

HOW TO GET YOUR PSA ON AIR

As a communicator at a nonprofit with a powerful and worthy message, you're always under pressure to get it heard. One very viable media channel is public service announcements (PSAs). But, how can you increase your chances of getting enough airings to make an impact? Now in our **seventh** year, our survey inquires to more than 1,200 PSA Directors to reveal their preferences.

Here's a round up of this year's findings:

1. Digital distribution is the way to go.
2. Stations are receiving less PSAs than ever before, but have space for more.
3. Creative has a shorter shelf life. So, send new creative often, but use your asks sparingly.
4. Send campaigns 30 days before you want them to air.
5. Produce as many spot lengths as you can, but make sure you have a :30, :60 and :15.
6. Peak times for inventory are still in Q1, during the summer and surprisingly, during the holidays.
7. There are *many* factors that affect the potential of your PSA to get on air. Check them out on page 8-9.
8. It's possible to get airings for PSAs that ask for donations.
9. ****New in 2018**** A local angle is important, but the creative itself doesn't need to be localized.

About Williams Whittle

Williams Whittle has thrived for 50 years as a full-service advertising agency, working with nonprofit and forward-thinking companies dedicated to making a positive impact.

From launching new programs and initiatives to executing successful rebrands to producing iconic taglines and campaigns, we dig deep to build solid foundations for brands. By using compelling, targeted, and creative marketing strategies along with storytelling that resonates emotionally, we are able to hook, connect and engage audiences. We give brands the tools to not only meet their bottom lines but to grow to their fullest potential.

But what truly energizes us is the knowledge that we help our clients make positive change possible. We call it:

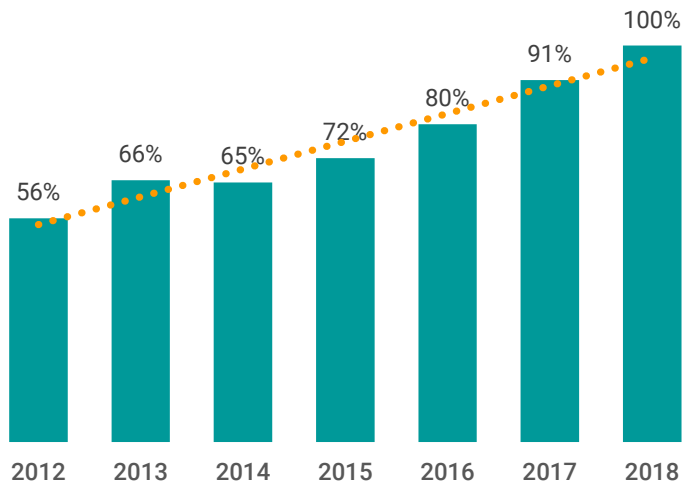
Generating Ideas that Generate Change

1 Digital is the way to go.

We finally hit the summit - all stations are asking for digital copies of your PSA. So, save yourself money (and the environment) and send it digitally.

GRAPH A

On which format do you prefer to receive a PSA? Answer "digital."



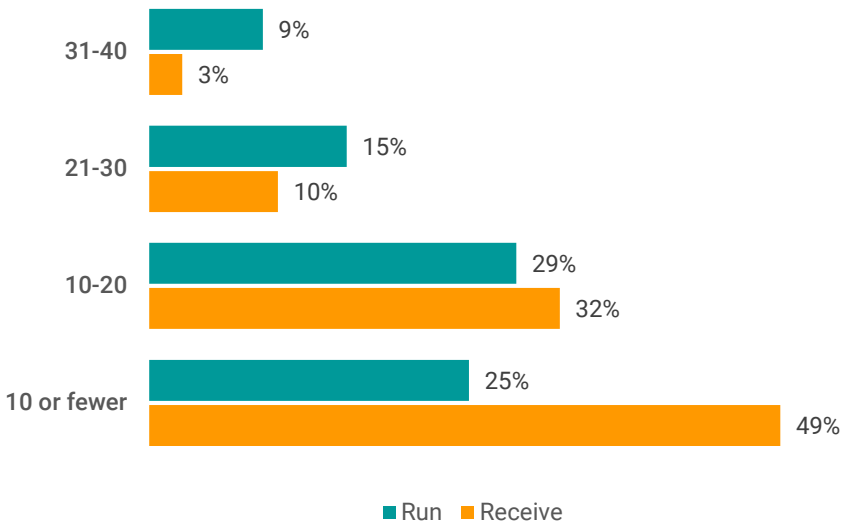
WW INSIGHT Going digital is easier for more nonprofits to afford to distribute a PSA, but it doesn't mean you should shy away from using the mail to remind them about your need for airings.

