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COMMUNICATION STRATEGY TEMPLATE

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY TEMPLATE

Key Note

This template can be used to develop a Programme/Project or an institution's communications strategy. Whether you communicate to external or internal audiences or both, this will help ensure that all key elements of a communications strategy are captured.

1. Current Situation/Background

Before you map out where you want your communications strategy to take you, you need to find out where you are now.

What has been accomplished so far from a communications point of view? How effective have previous communications been? You need to evaluate the past communication to influence what you are building or upgrading.

2. Overall Institution/Programme/Project Objectives

This communications strategy must support your institution or specific Programme/Project objectives. Use this section to list your key Institution Programme/Project targets.

3. Communications Objectives

In this segment, list your external and/or internal communications objectives. What do you hope to achieve as a result of your communications activities? How can communications activities help you achieve the objectives you've listed?

Clear, specific, and measurable objectives are key to the success of any communications strategy. When setting these objectives, whether your communications will be external (i.e. targeted at voters, government and policymakers) or internal (institution's network/consultants/partners), or both, you should:

- Be realistic within the timeframe, budget and resources
- Ensure the objectives are measurable

The following are examples of communications objectives:

- Build awareness of a political party to potential voters groups across the country.
- Secure the commitment of a defined group of stakeholders to the project aims.
- Influence specific policies or policymakers around key aspects.

4. Target Audience

Who do you want to get your message across to? Be as specific as possible:

- Who will best help you achieve your goals?
- What demographic groups are you trying to reach?
- What do you know about the best ways to reach them?

Key aspects to address concerning your audience include:

- Current behaviour and trends
- Level of awareness
- Level of knowledge
- Preferred methods for receiving information
- Motivations/barriers to hearing and believing/accepting the information.

The more refined the target audience description, the more precise and effective your communication will be. Broad descriptions such as the "general public" are less likely to lead to a successful communications campaign than a tightly defined target. The more thoroughly you understand your target audience(s), the higher the probability of communications success.

Primary Target Audience – These are the key persons/groups you communicate to directly. You can have more than one primary target audience. *For example the Unregistered Voters between 18-20 years.*

Secondary Target Audience – Less important people who you wish to receive the communications campaign messages, people who will also benefit from hearing the messages or people who influence your target audience now or in the future.

If you're targeting an internal audience like the organization's network, which individuals, and departments do you need to reach within the organization?

5. Key Message per Target Audience

Whether your target audience is external or internal, you need to fill in the following information about them

- What is it that you want to change?
- What do you want the target audience to know?
- What do you want them to feel - what perception do you want to create?
- What do you want them to do - what action do you want as a result?

The responses to this will vary but could be:

- Do you want to change their attitude towards the party of the institution?
- Do you want them to donate funds?
- Do you want them to be motivated to take action or make a decision?
- Do you want them to join the party membership?

6. Communications Mix

How do you want to get the message across? Whether you're preparing a 12-, 24- or 36-month communications plan, what tools will you need to use during this timeframe? Your choice will depend on what you want to achieve, the level and type of message you want to communicate, and the profile of your audience.

External Communications Mix

- **Press**
    - Press release
    - Radio
    - Opinion editorial
    - Features
    - Features advisories
- **Online**
    - Social Media
    - Party Programmes, organization homepage, etc.
    - Multimedia: Screensavers, online games, photo galleries, e-cards etc.
    - What's the new e-mail newsletter
- **TV**
    - News and features, Interviews or advert clips

- Long-format programmes and online television options
- **Advertising**
    - Print
    - Radio
    - Television
- **Print**
    - Brochures
    - Posters
    - Letters
    - Leaflets
    - Scientific report
- **Public Relations**
    - Event/Stunt
    - Endorsements
    - Telephone calls
    - Conferences

Internal Communications Mix

- Conference calls
- Face-to-face meetings

7. Promotion

Once you've decided what your communications mix will be, you need to determine how you will promote the various components. In other words, how will you promote your "Product/message".

Promotion should be done on two levels. Internally (the organization's network and staff need to be aware of what you are doing) and externally.

For example, if you need to develop a website to meet your communications objectives, how do you intend on promoting the site throughout the organisation's network? What is your plan to drive external traffic to the site?

8. Budget

Where possible, list the following:

- The amount of money available now
- The amount of money available in the future
- The amount of money needed
- What the organization can do to raise funds (Also find in Fund Raising Strategy)

9. Timeline

Will you need to communicate over the next 12, 24 or 36 months? List the key dates, what you need and when. Describe each key event or activity that will need communication (e.g. launch of Party Manifesto, forum, conference, etc.). Make sure you answer the 5Ws + H

- What
- Why
- Where
- When
- Who
- How

- Target Audience
- Objective
- Key Message(s)
- Media Strategy
- Tools and Materials

Under this section, you can also attempt to identify, or at least anticipate, any communications opportunities that may emerge from the actions of others working in the region, e.g., events such as partner or other agency media events, legislation processes, or expected government announcements that are not controlled by the organization. Describe those opportunities here.

10. Being on Brand

How are you going to ensure that your communications (external and internal) will be on brand? Presenting our brand correctly is crucial.

This means being consistent with our logo, typefaces, slogan, colours, and "on-brand" with our key messages and the way we use words and images on all applications. All this will combine to communicate the sort of organization we are – active, passionate, solutions-oriented. When communicating with your audience follow this simple checklist and ask yourself:

- Is my message **passionate**? Does it show my enthusiasm?
- Is it **optimistic**? Is it positive and forward-looking?
- Is it **inspirational**? Will it move someone to take action?

- Does it **challenge**? Does it confront the issues?
- Is it **credible**? Will people believe me?
- Is it **accountable**? Does it demonstrate our honesty and trustworthiness?
- Is it **persevering**? Does it prove our commitment?
- Is it **delivering results**? Does it show what we have achieved?

Keep in mind that your message does not need to include all of the above. In other words, you don't need to reflect every single brand value in your message.

11. Evaluating Success

How will you know if you have succeeded and met your objectives? How are you going to evaluate your success, and what performance indicators and evaluating measures will you use?

It's important to assess your strategy/project so that any changes, if necessary, can be made when engaging in a similar strategy/project in the future.

External

- Have you achieved your objectives (i.e., raise funds, create awareness...etc)?
- Did you reach the right audience?
- Did you use the right tools?
- Were decisions taken as a result?
- Did you come in on budget? If you didn't, why not?

Internal

- Did you reach the right people within the organization?
- Did they understand what the message was - did they do what had to be done?
- Did you use the right tools?