



The *Think Out Loud* Brand

Developing the brand

The branding of *Think Out Loud* began before the show launched, with a lot of thought about the show's tagline ("the talk show that listens"), and a name (*Think Out Loud*) and logo would fit within OPB's overall branding.

OPB worked with Leopold Ketel & Partners, a marketing firm that had worked with us as branding consultants, to help find a name for the show, and to develop a logo that would fit into the station's overall brand.

Leopold Ketel's creative team talked to Executive Producer Eve Epstein about the show's mission and goals, about the importance of integrating the online and the on-air portions of the program, about show logo requirements, and about the overall goals of the CPB grant.

Their assignment was to:

- Come up with a name that sounded fresh, energetic, simple and provocative
- Find a name that suggests that this is THE spot where Oregonians are gathering to have respectful, enlightening conversations
- Find a name that suggests a sense of place, gathering, or collectiveness: you're invited to belong
- Find a name that captures the OPB brand as an organization, as opposed to merely a media company

Of the three names Leopold Ketel offered, **Think Out Loud** was the unanimous choice as a name that had the fresh, inviting and open sound we were aiming for. It is a colloquial way to describe "civil discourse" without sounding too formal and it plays well off of OPB's overall "Think" brand.

As part of their work on branding, Leopold Ketel also developed a logo that brands the site and a portable vertical banner that we use for internal and external events. The banner has been an easy way to extend the program's visual identity—always a challenge for a radio show!

Marketing the Launch

We have used a variety of standard marketing practices in connection with *Think Out Loud*. We have professionally produced publicity photos of individuals and the staff as a group on file for use in press releases, development department materials and the station's member guide as well as online.

We keep a supply of T-shirts and mugs with the program logo on hand as thank you gifts for event attendees and guests who appear on *Think Out Loud*. The mugs have also been used as a pledge premium in limited numbers.

The program launch offered the first opportunity to develop a marketing strategy. Shortly before the launch, OPB announced the hiring of the staff and the show launch date with a traditional media campaign.

The first program was broadcast from OPB in front of a live studio audience. Our Marketing and Development departments created and sent out information about the show and the show hosts as part of an invitation to participate in the live audience. Invitations were sent to OPB members, major donors, members of the press and, through on-air and online call-outs, to members of the general public. As a result, the launch received considerable press attention.

The month following the launch, *Think Out Loud* was the cover story for OPB's member guide, which is sent to the station's more than 100,000 members. In addition to a cover photo with the entire *Think Out Loud* team, the member guide included an article by Executive Producer Eve Epstein about the program, a Q&A with hosts Emily Harris and David Miller, and a note about the online site.

Ongoing promotion

From the start, *Think Out Loud* has been promoted on OPB Radio with a full OES plan (a minimum of 10 mentions per day). Host Emily Harris records a promo each day for the following day's show.

In addition, Harris has a brief, live, unscripted conversation at 8:50 a.m. (ten minutes before the program begins) with our local *Morning Edition* host, talking about the subject of that day's *Think Out Loud*. This is designed to maximize *Think Out Loud*'s exposure to listeners who are most likely to hang on to hear the show—those listening to the last few minutes of *Morning Edition*.

Online, *Think Out Loud* is promoted in a variety of places on OPB's website. From midnight until the show airs at 9 a.m., it is promoted on OPB's home page, with a link to the *Think Out Loud* home page. There is also a *Think Out Loud* promotion on OPB Radio's landing page at opb.org where daily show information is highlighted 4 p.m. until the 9 p.m. re-broadcast.

A few months after *Think Out Loud* launched, our marketing department began working on a way to promote *Think Out Loud* to our television audience (we are a joint licensee). They determined that *The Newshour with Jim Lehrer* had the audience with the highest affinity for *Think Out Loud*. They developed a simple visual spot, using *Think Out Loud*'s logo. Every day, host Emily Harris records a ten-second description of the following day's show topic which is used as VO for the TV promo. That promo airs on OPB TV adjacent to *The Newshour*.

Think Out Loud show topics are also regularly promoted in OPB's weekly online newsletter.

Marketing: Phase Two

Using survey data that showed some of OPB's core audience hadn't sampled the show, and that some core audience members had doubts about a "talk radio"-style format, we designed a strategy to reach members with the message that *Think Out Loud* is consistent with their overall public radio listening experience. This resulted in a "second wave" of marketing aimed directly at our core demographic. The research indicated that people who connected with the show online were fans, and could be reached through that medium, but that some of our other listeners would need to be reached in a more traditional way.

Executive Producer Eve Epstein interviewed two long-time listeners who fit the "traditional member" profile, and who were big fans of the program. She quoted them extensively in an article that appeared in the monthly member guide. These testimonials made the case for *Think Out Loud* in a way that would invite other traditional audience members to try the show.

We are looking at a range of marketing options to follow up on this initial step, including radio and TV promotion aimed at the core audience, talking about the show's overall qualities (as opposed to just promoting the next day's show topic).

Our online strategy is different, as research indicates the online audience responds well to the opportunities to participate in the program. We are planning online media buys to promote the program to a wider online audience. *Think Out Loud* also hired a short-term consultant in to do intensive online outreach and community building for a limited period. This effort boosted page views by 25 percent (See *Think Out Loud* Online Outreach Overview).