2 Stations are receiving less PSAs than ever before, but have space for more.

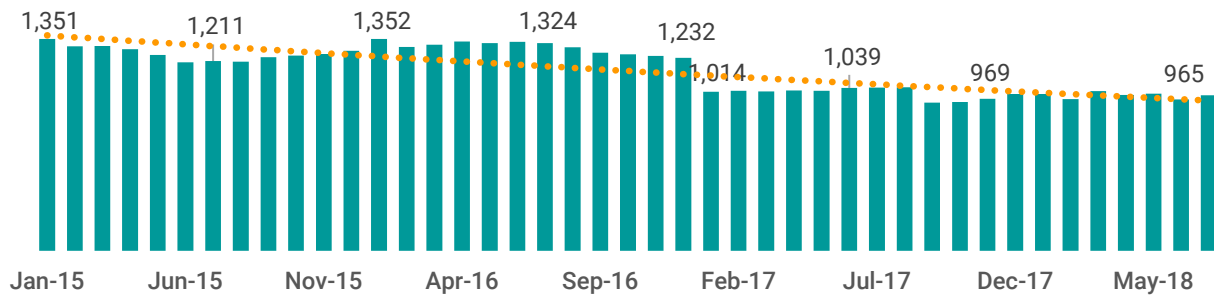
Nearly half of all stations tell us that they receive less than 10 PSAs per week. This trend can be confirmed by Nielsen data – the number of PSA campaigns tracked on air has been significantly reduced in the past year. [SEE GRAPH C](#)

GRAPH B

How many PSAs do you receive per week? vs. How many different PSAs does your station run per week?



GRAPH C



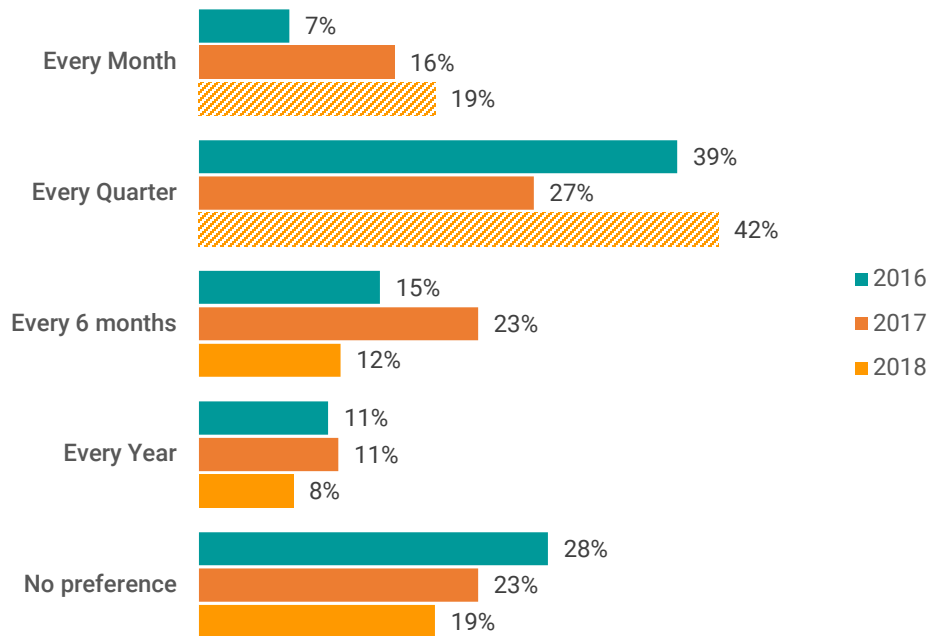
WW INSIGHT While there are less competitors in the PSA space, there is still stiff competition. You'll need to pay attention to what appeals to PSA Directors to ensure you stay top of mind.

