



TENT

Communicating about your refugee efforts



What we will cover

- ▲ The importance of public communications around refugee issues
- ▲ Narratives that resonate with the public
- ▲ Communications tactics to amplify your work
- ▲ How companies have communicated about their refugee efforts



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We're seeing a more positive discourse around refugee issues



The current Administration's rhetoric and actions – including raising the refugee cap and starting to rebuild the resettlement infrastructure – have shifted the operating environment

The Afghan crisis mobilized the veteran community to stand behind Afghans who worked alongside the U.S. military and government

The Ukraine crisis has driven an unprecedented outpouring of support and has sensitized the general public to refugee issues

But public communications are not entirely without risk



There is a vocal minority of the population who is opposed to legal immigration in any form

Refugees are being conflated with migrants crossing the southern border (including ones with valid asylum claims). Even many moderates see southern border crossings as chaotic and "illegal"

There is huge value in businesses communicating about refugees

- According to Edelman's 2022 Trust Barometer, businesses (especially "my employer") are the most trusted institution by consumers, just ahead of NGOs, and well ahead of government and the media
- Consumers want business (& CEOs) to "do more" and "speak out more" on societal issues
- There is both an opportunity to help shift the narrative around refugees, normalizing businesses working on refugee inclusion...
- ... And an expectation from consumers that businesses will do the right thing

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Frame your work to support refugees around integrating them into their new societies

- Instead of using “us vs. them” dichotomies, frame your narrative around integration -- for example, by talking about how you’re trying to make sure that refugees already in the country can become productive members of their new society. *This framing resonates with conservative as well as progressive audiences*
- The most powerful counter to the “us vs them” narrative is an inclusive narrative that frames refugee policies and programs as creating opportunity for all



Explain that your efforts to support refugees don't come at the expense of other vulnerable groups

- If a commitment to support refugees is communicated in a vacuum it could lead to misunderstandings
- Communicate that jobs for refugees don't come at the expense of jobs for other people. Activities supporting refugees supplement your existing efforts to support disadvantaged communities

Example: A few years back, a company faced criticism for committing to hire refugees when it was mistakenly believed that it would come at the expense of its veterans' program. It rectified this error but could have instead clearly articulated its continued support of other vulnerable populations in the original communications.

Consider how to avoid politicization of U.S. Southern Border

- We welcome companies pushing back on the corrosive public discourse about the Southern Border – highlighting, for example, that many do obtain asylum status and make a rich contribution to their new communities
- Companies concerned about negative public sentiment about the U.S. southern border may wish to highlight certain facts about refugees, such as:
 - their experience in escaping war or persecution;
 - the fact that they arrived in the U.S. through government-organized processes; and
 - that they have work authorization



There is a place for bolder brand advocacy on refugee issues, but it can be more divisive

- Businesses speaking out to advocate for the rights of refugees can be incredibly powerful, but some topics are more divisive than others
- Issues relating to refugees that are already in the country legally and that have some business implications (e.g., passing the Afghan Adjustment Act) are more likely to be positively received than e.g. advocating for doubling resettlement targets

Example: Ben & Jerry's tweeted at the U.K.'s Home Secretary urging her to show more "humanity" to people arriving by boat to the U.K., saying that "people cannot be illegal". Ben & Jerry's received praise for speaking out on this issue – but also drew some criticism from the Government.

Put refugees at the heart of your storytelling

- Highlighting the stories of individual refugees you work with, and let refugees tell their stories in their own words
- If you can tell the story of one refugee, one job, or one opportunity at a time, it will help shape a positive refugee narrative over time and serve as a powerful way to showcase your company's impact



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Be mindful of how you represent refugees in your communications

While many refugees will have experienced difficult journeys, it's critical that in your communications subjects are portrayed positively and not as victims.

This will help to shift the narrative from one of refugees as helpless victims to one of refugees as empowered, productive contributors to their new communities.

Safeguarding refugees' safety must come first

While some refugees are eager to tell their stories, others will not be comfortable for fear of re-living trauma, or for fear of putting their families' lives at risk.

You should always be respectful of this.

- Be mindful when you are asking refugees to take part in public communications, and proactively ask if they are comfortable more than once. In some cultures, it's not appropriate to say "no" to a request from your employer
- Adopt a policy of "informed consent" – make sure the refugee is clear on the request by having them play it back to you. Use an interpreter if necessary
- Be very clear on what the ask is – for example, if their name/photo will be used on social
- Only identify the refugee by their first name or consider changing their name/ obscuring their face if they feel uncomfortable being identified at all

Try to include a refugee perspective in all communications on your refugee program

- Quotes in press releases explaining how your refugee program has impacted their lives
- Video testimonials
- Representation at internal (virtual or in-person) events, away days, company gatherings
- Consider training a couple of refugee spokespeople that are comfortable speaking to press or who can represent your company at external conferences and events



Create powerful audiovisual content to bring your story to life

Consider investing in images and video content to help bring your audience closer to refugees' realities.

