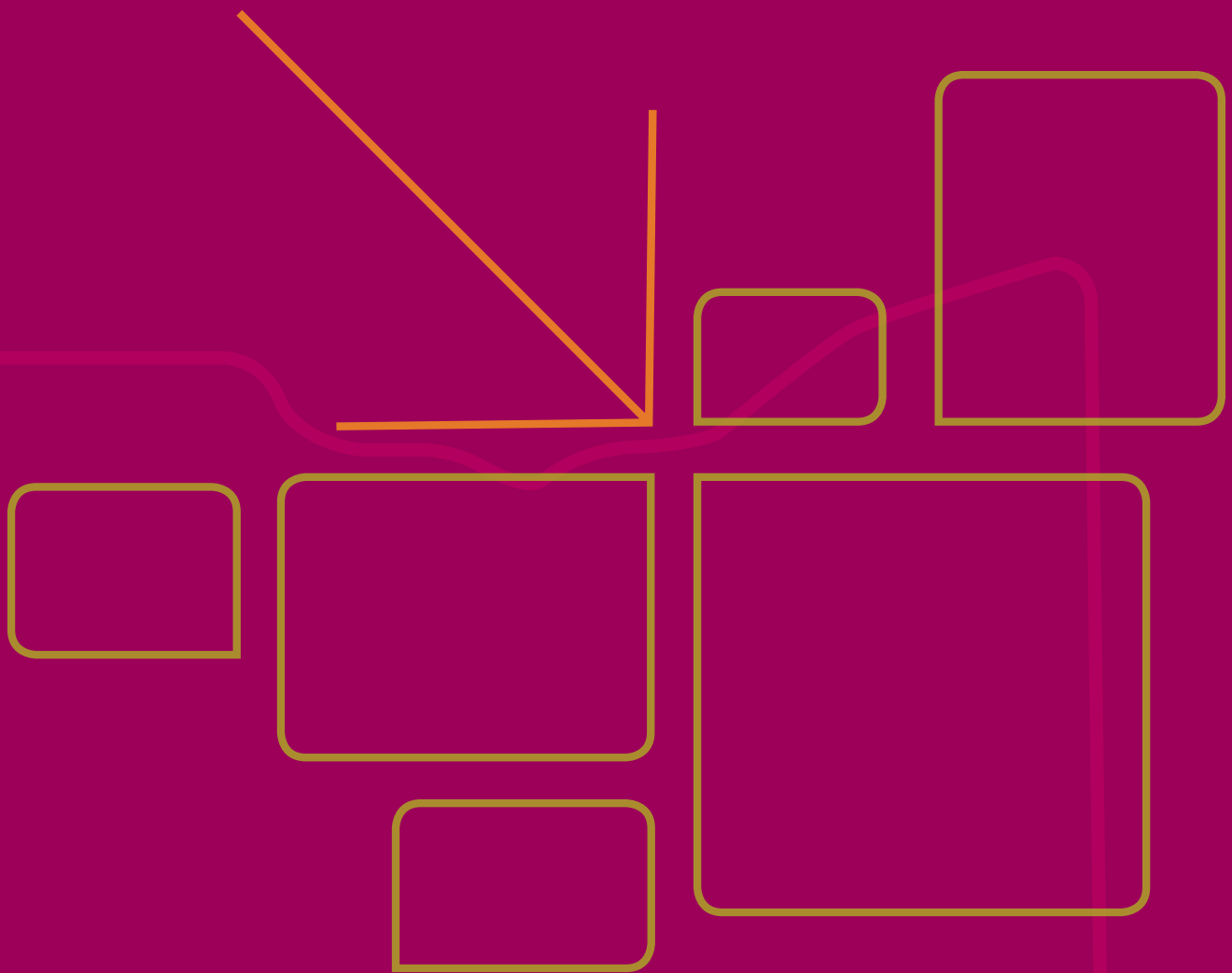




# D&E and the RNC

How a **multi media relations strategy** helped catapult Cleveland onto the global stage



# **Opportunity** – Millions watching the RNC **Challenge** – Change perceptions of Cleveland **Communications** – Proactive, innovative, aggressive

*“The (Republican National Convention) pumped an estimated \$200 million into our economy and accelerated important civic projects. More important, it elevated how we are viewed by the world and how we view ourselves. The hundreds of positive stories written about our city were beyond all expectations.”*

— **David Gilbert**, CEO, Cleveland 2016 Host Committee, The Plain Dealer, July 29, 2016



## **Executive Summary**

Cleveland enjoyed a rare opportunity in July 2016. For a precious few days, the world's gaze shifted to the largest city in Northeast Ohio and host of the 2016 Republican National Convention (RNC).