3 Send new creative often, but use your asks sparingly.

Stations want new creative more often, with almost 20% wanting new creative every month and almost half wanting new creative every quarter. **SEE GRAPH D** And while they want to keep their stations' creative fresh, 30% indicate that "2" or "3" requests to air a PSA per year would be too much. Don't get discouraged though, the majority say they don't mind being asked, they might not have the space. **SEE GRAPH E**

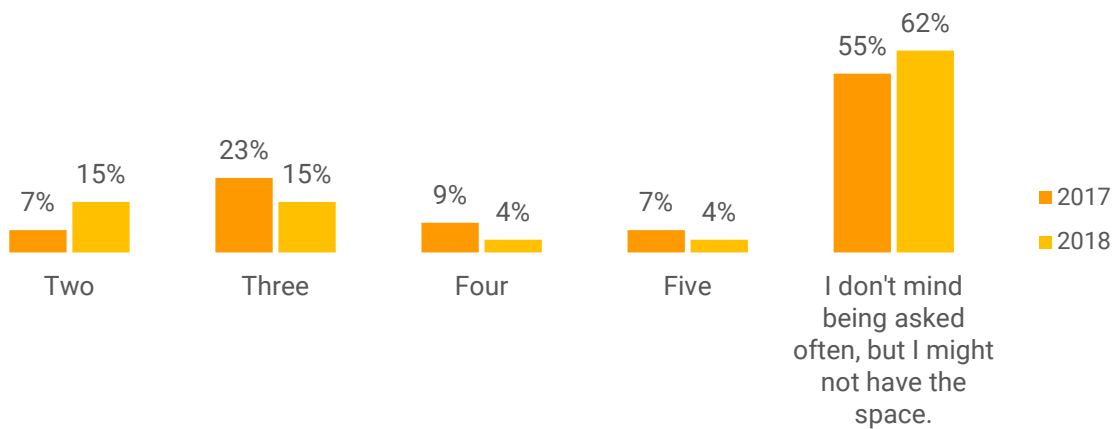
GRAPH D

How often would you prefer to receive new creative from a nonprofit?



GRAPH E

How many PSA asks from one nonprofit is too much in one year?



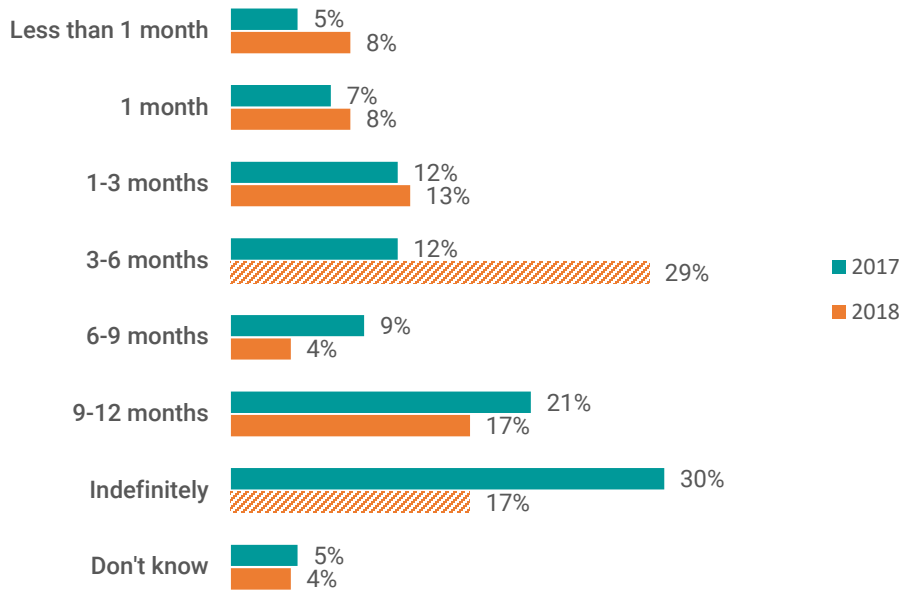
WW INSIGHT You'll need to find different ways to keep your message "new" even if you don't have new creative. And when you do, be sure to keep your asks specific and timely.

