INSPIRING MINDS: CREATING AWARENESS FOR NEXT-GENERATION SUBORBITAL SPACEFLIGHT. G Griffin. Managing Director, Griffin Aerospace Communications, 3101 NASA Parkway, Suite L., Seabrook, TX, 77586, gwen@griffincommgroup.com.

Introduction: The opportunities provided by the unique microgravity environment of next-generation suborbital vehicles are limitless and have potential applications for industries ranging from pharmaceutical and medical equipment to environmental engineering and, of course, the emerging market for space tourism. Although the implications of suborbital spaceflight are well known within the tight-knit space community, educating and creating awareness with the general public is a challenge that has faced the space industry for decades. A well-planned strategic education and public outreach (EPO) program can yield increased awareness and support among the general public and key constituents—ultimately translating into new programs that provide funding opportunities for suborbital research.

There are key steps to developing a strategic EPO plan. Griffin Aerospace Communications takes the approach of “plan your work; work your plan,” which includes clearly defining the plan before taking the first steps of implementation. Using various space industry client examples, Gwen Griffin will provide a general outline and overview of successful EPO programs reaching multiple audiences with a variety of tactics that can be tailored for use within the next-generation suborbital spaceflight community.

Establish Key Goals and Objectives: While this seems like a simple task, this can arguably be the most important step in developing an EPO plan. Setting the goal provides a clear reference point to determine implementation tactics for such a program. The goal should be a guidepost allowing a company or organization to ask “will this achieve the goal?” when evaluating implementation and tactical opportunities.

Define the Audience: Depending on the company or organization, the audience could include fellow scientists, major funding providers, Congress, corporate decision makers, educators or students. Identifying the appropriate primary, secondary and tertiary target audiences allows the development of definitive strategies to target each audience specifically, ensuring that the message is received in the best medium.

Create the Message: The foundation of a well-defined, organized EPO plan is key message development. What information needs to be shared with the target audience(s) and how? For instance, much of the technical information and industry jargon that makes sense to the suborbital science community needs to be reworded and simplified for various external audiences.

Implementation: Once the goals, audience and messages are established, it is time to evaluate the opportunities available to push out the message utilizing the right tactics to begin creating strong awareness for the value and importance of next-generation suborbital science. With so many tactics available including traditional media relations, thought leadership campaigns, web/social media, advertising, industry events, white paper development, grassroots marketing and industry relations, it can be difficult to choose the best avenue to reach the audience. It is important to evaluate each option and again review the established goal to once again answer the question “will this achieve the goal?” If the answer is yes, then you must evaluate the opportunities at your disposal to create the ideal EPO mix.

Evaluation: What is success? With any successful EPO campaign, evaluation tactics must be considered to determine if the plan has been effective or if different strategies should be implemented or refined. Establishing ongoing monitoring and evaluation as part of the EPO program which allows you to revise tactics along the way is critical to the campaigns success.