To maximize the communications potential, Dix & Eaton employed a multi media relations strategy on behalf of multiple clients to help inform 50,000 RNC visitors, including 15,000 journalists from around the world, about the region's transformation into a favorable location to live, work, play and visit.

The strategy and the firm's collaboration with and support of Destination Cleveland and the Cleveland 2016 Host Committee helped transform media skepticism into widespread praise of Cleveland.

The city enjoyed a flood of positive coverage and comments that exceeded all expectations. Thanks to ongoing strategic communications and the collaboration of the Host Committee, public, private and civic leaders and security personnel in the successful execution of a safe event, nearly 90 percent

of community coverage Dix & Eaton impacted was positive or neutral in tone. Headlines touted Cleveland's economic resurgence, vibrant downtown and valued hospitality. The region's business community benefited from more coverage in a three-week span than it had earned in any single year in the past decade.

This white paper details the development and implementation of a two-year multi media relations strategy created to leverage the long-term benefits of the RNC for Cleveland and Northeast Ohio. Dix & Eaton thanks the numerous clients that engaged the firm in support of these efforts, particularly **Cleveland Plus**, the national and international marketing program of Northeast Ohio's business community, and **Destination Cleveland**, the region's largest convention and visitors bureau. Destination Cleveland's personnel led much of the overall convention planning in partnership with the **Cleveland 2016 Host Committee**. Dix & Eaton executives also served as advisors to and volunteers for the Host Committee and a number of its subcommittees.

## Winning the RNC: Time to seize the day

In July 2014, the Republican National Committee announced that it had selected Cleveland over Dallas as host of the 2016 RNC. National media reaction and analysis tended to credit the decision to the political reality that Cleveland was the dominant industrial city in the critical swing state of Ohio.

Many national journalists already were familiar with the economic transformation gathering momentum in Cleveland. Since 2006, Dix & Eaton and Cleveland Plus had been meeting with national business journalists in New York and Washington to suggest stories related to the changes within Northeast Ohio's economy.

Two days after the RNC announcement, representatives of Dix & Eaton and Cleveland Plus visited Washington to provide journalists with information about Northeast Ohio's economy and explain why Cleveland was selected. (The fortunate, if coincidental, timing of LeBron James' announcement that he would return to the Cleveland Cavaliers added a bit of excitement to the conversations with media!)

A subsequent media audit Dix & Eaton performed in December 2014 and January 2015 revealed that journalists remained eager for information about Cleveland and Northeast Ohio. During interviews, journalists at a handful of media outlets:

- Invited proactive communications about Cleveland and Northeast Ohio, specifically related to the RNC and Cleveland's resurgence
- Agreed that their image of the "Rust Belt" was gradually shifting to a more positive stance

The topics of interest reporters identified included:

