



Case Study: Targeted Growth, Inc.

Strategically aligning public relations and public affairs strategies to double the effectiveness of communications programs.

Executive Summary

Situation: Seattle-based Targeted Growth, Inc. (TGI) has developed the world's first truly dedicated biofuel crop, called camelina. Drought resistant, requiring low fertilizer and able to grow in rotation with wheat, the crop is ideally suited for Montana and other arid climates in the United States. The company needed to drive awareness of and interest in camelina among farmers and grower cooperatives in Montana to meet its goal of producing 100 million gallons of camelina oil by 2012.

Challenge: How to stimulate the adoption and use of a new biofuel feedstock crop. Farmers are notoriously risk averse when it comes to planting new crops.

Opportunity: Farmers are always on the lookout for ways to increase revenue per acre. And increasingly, they want to play a role in helping the United States increase its energy independence.

Approach: TGI teamed up with Seattle-based Scoville Public Relations and Washington, D.C.-based law firm Van Ness Feldman (VNF) to develop and implement a two-pronged approach to "plant the seeds for success." The campaign included a combination of government and public relations efforts that succeeded in putting camelina on the national radar, almost overnight.

Case Study

Founded in 1999, Targeted Growth is a Seattle-based renewable energy

bioscience company that works to further the long term success of renewable fuels such as biodiesel and ethanol by developing, growing, and marketing dedicated biofuel crops that are optimized and continually improved. Targeted Growth spent years applying its suite of yield and trait technologies to camelina, a cousin of canola, to create the first Elite Camelina Seed – a seed that can be grown on marginal land, requires minimal water or fertilizer and can be harvested with traditional equipment.



Left: Camelina, a cousin of canola and the world's first truly dedicated biofuel crop, growing in its mature stage. The Elite Camelina Seed was developed by Seattle-based Targeted Growth, Inc.

In 2007, Targeted Growth teamed with Green Earth Fuels, a Texas-based, vertically integrated renewable biodiesel energy company, to form a joint venture named Sustainable Oils, Inc. to produce and market up to 100 million gallons of camelina-based biodiesel by 2012. At its launch, the Sustainable Oils venture was the single largest U.S. contract for camelina. Nearly all of the initial camelina production was to be grown in Montana.

Scoville created a communications program designed to achieve three goals:

- 1) Increase the awareness of camelina's potential to help our nation's energy independence at a national level
- 2) Drive enthusiasm and interest for camelina among farmers and growers in Montana

3) Establish camelina as a “second generation” biofuel feedstock

Achieving these three goals would help the team at VNF achieve their policy initiatives – namely getting camelina as an approved feedstock for the biodiesel blender’s tax credit as well as getting camelina covered under a federal crop insurance program. Both of these were considered functional prerequisites to getting farmers to purchase and plant camelina, and biodiesel producers to purchase the camelina oil.

After crafting a message that emphasized the economic and public policy implications of the Sustainable Oils venture, and leveraging Van Ness Feldman’s connections with state and federal elected officials, the two teams planned and executed a press conference in the Montana State Capitol to announce the Sustainable Oils joint venture. Attending were Tom Todaro, CEO of Targeted Growth, Greg Bafalis, CEO of Green Earth Fuels, LLC, U.S. Senators Max Baucus (D-MT) and Jon Tester (D-MT), Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer, and representatives from state agriculture groups.



From left to right: Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer, Tom Todaro, CEO of Targeted Growth, Inc., and U.S. Senators Max Baucus (D-MT) and Jon Tester (D-MT).

Coordinating with the communications directors of the various elected officials, as well as company representatives, Scoville ensured the consistency of the message

being communicated to press outlets as well as to the public – a message that emphasized the benefits of a new cash crop for Montana farmers, the emergence of a domestic biofuel industry in the state, and the importance of reducing our national reliance on imported petroleum-based fuels.

The carefully-planned campaign produced exactly what Scoville and Van Ness Feldman had set out to achieve: regional and nationwide coverage by an array of media outlets, including broadcast coverage in the major network markets of Montana, Seattle and Texas, coverage in Northwest and national agricultural industry publications, fuel and alternative energy publications and in major news publications such as the Seattle Times and Associated Press. The successful execution of the event earned Scoville a prestigious “Critical Hit” designation by the editors of PR Week magazine.

The publicity that resulted from this event helped increase awareness of camelina amongst key policymakers, which combined with direct outreach from Van Ness Feldman, helped achieve the legislative goals. In early 2008, camelina was listed as eligible for crop insurance protection in the 2008 Farm Bill and it qualified as an eligible feedstock for the blender’s tax credit as part of the 2008 Energy Bill.

The partnership between government relations and public relations proved effective again just a few months later. In June 2008, Van Ness Feldman secured an opportunity for Todaro to testify before a Congressional committee on the promise of second-generation biofuels and to debunk some of the myths in the food versus fuel controversy. Todaro’s testimony was included in a Reuter’s article which got the attention of a producer for CNBC’s popular “Street Signs” program. Scoville worked closely with the producer of the show to develop a segment that featured the

promise of not only camelina, but also other dedicated biofuel crops being developed by TGI. Scoville was also able to get a TGI-produced digital animation of their technology and "beauty" shots of Camelina featured on the broadcast.

While Scoville's approach showed that strategic public relations can help move legislative agendas forward, Van Ness Feldman's work ensured that just the reverse could be true: that a more focused open legislative effort could also drive public relations. Together, Scoville's media campaign and Van Ness Feldman's public affairs work have helped to position Targeted Growth as a leader in the renewable energy industry and accelerated recognition of TGI's next generation biofuel feedstocks.