



How to make your communications plan

A carefully prepared communications plan can contribute to the success of your project and goals. Where people are affected and concerned, you need to engage them. What you write, say, visualize, give feedback on, chat about can help reach your goals, if you carefully plan and analyze your communications strategy. This is how you can outline your plan.

Background and purpose

Describe briefly the background and reason for the communications activity you are planning. What goals do you want to support through communication?

Analysis

Make a short analysis of the present situation. What should be communicated? Where do we stand today? Challenges and opportunities? Are there other processes to take into account? What restrictions should you consider? What issues cannot be solved through communication? Consider the resources you have access to, so that your plan will be realistic and not over-ambitious.

Target groups

Who do you want to reach? Can you prioritize? What are their needs, previous knowledge and opinion about you and your subject? Are your target groups within your organization or outside, or both?

To succeed with your communication, you need to relate to the people you are addressing. What are their interests, knowledge and engagement? What habits do they have when it comes to receiving information, what networks do they have and what people do they talk to? Successful communication depends on how well you know your target groups.

Message

What do you want your audience to know? Why, how and who is the spokesperson? You may have several different target groups, who require an adjustment of the message in tone, expression and selection of words. Try to focus on the things that are most important to your audience, so they will perceive you as relevant and trustworthy. Try to answer the question: "What's in it for me?" – give reasons why they should put time and effort in interacting with you.

Main message: What is the most important thing you want to express? What is relevant to all your target groups?

Supportive message and arguments: What supporting messages are there? Do you need to adjust your message according to the different target groups? Create some questions and answers, try to anticipate what questions might arise and write down answers before they appear.

Goals

What effect are you aiming for when communicating? Set out concrete, tangible goals so that you can measure the impact afterwards. Is it enough that your audiences gain knowledge or do you want them to be more engaged and perhaps change a method of working? The effects that you aim for will determine what channels to use when communicating.

Knowledge

What do you want your target groups, your audiences, to know? Use a scale from “be aware of” to “understand”.

Attitude

What do you want them to feel? What should their opinion be? “Tolerate” or “be engaged”?

Action

If you want action, you need to motivate, for instance, on a scale from “I might just try that” to “fight for”, or from “I’ll try it just this once” to “I’ll always do it that way from now on.”

Channels

Depending on your goals, you choose in what way you will communicate. Sometimes, it is enough to simply inform – a one-way process to tell people about something or to explain something. An article on the website can be sufficient, or an e-mail. To create understanding, engagement or to change behavior, you need to communicate. Establish a dialogue and meetings.

Activities

Put down what it is you want to communicate, your message, when, to whom, through what channel and who is responsible. Depending on the number of target groups and the project’s complexity, this plan can be simple or more elaborate. You may have to adjust it as you go along.

<i>What</i>	<i>Target group</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Channel</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>	<i>Notes to think about</i>

Spokesperson

Who is the right spokesperson to address the different target groups and in different situations? Always one and the same? Inside the organization and to audiences outside? Decide who will be the spokesperson and agree on what messages should be put forward.

Questions and answers

Sometimes it can be helpful to anticipate the questions that will arise and to formulate answers. Put yourself in the shoes of the various groups you communicate with and try to imagine what questions they might have. What will journalists ask? Students? Colleagues?

Evaluation

Measure the effect and impact of your communication activities. Conduct simple surveys or

check with your staff and colleagues as you go along, so you can adjust your plan if necessary. At the end of your project, you can make a more systematic evaluation

Budget

What budget does your communications plan require? Think both about money, materials, time and resources, i.e. competence and access to a website for instance. If the project is externally funded, you may have to account for time spent on communication.

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