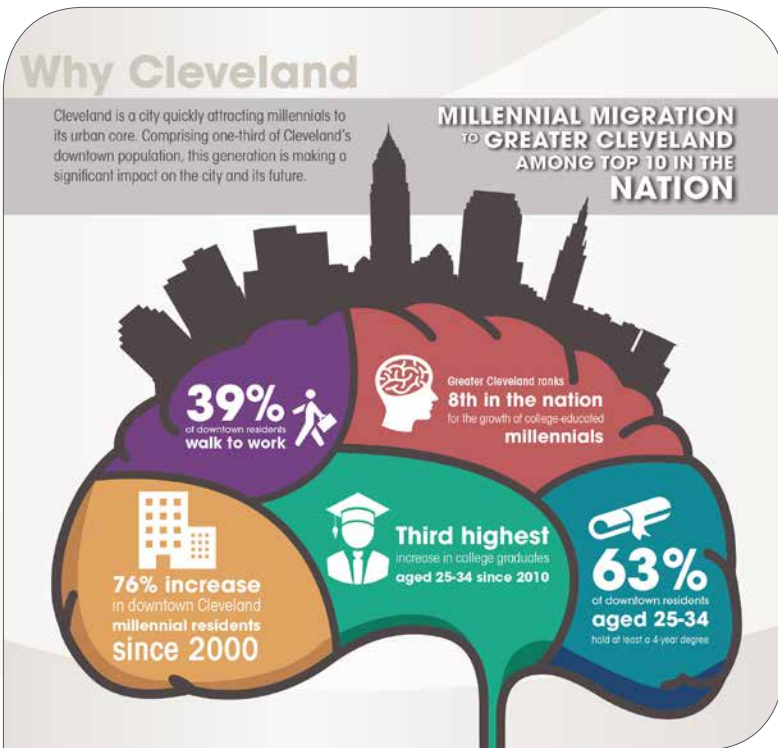
- Ohio as a swing state/Cleveland's political environment/whether the GOP could make inroads in Ohio
- The economic recovery of Cleveland, Northeast Ohio and the Midwest/downtown Cleveland resurgence
- Job creation/the future of manufacturing and unionized labor in Ohio
- How the RNC was creating new business and investment in Cleveland
- How Cleveland was promoting the RNC



Republicans choose Cleveland for 2016 convention  
— **Washington Post**, July 8, 2014



Photo by Destination Cleveland  
Cleveland's Cheerleaders Take GOP Convention Victory Lap  
— **The Wall Street Journal**, July 10, 2014



Example from the "Why Cleveland" infographic series, which were created monthly during the build up to the RNC. See page 6 for more information.

When asked to provide three adjectives to describe Cleveland, journalists most often offered the following terms:

- Midwest
- Rebound
- Rust Belt/industrial
- Resurgent/rebuilding/scrappy/underrated

It was clear that the RNC – one of the most covered events in the world – combined with the nuance and economic energy of Cleveland's resurgence, presented a unique national and international communications opportunity that could pay long-term dividends for Northeast Ohio.

It also was clear that the evolution of mainstream media and the revolution of digital and social media would be the foundation for a unique multi media relations RNC strategy. The approach Dix & Eaton devised melded useful, engaging and data-driven content with digital communications, relationship-based media relations, coverage analysis, social media engagement and thought leadership.

## Multi media relations

### What is multi media relations?

Multi media relations is an innovative communications approach that combines media relations best practices with elements of digital communications, social media, thought leadership and content marketing. Programs are highly strategic yet flexible to the communications objectives and the target audience's appetite for information.

### How can you use it?

To use multi media relations effectively, identify your objectives and opportunities, research target audiences' desire for information and choose the most effective channels to communicate that information. Avoid format discussions until you understand the content you will convey and your methods of delivery.

### How do you measure results?

Establish a baseline prior to embarking on a multi media relations program. Measurement and analysis will depend on delivery methods as well as target audiences appetites for information. Periodic follow-up reports should include context such as industry standards for specific delivery methods, as well as observations about communications content and, as appropriate, competitor analysis.

# Creating a strategy: Multi media relations in three phases

Over the next several months, Dix & Eaton implemented a three-phased multi media relations strategy on behalf of its clients to educate global journalists and other targeted audiences about Northeast Ohio's assets, economic progress and vitality.

## Phase 1: Establishing a Foundation (January 2015 to July 2015)

The first phase was dedicated to determining journalists' knowledge and impressions of Cleveland, as well as the topics they wanted to explore. Dix & Eaton and Cleveland Plus increased the frequency of their media trips to expand relationships with targeted journalists and provide information in a digital format about the regional economic transformations taking place in Northeast Ohio.

