**The Media Consortium 2011 Annual Member Meeting**

**Harnessing Our Collective Power**

**October 13-14, 2011**

**Oakland, CA**

**Meeting Goals**

* Impact the public conversation during 2012 by developing an infrastructure for deep editorial collaborations among TMC members
* Explore whether and how we can develop partnerships between TMC members and advocacy/policy allies in order to better source stories and create impact.
* Emphasize innovation and experimentation through presentations on new products and techniques, and by fostering collaboration and shared best practices.
* Provide info for members on 2012 TMC initiatives and receive feedback on The Media Consortium

**Major Takeaways:**

*“We are the Media for the 99 Percent!”*

The Media Consortium was founded in 2006 in part because members were frustrated that indpendent media had not had a greater impact during the 2004 presidential election year. This year, our members are determined to harness their collective power to make clear that the American public does have an alternative to the corporate media. Though the combined revenue stream of TMC members is close to 1% of the total revenue attained by the top 15 media corporations (Disney, Viacom, News Corporation), we reach over 100 million Americans with stories that speak directly to their lives. We are the Media for the 99 Percent.

After two years of testing editorial collaborations, from the U.S. Social Forum to our current Campaign Cash work, Media Consortium members are ready to launch a Consortium-wide campaign to make sure the American people’s voices are heard during this election year. To make that campaign happen, we recognize the following principles:

* **Editorial Collaborations Require Infrastructure:** Each media outlet comes to a collaboration with its internal needs and vision. To ensure that these needs are honored while achieving the goals of a collaboration requires a networking, content production, marketing and evaluation infrastructure run by full-time staff who are deeply familiar with the outlets and their work. Practically, this means the Media Consortium is more necessary than ever, and so at a facilitated meeting we discussed concrete ways to put TMC on a solid, sustainable financial footing so that it can provide this infrastructure.
* **Partnerships with Advocates can Increase Impact:** Advocacy and policy organizations have been and will continue to be sources for media. With advance planning, such organizations can also push out media content in a way that benefits their own message while creating a larger audience for media and, most importantly, moving that audience from being passive consumers to actors, thus creating impact. How to create this partnership without infringing upon the independence of Media Consortium outlets, and how to create a collaborative infrastructure across very different types of organizations, will require much more work and thought.
* **Impact Must Be Measured:** Media outlets tend to rely upon audience metrics to calculate impact, but these numbers only tell us who saw/heard our stories, not whether they acted upon their content. If we want to change the public conversation, we have to learn how to measure whether our content moves people to think and act differently. The good news is that advances in metrics now make such measurements possible.

Even as we focus on the big vision, TMC members are very clear about the practical matter of running media organizations. Even after six years, independent media outlets remain dogged by the two factors impacting the entire media field: adapting to a quickly changing digital space and finding a sustainable revenue model. To harness our collective power, we must find solutions for these issues so that we are working together from positions of individual strength and stability.

* **Adapting to New Digital Devices:** In 2010, we focused on moving into mobile. Yet the mobile space itself has proliferated into smart phones and tablets. Instead of seeking apps or mobile-based designs, TMC members are seeking to understand and implement responsive web design, one design and code that will allow a website to adapt to any kind of digital device. In 2012, TMC will create webinars and mini-labs for TMC members to learn about html5, responsive design, and other mutliplatforming strategies.
* **Revenue generation:** In 2010 we asked, Where to find the money to support this work? One answer members will test is a collaborative fundraiser, now scheduled for February 15, 2012. After a presentation about the fundraiser at the meeting, members are gearing up to experiment with this Q1 revenue stream.

The Consortium’s most successful collaboration to date, from the standpoint of metrics and impact, was our joint effort to cover the Wisconsin protests in early 2011. The main takeway from the panel that reviewed this collaboration was that the Media Consortium is ready for a Consortium-wide campaign that reshapes the American conversation. Yet the panel also clarified for all of us that we cannot downplay the cost in dollars and time that such collaborations entail. As we plan editorially for 2012, we must simultaneously become ever more creative about raising revenue, and ensure we raise enough revenue, to harness our collective power.