4 Campaigns have a shorter shelf life.

Most stations are still saying that they will air a campaign indefinitely, but if they had to commit to a timeframe, it would air for 3-6 months. This is much shorter than last year's majority answer at 9-12 months and lines up with the responses on the previous page as to how often stations prefer new creative (every quarter). [SEE GRAPH F](#) And that want you to send PSA materials **a month before you want them to air**. [SEE GRAPH G](#)

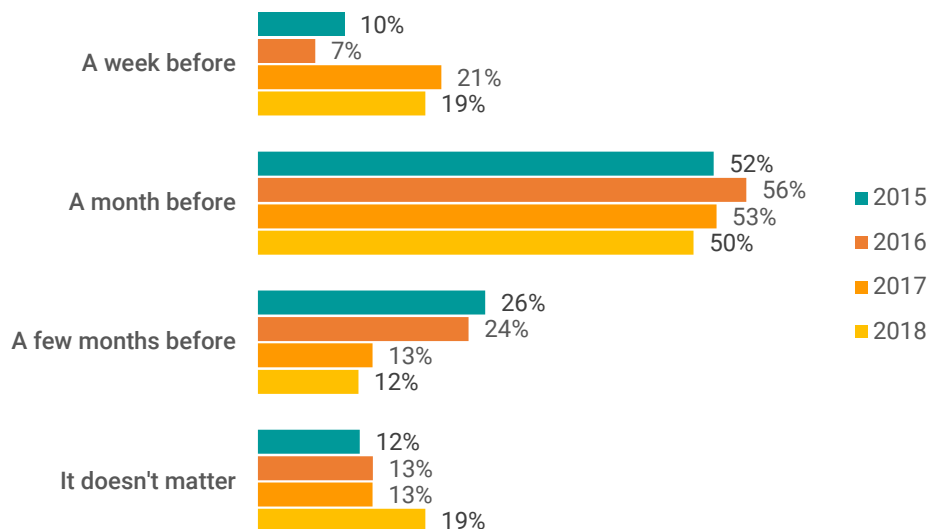
GRAPH F

How long will you/can you keep a PSA in rotation?



GRAPH G

If you accept PSAs that have a specific time for airing, how far in advance would you like to receive materials?

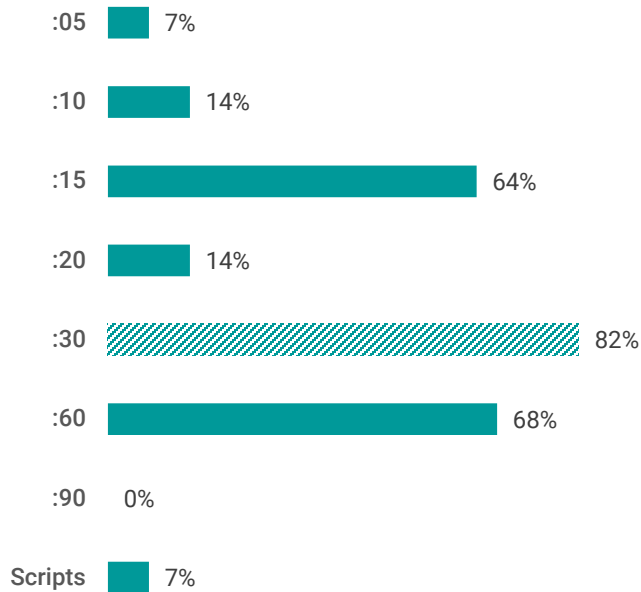


5 Produce as many spot lengths as you can, but make sure you have a :30, :60 and :15.

The types of spots lengths stations prefer have not changed since we began asking in 2014. The more options you provide, the more likely your PSA will get on air. **Sixty-second, thirty-second and fifteen-second spots are “staples”** with the ten-second seeing significant preference. [SEE GRAPH H](#)

GRAPH H

What PSA lengths do you prefer?