### Highlights:

- Conducted media audit
- Leveraged relationship-based media relations, including monthly desk-side visits to New York, Washington and London, email correspondence and targeted pitches
- Produced regional investment and sector-specific fact sheets for media distribution
- Mined strategic milestone opportunities (NBA Finals)
- Produced and distributed media kits on flash drives



Cleveland's rents soar ahead of Republican convention  
— **CNN Money**, March 13, 2015,

## Phase 2: Building Momentum (July 2015 to June 2016)



Cleveland Won the First GOP Debate  
— **The Atlantic, CityLab**, Aug. 7, 2015

Journalists' interest in Cleveland Plus media trips increased significantly as the RNC approached. Meetings grew from one-on-one discussions to group sessions, often with five to 10 journalists in the room and others on a conference line. Additional media trips were added for Destination Cleveland as it supported the Host Committee. Dix & Eaton proactively pitched the social media platform editors at national networks. Activity with the Host Committee's Visiting Media Subcommittee expanded to include story angle brainstorming, communications strategy and message development.

Data-driven content fueled a “Why Cleveland” campaign, which included a monthly news release and infographic, statistics and trend information pertaining to specific Cleveland-based topics or sectors (e.g., Downtown investment, millennial migration, manufacturing sector shifts and biomedical innovation). Dix & Eaton also collaborated on the Host Committee’s Media Resource Guide, which included 70 story ideas, as well as experts, recommended visuals and trend information in digital and printed formats. The firm initiated a blog for one client to demonstrate relevance and thought leadership and provided strategic counsel for clients interested in the communications opportunity the RNC represented.

**Highlights:**

- Leveraged relationship-based media relations, including monthly desk-side visits to New York, Washington and London. Email correspondence and pitches became more frequent; media list build-out based on primary coverage progressed
- “Why Cleveland” campaign created as Cleveland Plus’ first outbound marketing effort
- Initiated client podcast schedule
- Produced and distributed media kits on flash drives
- Participated in RNC Host Committee Visiting Media Subcommittee
- Expanded fact sheets to include Cleveland neighborhood map and information provided in print and digitally
- Contributed content to support **Host Committee’s 70-pages of “Stories Worth Telling”**
- Coordinated production of a thought leadership blog
- Mined strategic milestone opportunities (first GOP primary debate, NBA Finals)
- Provided media relations support and real-time social media activity around political event timed for the GOP primary debate
- Conducted strategic client engagement discussions and counsel



Photo by Destination Cleveland

Ohio primary battle:  
Will this swing state's economy matter?  
— **CNBC**, March 15, 2016



Photo by Destination Cleveland

Postcard from Cleveland:  
LeBron, Trump and downtown’s resurgence  
— **San Francisco Chronicle**, June 7, 2016

**Phase 3: Time for the Show (Three weeks in July 2016)**

National and global media started arriving in Cleveland in late June and early July to prepare for the July 18-21 event. To meet the media’s needs and fully leverage the communications opportunities, Dix & Eaton activated a daily multi media relations schedule that included mainstream media and social media monitoring and reporting, support for a client’s weekly podcasts and a Facebook Live report, daily pitching to a fully built-out media list of more than 400 journalists and redistribution of the “Why Cleveland” media releases, select portions of the Playbook and community leader contact information.



Hot in Cleveland?  
The city’s new, cool Public Square  
— **PBS Newshour**, July 13, 2016

As a result of outreach to social media platform editors, Dix & Eaton coordinated with media outlets to create content to support social media coverage on platforms such as Snapchat and Twitter. The firm also connected with social media outlets that sent journalists to the RNC. Communications support to address media and client needs was available 18 hours a day during weekdays, and eight hours a day on weekends.

To add context to Cleveland's interactions with the RNC, Dix & Eaton's team produced a [daily blog](#) that captured downtown sights and sounds, from protesters to media to the vendors. The posts reinforced the vibrancy of downtown Cleveland as a place to live, work, play and visit.

