

MDB, Inc.

APCO INTERNATIONAL

Managing Change, Strengthening Identity and Designing a Response to Homeland Security Challenges



CHALLENGE

With over 15,000 members around the world, APCO International is the largest and oldest non-profit organization dedicated to the enhancement of public safety communications. Following the events of September 11, 2001, public awareness surrounding the urgent need for improved public safety communications was at an all time high. APCO International recognized the need to increase its visibility in Washington in order to adequately represent the needs and concerns of its membership. Increased media and policy attention on the delayed implementation of Enhanced 911, or E-911, accentuated APCO's responsibility as a leader in the public safety communications community.

MDB, Inc. was approached in early 2002 to assist APCO International in its efforts to raise the organization's visibility in Washington, to ensure the inclusion of public safety communications in the broader Homeland security dialogue, to increase the size and involvement of its membership, and to help create and publicize a public safety foundation dedicated to support and expedite the implementation of E-911 throughout the United States.

RESPONSE

MDB understood that the challenges and opportunities facing APCO were complex, that any strategic plan would need to be equally complex, and that time was of the essence. It was imperative that critical audiences, including the general public, be informed and educated on the complex issues surrounded security improvements. Thus, a multi-faceted education, outreach, advertising and foundation marketing effort was critical. If APCO, its members, and local communities were to benefit from security improvements supported by the association, action would have to begin immediately.



While APCO International represents diverse associations, it had limited interactions with critical policy and decision makers. To address this concern, APCO realized an immediate need to re-evaluate its governance and operational structure. This reevaluation would create an opportunity for APCO to enhance its capacity so that it may launch specific efforts needed to effect change and influence federal, state, and local policymakers. MDB staff became an integral member of APCO's strategic planning committee as the third-party expert with specific obligations to evaluate, collect and analyze organizational management and planning data. The resulting outcome of this effort was a five-year strategic plan.

MDB designed a marketing, communications, and education/outreach plan that integrated all of APCO's programmatic work into one cohesive message and story, which was disseminated to a wide audience base.

A significant amount of MDB's efforts with APCO focused on the creation of a non-profit arm of the Association, the Public Safety Foundation of America, created to offer grants to communities who needed additional resources to expand their public safety communications infrastructure.

RESULTS

In 2003, public safety communication officials were legislatively recognized as key members of the "first response" community and therefore able to access much needed resources to improve and expand infrastructures. MDB helped APCO International develop a lean, responsive organization, with a vision for the future, which will ensure its membership continues to offer state-of-the-art public safety services to its local communities. With the help of MDB staff, a complex and integrated strategy has been developed that will guide the organization for several years.



Public Safety Communications is now part of the homeland security dialogue at the federal, state and local levels. Leaders from APCO are invited to testify before Congress on the many public safety communications issues being addressed nation-wide. Further, the Foundation has successfully completed three grant cycles and awarded millions of dollars to local communities. Membership in the organization increased by nearly fifteen percent over the several months following the launch of the campaign designed by MDB, a marked improvement over the lag in numbers experienced in past years. Efforts continue to expedite the implementation of E-911 and address the needs of its membership within the context of homeland security needs.



MDB, Inc.

1050 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 1067 Washington, DC 20036
 t: 202.331.0060 f: 202.331.0044

100 Capitola Drive, Suite 308 Durham, NC 27713
 t: 919.794.4700 f: 919.287.2901