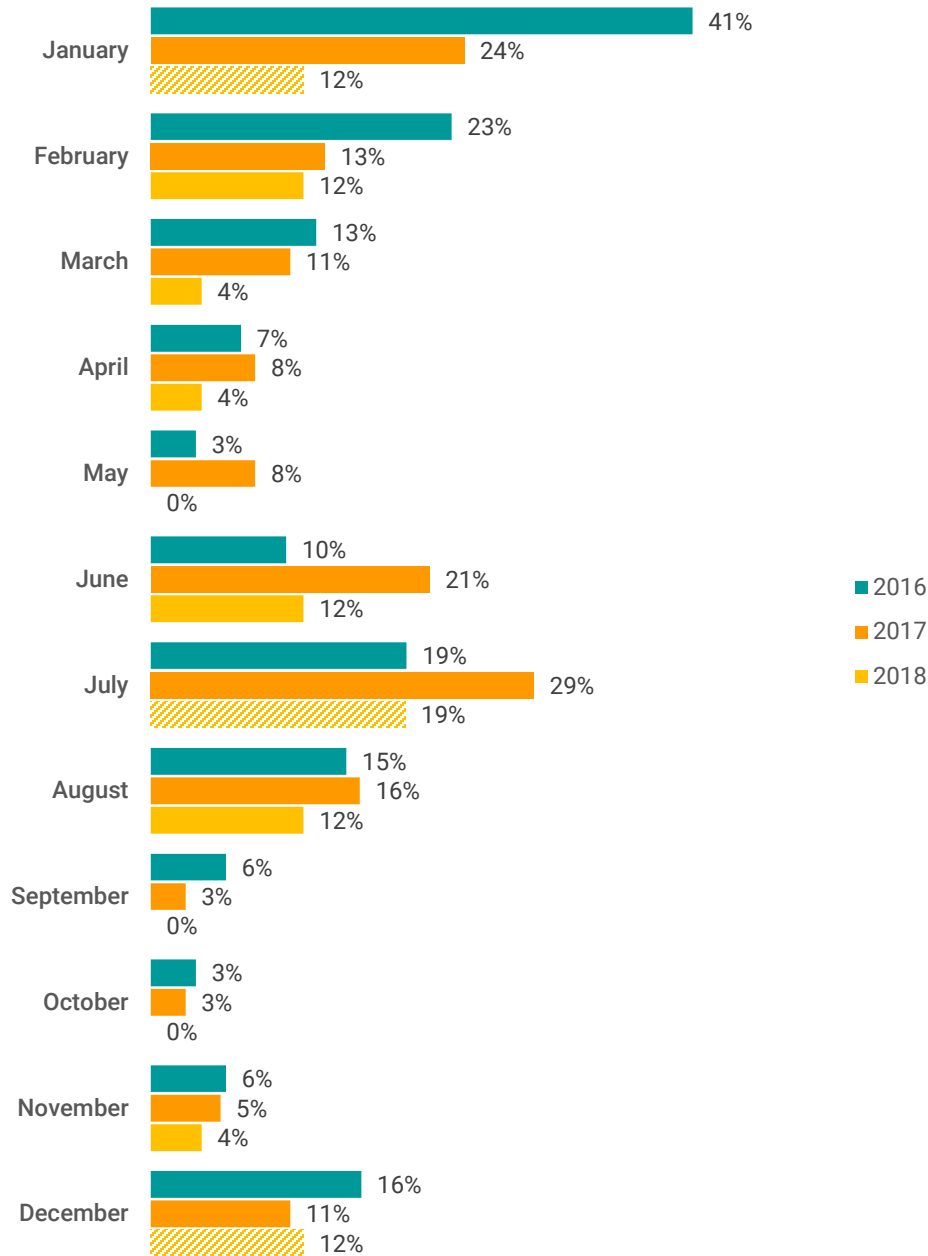


6 Peak times for inventory are still in Q1, during the summer and surprisingly, during the holidays.

The most popular months with the most airtime inventory for PSAs have been January and February. But, PSA Directors are also telling us that July and December are open, too. [SEE GRAPH I](#)

GRAPH I

In which months do you have the most airtime inventory for PSAs?



