

2 YEARS 2 MANY

CREATING A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

A public service announcement (PSA) is a short radio or video spot (15, 30, or 60 seconds) that delivers a simple social message and a call to act. Making a PSA is an excellent exercise to develop media skills, to learn how persuasive texts work, and to develop texts for a real audience. PSAs can be easily used in an elementary, high school, or a university setting. In this project, Mapping Memories worked with a human rights lawyer and a class of 24 Concordia Communication students over a period of four weeks to develop two PSAs on the delays refugee claimants face while waiting for the Canadian Government to process their claims.

Our steps:

Research – understand the issue

Our first step was to invite refugee lawyer, Mitchell J. Goldberg, to visit our class and explain the issue. Following this brief, we compiled a list of follow up questions and designated a group to conduct additional research.

Questions to consider while conducting research: What stands out? Does the information confirm or conflict with your pre-existing knowledge?

Determine your approach – study the form

We began by watching sample PSAs to explore how they were made. After watching each PSA we discussed the message, the target audience, the opening and closing shots, and the visual and audio techniques utilized. *Additional examples of PSA projects can be found at Listenup.org.*

Determine your audience – identify your target audience

With this project, we were building a viral campaign, which uses social networks to spread the message, because the group wanted to reach young adults on the Internet who were unaware of the issue and would be moved to contact their legislators. With this in mind, we cast actors, parents, and friends whom we felt the audience would identify with. We also cast two popular young actors from the TV series *Degrassi* to help draw attention to the PSA.

Clarify the message – determine a title

Finding a title helps to clarify the message of the PSA. Our title was, 2 Years 2 Many. Another way to clarify the message is to frame the video around a central question/s. Our thematic question was, What if you had to wait up to two years for your refugee status to be determined? From there we developed a series of questions that would be relevant to the audience, such as “What if you had to wait two years to get your medical results?” A script needs to be concise and to the point. Find PSA scripts on our website.

Plan the production – make a production schedule

We had one month to complete the project and our class met once a week for three hours. With these constraints in mind, we designated a week each for research, script, production, and editing. Because we had three hours to shoot, we kept the production simple. We had a studio team and a field team. The first PSA was shot in our studio and each of our six actors stood against a black background and delivered a simple message. We rehearsed and set everything up the day before. For the second PSA, our field production team went to a local market, Jean Talon.

Work with partners – get the word out

Once we had finished the video, we shared it with refugee lawyer Mitchell Goldberg to ensure the PSA was accurate. We set up a web page, using a blog template on Wordpress, uploaded the video to YouTube, and the students wrote a press release to provide additional context. Mitchell Goldberg used his networks to get the word out and we also sent the link through our own networks, as well as through the press release.

You can watch *2 Years 2 Many* or access the script at www.mappingmemories.ca.

For additional resources on making a PSA visit: www.learnquebec.ca.

