

Communications planning workshop

Volunteer Wellington

Susie Hall, 24 March 2017



Kia ora koutou . . .

Welcome to our interactive communications planning workshop.

We're going to learn and discuss how to get people's time, attention and deliver results.

Good communication delivers what you want.

It needs upfront thinking, planning and care in the delivery.

Workshop outline

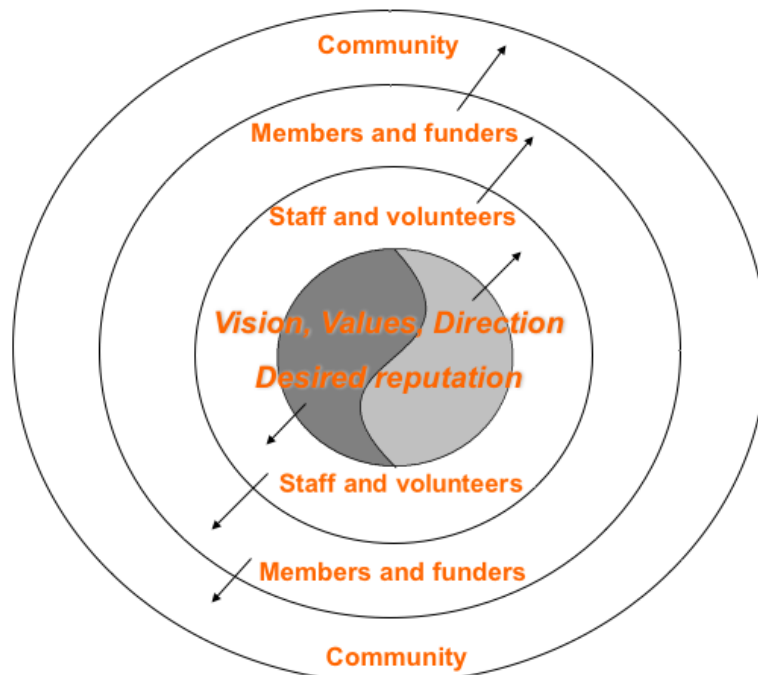
- Communications planning overview
- Small group exercise and report back
- Some communications tips



A good communications plan will help you - no matter what your goal:

- promoting a cause or event
- building profile
- getting others to deliver for you
- increasing your membership or funding or
- growing your volunteer force.

Inside out communications



I want to frame our comms efforts.

You need to **build people's trust and confidence** in you. This isn't quick work but it certainly is very important mahi.

You need to **be visible and tangible**. People need to experience you.

We want people – your clients, communities, funders, volunteers, members and boards – to see and understand how you're making the difference!

My top tips for building your brand are:

- **Put your people first:** involve your most important stakeholders in your direction, performance and communications – make them your comms champions!
- **Inside out:** support your people and stakeholders to represent you and communicate your stories
- **Engage key influencers:** strengthen relationships with key stakeholders; use the media and social media

Communications planning

- Be clear of your business purpose:
 - Enable your business plan
 - Promote good attendance at an event
 - Get positive publicity
 - Increase membership
 - Increase funding
 - Grow your volunteer network
 - Change how you operate



Where are you going and what do you want - '**start with the end in mind**' (Stephen Covey)

What do you want to achieve? This can range from:

- **Building trust and confidence** in your organisation - board, members, funders, your community and networks
- Getting people along to your conference or AGM
- Increasing your funding
- Improving client services and managing community expectations

The nature of **your business goal will shape your communications** approach, tactics and channels

As we run through the rest of this presentation I'm going to use examples to illustrate my points

Communications objectives

- Link to project purpose or organisational goal
- What do you want people to know, think, feel and do as a result of your communications?
- Define SMART objectives that are :
 - S pecific
 - M easurable
 - A ttainable / realistic
 - R elevant
 - T imebound



Decide how your business purpose relates to communications, for example do you want **more funding?**

- Increase collection and comms about qualitative and quantitative results
- Use 20% more success stories in your channels next year
- Report quarterly on your performance stats or in existing comms
- Set KPI for frontline success stories - part of monthly report
- Create a series of tweets on the numbers of people benefiting, eg people helped by a pro bono lawyer

Identify WHO can affect your goal, and HOW, for example to **create new services or events** to empower youth to be active in your suburb or city you could:

- Identify key stakeholders and establish relationships
- Include potential community partners who may give you reach
- Build a calendar of existing and relevant community and youth events
- Produce approved comms materials by when
- Set targets for introducing yourself at events, meetings, briefings

Context – background, environment

- Brief summary of project, challenges, previous communications
- External environment (eg media, issues, advocacy or activities by others)
 - What's going on?
 - How does it impact your project?



Your communications objectives should fall out of your business purpose or strategic goals:

- They'll keep you focused, help justify your communications priorities, staff time and budget, reinforce communications as a management function - and over time earn you a seat at the table
- They'll also help build your whole team as you work toward the same things – we want everyone to have a comms role!