#### Highlights:

- Expanded media relations, including daily content-based email correspondence and pitches to a media list of more than 400 journalists
- Held on-site interactions with journalists
- Produced live tweets during panel discussions of news and civic organizations
- Supported client during international media briefing
- Provided social media content to mainstream media covering select clients
- Pitched content for media outlets' social media platforms such as Snapchat
- Compiled and distributed media kits on flash drives
- Produced daily media and social media monitoring and analysis reports
- Coordinated digital media contact list for experts and sources in Cleveland's business community



Cleveland hosted the show, but hopes you leave with a lasting impression

— **USA Today**, July 21, 2016

Photo by Cody York Photography



Cleveland on the Rise:  
A Look Back on the City's Comeback Before RNC  
— **ABC News**, July 17, 2016

- Offered counsel and support to Cleveland Host Committee Visiting Media Subcommittee
- Provided national media relations support for Destination Cleveland Social Media Command Center
- Delivered strategic client engagement discussions, counsel and podcast support
- Produced blog posts supported by social media distribution
- Provided ongoing client messaging counsel
- Facilitated and participated in client interviews regarding efforts to communicate Cleveland's story

Reporters provided positive feedback to the quality of the information and data being provided, AND they used it!

#### In Phase 3, the number of Dix & Eaton clients involved in multi media relations RNC strategies grew to include:

- Cleveland Plus
- Destination Cleveland
- Bliss Institute, University of Akron
- Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum
- Community Blight Solutions
- Cleveland State University
- Playhouse Square
- Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University
- KeyCorp
- Greater Cleveland Partnership
- Cleveland Museum of Art

# Analyzing results: Cleveland vs. Philadelphia

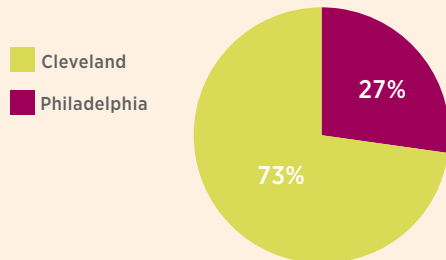
The multi media relations strategy provided the most prominent media organizations covering the RNC with a plethora of information about Cleveland and Northeast Ohio.

An examination of the overall nonpolitical (community) coverage emerging from Cleveland (July 11-22) and Philadelphia, which hosted the Democratic National Convention (July 18-30), offers insights into the impact of Northeast Ohio's collaborative and aggressive multi media relations strategy.

Although the proportion of positive/neutral to negative coverage was similar for each city, Dix & Eaton research shows that Cleveland's share of voice was three times greater than that of Philadelphia.

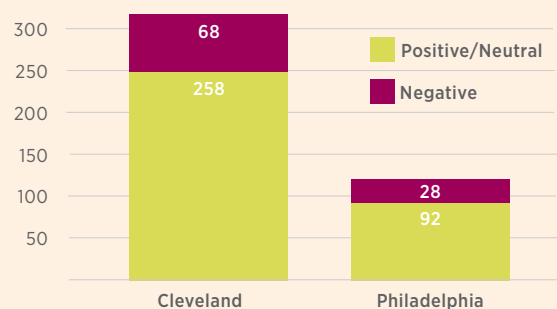
## Cleveland vs. Philadelphia – Share of Voice

(Represents 446 unique placements, all media)



## Cleveland vs. Philadelphia – Tone Breakdown

(Represents 446 unique placements, all media)



*Is this heaven?*

*Or is this **Cleveland?***

— Savannah Guthrie, **TODAY Show**, July 19, 2016



# Analyzing results: Relationships and multi media interactions

A number of Dix & Eaton clients saw significant results from their communications efforts.

Cleveland Plus' previous eight-year effort to establish relationships with national media was invaluable to the success of the two-year multi media relations strategy employed leading up to the RNC. Cleveland Plus-related activity yielded 74 unique placements in the first three weeks of July, a total that surpassed the activity of any single year in the marketing program's 10-year history.

National and international media outlets eager for news about Cleveland and the RNC republished the unique placements. These pickup placements dramatically expanded the reach and impact of Cleveland Plus' efforts. In all, media published

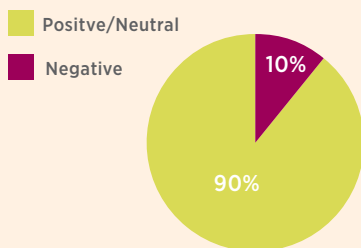
more than 1,500 unique and pickup placements pertaining to Cleveland's "work" messaging.