7 There are many factors that affect the potential of your PSA to get on air.

Since we've been asking "How does the use of a celebrity in the PSA have an impact on your decision to air?" in 2013, every year more than 70% of stations have told us that it "doesn't matter either way." Same with the question "During holidays, do you prefer PSAs that incorporate a holiday message?" More than 50% of stations say that "it doesn't matter."

When asked "Does paying for some spots to run affect your ability to also run it as a PSA?" most PSA Directors are still saying "no." [SEE GRAPH J](#)

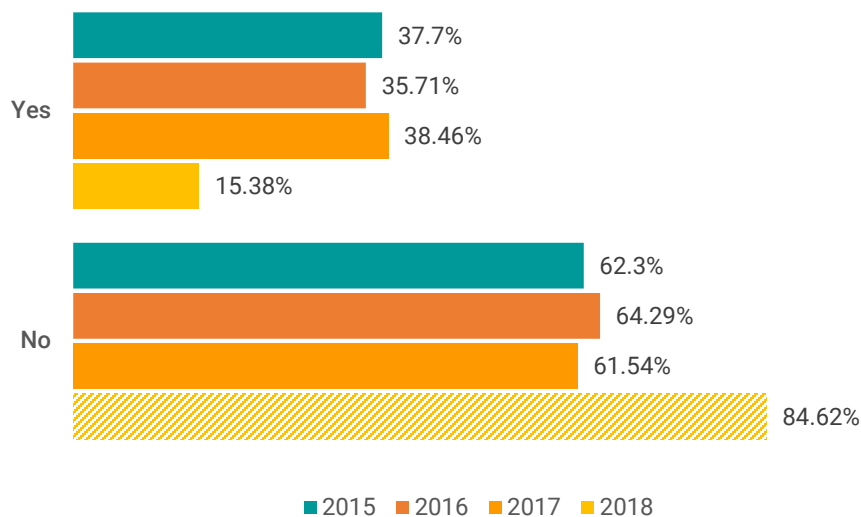
Year after year PSA Directors have told us the most important qualities of a PSA campaign are a local angle, the creative quality of the spot and whether there is well-executed messaging. [SEE GRAPH K](#)

And a new question in this year's survey is asking station's who makes the decision on whether a PSA makes it on air? [SEE GRAPH L](#)

[SEE GRAPH J](#)

GRAPH J

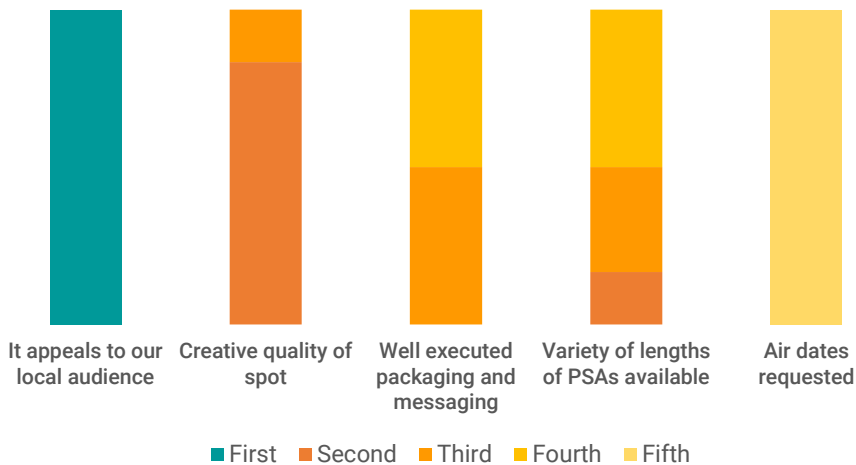
Does a paying for some spots to run affect your ability to also run it as a PSA?



WW INSIGHT For nonprofits that have a paid media budget – you can pay for a flight of advertising and supplement it with PSAs. And don't forget when you're negotiating that media spend to include PSAs as a guaranteed value add.