Take part in Tent's own communications activities & campaigns.

- Watch [Hilton's](#), [Bloomberg's](#), and [Pfizer's](#) films featuring refugee employees
- Listen to Tent's [Refugees at Work](#) podcast which features the story of a refugee in their new host community.
- Watch Tent's World Refugee Day Films from [2020](#) and [2022](#)



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Companies will announce ambitious new commitments at U.S. Business Summit on Refugees on September 19



Hamdi Ulukaya and other prominent business leaders will co-host a high-profile Summit in NYC to showcase the business community's support for Afghans, Ukrainians, and other refugees

Participating companies will make measurable and specific commitments to hire, train, or otherwise support refugees in the U.S.

Collectively, these pledges will change the lives of thousands of refugees and send a powerful message about the contributions of refugees to the U.S. economy

There is power in communicating alongside other companies

- We're working towards a big-bang communications moment that draws attention to this issue and highlights the business community's leadership
- It can take some of the pressure off a standalone announcement
- There is strength in numbers! It will strengthen your message and mitigate the small risk of being singled out for criticism

Example: In December 2020, over 20 companies - working with Tent and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation - announced new commitments to mentor [LGBTQ refugees in North America](#). Read the article in [Fast Company here](#).

Get your key stakeholders on board

- Make sure you've communicated your efforts to key stakeholders internally before you announce commitments to refugees publicly
- Provide relevant senior stakeholders like the C-suite, department heads, board members, and investors with talking points to help them speak about your efforts in a unified way + encourage them to share the announcement on their social channels
- Make sure you highlight the business case as well as the moral imperative for making a commitment in support of refugees (*Tent can help*)
- Invite relevant internal stakeholders to watch the live-stream of our U.S Business Summit

Example: TD Bank launched an internal refugee task force involving different department heads within the company to flesh out its commitment to support refugees.

U.S. Business Summit: comms planning

- Land "curtain raiser" piece in Bloomberg BusinessWeek in early Sept
- Invite Tier 1 press (print, online and broadcast) to the event
- Issue press release (embargo lifts approx. 3pm on 9/19) announcing commitments, numbers of refugees we'll reach. Issues to business, immigration/policy, general interest, CSR, & UNGA press.
- Tent will coordinate press enquiries and field media requests to companies
- We'll provide a template press release including quote from Tent for companies to issue own announcements (please comply with embargo!)
- On-the-day social media push + company spotlights on Tent channels in days following
- Social media toolkit for companies to amplify announcement

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Get your employees on board

- Make sure to update your workforce just after announcing your commitment at the Summit!
- Consider having an announcement (intranet, email, short video) come from a C-suite sponsor to show that the initiative has senior buy-in
- Organize a lunch & learn or webinar to educate your employees about the refugee crisis & your commitment in response to it
- Consider including a refugee employee or other refugee voice testimonial to bring the story to life
- Tent can help you brainstorm creative ideas to bring this to life for employees!

Example: In June, to coincide with Pride, Tent helped Warby Parker celebrate their involvement in the LGBTQ refugee mentorship program through an internal virtual event featuring LGBTQ employees, allies, and refugee mentees, sharing their stories about what mentorship has done for them

Continue to find ways to tell your story

Consider other storytelling opportunities over the course of the calendar year. Some examples:

- **World Refugee Day** (June)
- **PRIDE** (June)
- **Ramadan, Orthodox Christmas/Easter**
- **Human Rights Day** (December)

Reach out to the Tent team if you're interested in participating in films, podcasts, social campaigns, & press opportunities on an ongoing basis!

Examples: On World Refugee Day 2022 **Google** asked three of its refugee employees to share their stories on the company's blog; **Airbnb** published progress update on its efforts to connect refugees to temporary housing; and **Pfizer's** CEO shared a post on his personal social media which provided an update Pfizer's refugee hiring efforts and highlighted the value they bring to the company.

Report back on successes and learnings

- On a yearly basis, Tent will provide opportunities to report back on the progress you've made on your commitment alongside other companies
- It'll also be an opportunity to share challenges and learnings, and show accountability and transparency