Unique placements are defined as coverage from journalists or news organizations who had taken face-to-face meetings with Dix & Eaton, had received emailed content from Dix & Eaton or used messaging or data from the Why Cleveland campaign, media kits or Host Committee materials. Pickups are the republishing of the unique placements, which dramatically expands the reach.

In 90 percent of the coverage, the tone was positive/neutral; of the top priority media, called Tier 1 Media, the tone was positive/neutral in 71 percent of the coverage.

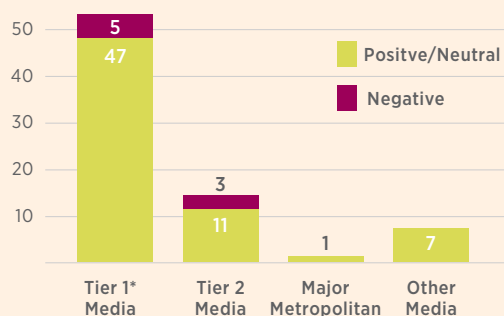
## Tone of Placements

(74 unique placements, all media)

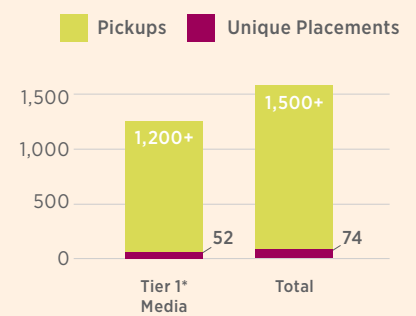


## Tone of Placements by Media Tier

(74 unique placements, all media)



## Unique Placements and Pickups



The daily Dix & Eaton blog saw a significant readership increase during the RNC. **Ninety-two percent** of the traffic to the firm blog from June 15 to July 25 occurred during the days leading up to the RNC and during the event. Overall, the blog saw a **526 percent increase** in readership from the previous six-week period.

*Cleveland is  
Back!*

— CBS Sunday Morning, July 17, 2016

# Revealing the future: Multi media relations worked for Cleveland

Prior to the RNC, Cleveland's public, private and civic leaders repeatedly stated that one of the primary opportunities associated with the 2016 RNC was the chance to tell the city's story of economic transformation, vitality and livability. Dix & Eaton's multi media collaboration with a number of key clients, civic organizations and the Host Committee helped convey key information to highly valued journalists. The effort was not lost on the national and international journalists, as key messages and data surfaced numerous times in coverage.

A few examples:

"Great restaurants, good beer, you know it's just a really cool place to live now and it's defying some people's expectations of the city."

— **Fergus Nicoll, BBC**, July 20, 2016

"Today, thousands of new residents live downtown. An 'eds and meds' sector is powering new job creation, and many once forlorn neighborhoods are home to young millennial professionals and trendy microbreweries."

— **Salon.com**, July 19, 2016

"You know what they call Cleveland? City of Champions! Yeah, Cleveland!"

— **Joe Scarborough, Morning Joe**, July 21, 2016

Coverage in mainstream and digital media exceeded expectations as lingering skepticism about Cleveland and its renaissance largely evaporated. Civic pride swelled as leaders and Northeast Ohio residents alike basked in a communications victory for Cleveland and the nation's Industrial Heartland.

The gains have excited a number of clients and encouraged leaders at all levels of Cleveland's public, private and civic sectors.

"The strategy Dix & Eaton employed, in conjunction with Cleveland Plus and many other key organizations in this city, was effective in helping us tell our story to the national and international media," said Rick Batyko of Cleveland Plus and Team NEO. "The 'Why Cleveland' campaign was the first time we created and pushed content out to journalists, and it clearly was impactful."

As senior director of PR and communications for the Host Committee, as well as Destination Cleveland, Emily Lauer oversaw the Visiting Media strategy development, creation of the Media Resource Guide and led all the committee's media relations efforts. She too traveled to New York and Washington for desk-side meetings with journalists.