This part helps set the scene and gives context for investing in your comms:

- *Internally* - where you are in relation to your business purpose, comms objectives, challenges
- For example, internal challenges might be volunteers aren't inducted as comms champions or you need a better database
- *Externally* – what's the environment you'll be communicating in, are others there, what's going on and how does it impact your comms
- For example, external challenges could be NGO competition for donor attention and dollars, or news about homelessness and poverty desensitising people

Stakeholders and audiences

- Who are your audiences and stakeholders?
 - Stakeholders are those you want to work with
 - Audiences are those you want to communicate with so they know about your work
- Why do you need to communicate with them?
 - Who do you want to know?
 - Who could impact your success?
- Be specific



Stakeholders - get 'up close and personal':

- Experiential, personal **engagement** tactics work best, for example coffee dates, more formal briefings, conferences or other events
- Build their trust and confidence so they want to work with you
- Share your direction and progress with them regularly

Audiences - communicate regularly so they **experience** you:

- So they know who you are and what you do
- For example, 'touch' them regularly with social media, even if they don't read a lot of your content

You might need to break your groups down:

- For example, if the public is too big, think sub groups - young people or people in a particular place or suburb

Communications approach

- How will you reach your audiences and stakeholders?
 - Summarise what approach you'll take
- Why will you take this communications approach?
 - Are there barriers, risks or issues?



For example, a lower-cost comms plan to support your business ops might be simply focused on **'high touch, high tech'**:

- Your board agreeing and allocating your **'top 10' stakeholders** AND
- a **quarterly e-newsletter** with direction and results-focused success stories
- supplemented with **responsive social media**

Internal changes could mean a **'no surprises' and engaging approach** with owners, funders, lots of face-to-face with staff and volunteers and low key external communications

A joint initiative with sponsors and partners may need a **shared plan and key messages, aiming for consistent comms.**

With challenging social issues will you talk robustly to get attention or frame problems in a positive, attractive way to avoid stigmatising people?

Put your black hat on – what are the comms challenges and risks you'll face?

Key messages

- Short, simple and audience focussed
- May need different messages for different audiences or stakeholders
- Focus on goals or outcomes, not the process
- How are you making the difference?
- What, when, why, who, where and how?
- What's your call to action?



Focused on your identified stakeholders and audiences – **walk a mile in their shoes and get in their heads . . .**

Use language they'll understand and take into account their existing knowledge.

You may develop different sets of messages for various audiences, tailored to their interests. Or messages that change over time.

Focus on goals and results – not the process.

Use the what, when, why, who, where and how questions to make sure you've included the basic information in your messages.

And often you'll want a call to action – **what do you want people to do after they hear your messages?**

While we're on the topic of key messages, I'm going to remind you about **keeping it simple**

Write clearly, concisely, in plain English

- Long complicated sentences and bureaucratic words baffle – even bureaucrats



- Avoid jargon and bureaucracy speak
- Keep it simple and to the point
- Avoid clichés and fancy phrases
- Avoid technical language
- Tailor language for audience
- Use short sentences and paragraphs
- Keep your message clear, plain and reader-friendly
 - Sentences that are less than 25 words
 - Web sentences that are 12 words or less

KISS communications

Good communications is simple:

- Simple, clear messages in plain English
- Repeated consistently by a variety of trusted sources
 - use metaphors, stories to illustrate and amplify
- Use many different forums to spread the word



Action plan

Tool, channel, action	Audience	Who	When	Budget
PowerPoint, email and poster				
Book meetings, venues etc				
Media release				
Articles, factsheets				

- Think about tools and channels:
 - Tools contain your messages
 - Channels reach your audiences
- Who will do what, when?
- How much will it cost?



This is where the rubber hits the road. Who'll be your spokesperson, draft the comms and approve it?

A table shows all the people with roles, not just the comms and admin people – if you have them.

Yes the comms or admin people have key roles where NGOs have them, but do name the leaders who will be visible, send the email or lead the meeting.

Examples of tools include: media releases, factsheets, articles, brochures, question and answer sheets, posters, presentations, briefings, memos, a tweet or post

Examples of channels are: news media, internet, twitter, facebook, conferences, workshops

Choose cost-effective channels that **reach your audiences and stakeholders – you need to be where they are!**

Measuring success

- Assess against your SMART objectives
- How will you know you're successful?
 - Formal research, focus groups, surveys
 - Team debrief
 - Feedback
 - Website visits, retweets
 - Media clips, coverage
- What's working?
- Adapt, evolve, keep learning



The best way to get good at communications is to honestly assess how well you've delivered your objectives.

To live and to learn.

Being specific at the start about the results you want will help a lot.

This can be as simple as counting people at events and using feedback forms or survey monkey.

Some of you will use relatively sophisticated market research, depending on your budgets.

A good rule of thumb is to use 10% of your annual communications budget on measuring success. It's worth it.

If you can show your communications deliver for the business your budgets may grow.



www.communitycomms.org.nz
comms@communitycomms.org.nz

See <https://communitycomms.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Comms-plan-template.pdf> for a template comms plan.