



Planning Before You Communicate

Overview

1. Strategic communications is based on a simple premise: **Deliver the right message, in the right place, at the right time, to the intended target audience.**
2. The **right message** is tailored for the target audience(s) to speak directly to individuals or groups with a clear call-to-action.
3. The **right place** is a medium or location where the message can be clearly seen, heard, read, and shared by the target audience.
4. The **right time** is an intersection, or frequency of intersections, of the message and the target audience throughout a given period. Ideally this occurs at points when the call-to-action can be followed.
5. The **right audience** may be an individual or group.

What is Required

1. Team Kickoff Meeting - Get input from all team members and encourage feedback and involvement in developing and executing the plan.
2. Team Leader - One person to collect contributions and feedback from the team, conduct focused discussions, and lead the decision making process (as necessary) to ensure that messages are correctly targeted to reach the audience in the right place at the right time.
3. Continuous Improvement - Revisit the plan regularly and adapt/refine to improve along the way. Direct more efforts towards what is effective and generating the desired action.
4. Teamwork - Strategic communications work best when informed experts are in control. Design the plan to have content experts (those who know the subject matter best) working alongside communications experts.
5. Internal (General) Communication - Regular status updates or announcement of changes (policy revisions, etc.). Indicate how any changes may affect ongoing activities, campaigns, or responses.

Benefits

1. Strategic communications coordinates team activities to keep all individuals and groups on the same page with consistent messaging and timing.
2. By considering objectives and the target audience at the beginning of the project, it refines and prioritizes the focus to maximize outcomes.
3. For the target audience, it ensures they will find a consistent message across all platforms, encouraging action and producing results.
4. Advanced planning and strategy creates opportunities to react and respond to current events, crises, and changes in direction if needed. These actions should be taken within the context of the goals and strategies set in this exercise.

Key Points

1. Keep it Simple - If you or someone on the team does not clearly understand, your audience will not either.
2. Know your Objectives - Each strategic communications activity should align directly with a main objective. If the activity does not, make a decision as to whether it is still worth doing and why.
3. Know your Audience - What tactics will be most helpful in reaching them with your messages? Where do they spend their time? How do they get their information?
4. Be Direct - If you want action from your audience, clearly ask them for it within a given timeframe. Do not wait or hope that they will get around to it later.

Have Questions?

1. Contact Russell Rubin, Director of Strategic Communications at the Public Health Foundation at rrubin@phf.org.
2. Contact Jack Moran, Senior Quality Advisor at the Public Health Foundation at jmoran@phf.org.

Communications Tactics

What communications vehicles do you have within your organization? How else can you spread the word?

1. Website Content: What website content will we produce? Why?

Consider: What web pages will need to be developed? What is the call-to-action for these pages? Reserve an easy to remember domain name or URL for pages appearing in print.

2. Email Newsletters: Which email newsletters will we use to publicize this?

Consider: Which newsletters does the audience subscribe to?

3. Email: Who is on the distribution list?

Consider: Staff, partners, media, stakeholders, community leaders, listservs

4. Social Media: What are the messaging themes and objectives?

Consider: Have you claimed a profile name on each social network for the organization? What messages are most sharable? Where will we direct people for more information?

5. Blog: Who can blog about this topic for us and/or our partners?

Consider: What blogs cover this topic and which leaders care most about this topic?

6. Events: Where can we find the target audience when we want to reach them?

Consider: Number of attendees, presentation, paper, poster opportunities, Board of Health meetings, community events, immunization fairs, health fairs, career fairs, etc.

7. Direct Mail: How can we target our message to be most effective?

Consider: By zip code, area code, neighborhood, school district, employer, etc.

8. Newspaper: Where in the local newspaper would we look to find our information?

Consider: Provide the newspaper with matte articles and public service announcements

9. Media: What opportunities are coming up to invite out or visit local media?

Consider: Provide the media outlets with public service announcements and offer interviews for public affairs shows

10. Photos: What photo opportunities do we have at upcoming events?

Consider: Do we have a uniform or identifying mechanism for the workforce? How will our audience identify the staff in each photo? Do we have permission to take photographs?

11. Elevator Speech: When someone asks what we are doing, have a message that uses the 27-9-3 rule.

Consider: No more than 27 words, 3 major points and you can deliver it in 9 seconds.

Internal	External	Start Date	End Date

Collecting and Measuring Data

1. Measures: What are our metrics?

Consider: What do we need to achieve to be successful? Select indicators and set goals and targets.

What is the baseline from which we need to improve?

2. How will we measure it?

Consider: Surveys, pre/post tests, interviews, etc.

3. What type of data do we need to collect?

Consider: Qualitative or quantitative

4. How much data do we need to collect?

Consider: Appropriate sample size required.

5. When will we collect the data?

Consider: When the process is operating, sampling at different times, etc.

6. Where will we collect the data?

Consider: Where the service is rendered, after the service is rendered, etc.

7. Who will collect the data?

Consider: Team members, those doing the service, outside help, etc.

8. How will we train them to collect the data?

Consider: Classroom, on the job, while they do it, etc.

9. Who will analyze the data and when?

Consider: Team members, external resource, etc.

10. How will we summarize the data?

Consider: Descriptive statistics, charts, graphs, tables, etc.

Lessons Learned and Key Observations

1. What did we learn from the analysis of the data?

Consider: Compare the new data to the baseline data to determine whether an improvement was achieved. What conclusions can we draw?

2. Were any problems encountered?

Consider: Implementation of the trial, data collection, etc.

3. Were any obstacles encountered?

Consider: Human, spatial, and timing issues

4. What lessons were learned?

Consider: Knowledge gained, surprising results, and unintended consequences

5. What is our improvement plan based on the data?

Consider: What did not meet the project goals? How can we refine our plan?