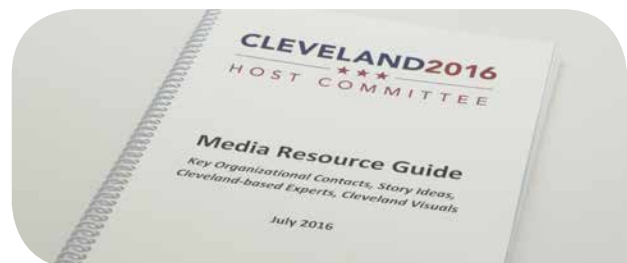
"This strategic approach helped make the hosting of the RNC a communications success for Cleveland and Northeast Ohio," she said. "Dix & Eaton was able to educate journalists on a wide range of topics supporting the region as a great place to live and visit, even as they supported a large number of clients. I know we will see the benefits of this approach for years to come."

Indeed, the long-term impacts of the strategic communications approach, not to mention the coverage, will be determined over the course of months and years. The RNC represented a rare opportunity for Cleveland. The proactive multi media relations strategy employed to support the city was equal to the opportunity and the challenge it presented.

Armed with accurate information about the region's successes as well as its remaining challenges, journalists are now better equipped to take measure of this industrial region and its brightening future.

The [Media Resource Guide](#) remains online. As do the [Why Cleveland](#) releases.

Perhaps more importantly, journalists have formed favorable impressions of Cleveland and established lasting relationships with sources who are ready to tell Northeast Ohio's multifaceted story.



**Host Committee's guide, including 70 pages of "Stories Worth Telling."**



# Lessons Learned

## PLANNING:

- Whether preparing for an ongoing campaign or an event, give yourself plenty of runway before taking off.
- First things first: Establish a baseline of coverage, and ask your target audiences what information they want or need.
- Know your primary goal. If you don't know where you are headed, you won't know how to get there.

## BIG THINKING

- Develop a strong strategy. Then expand it. You likely made it too small.
- Identify target communications platforms. Then expand it. You likely didn't think of them all.
- Remember, target audiences want content in quick and convenient servings. That includes journalists.

## COLLABORATION AND VISION

- Leading multi media relations strategies is like conducting an orchestra. Sometimes the music calls for more brass; other times woodwinds must lead the way.
- Using multiple platforms requires multiple areas of expertise. Collaborate with organizations and professionals proficient in a variety of communications areas.

## DIVERSE CONTENT IN PROPER PROPORTION

- The strategy must be multi-dimensional and multi-textured. Few stories are simple. The plans to communicate them should cover a variety of angles.
- Thought leadership. Straight data. Info-graphics. Video. Audio. All are valuable. None achieves the same goal. Produce those that are most efficient and compelling to convey information to the target audience.

## A FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO MULTIPLE PLATFORMS

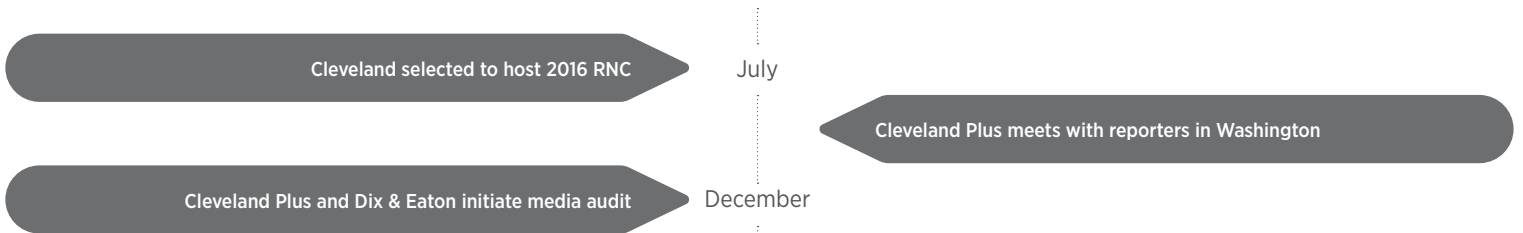
- Build relationships with journalists on multiple platforms: print, digital, broadcast, radio, social media.
- Track which platform is most effective in reaching its targets
- Adjust as needed.

## LEARN TO LET GO

- If you produce content that is going to be used, you can't expect to control it. Sometimes journalists or other targets will take your information and pursue it without your knowledge, or control. Sometimes, that is OK.

# Multi Media Relations Timeline

## 2014



## 2015



## 2016