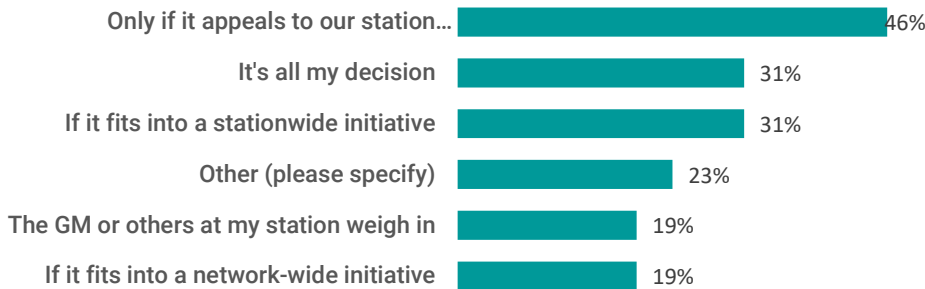
GRAPH K

What factors contribute to your decision to air a PSA?



GRAPH L

What determines whether a PSA makes it on air?



Here are some of the “Other” responses:

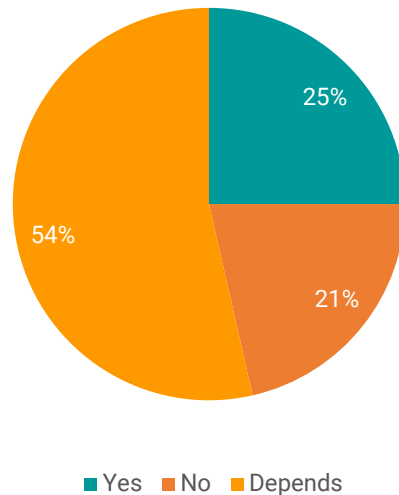
- Simply based on when it was sent (we require two weeks ahead of time), and whether there is room.
- Must be well-produced. Dry PSAs tend to get rejected.
- Quality of production is key and timing must be on
- Also depends on what we’re committed to locally; we have a large number of established partnerships with local non-profits

8 It's true! You *may* get some airings for PSAs that ask for donations.

Traditionally, PSAs can't include an ask for donations. But, when we asked PSA Directors to tell us their preference, **the majority said "it depends."** SEE GRAPH L

GRAPH M

Will you air a spot that directly asks for donations?



When asked to elaborate, here are some of the responses:

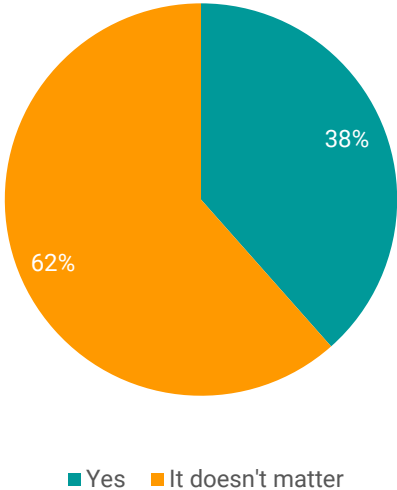
- Depends on whether it has a local connection, or whether simply there is space to fill.
- Depends on the nature of asking.
- Must be 501c3 and wording must be reviewed by manager.
- All PSAs we air are entirely based on content/cause, not dependent on donation etc.
- Will evaluate the organization requesting donations; sometimes the station is supporting a local chapter and will not double up with a national spot for the same organization.

WW INSIGHT Keep in mind that most of the stations that will consider a PSA that asks a viewer for donations are local (not national networks) and usually not in the top markets. Compare the markets where your nonprofit gets the most donations and see if it's worth a shot in producing an alternate spot.

9 A local angle is one of the most important characteristics of a PSA, but the actual creative does not need to be localized.

Many of our clients have asked us if they should invest in localizing a PSA for a station or for a market. While having a local angle is a factor in whether your PSA may make it on air, the actual creative can be generic. [SEE GRAPH N](#)

GRAPH N
Do you prefer if PSAs are localized to your area?



Thanks for reading! You can find past PSA preference survey results on our [website](#).