

# Five Components Of A Successful Strategic Communications Plan



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Communication is a critical part of any organization's success. Once, I was working closely with the senior leadership to create an email that addressed late deliveries. I remember that when we first started, there were so many ideas swirling in our heads about how to approach this project and what tone of voice would be best for our company. I wished I had someone with a communications strategy plan who could tell me the "best" way to approach this project in order to be successful.

I started reading and researching, looking for what I felt was a good strategy to communicate with our target audience. Luckily, after some research and conversations with others who had more experience than myself on the topic at hand, what finally developed was a communications strategy plan that we used over and over again for all of our marketing and communication efforts.

## What Is A Communications Strategy Plan?

A communications strategy is a plan for communicating with your target audience. It includes who you are talking to, why you are talking to them, how and when you will talk to them, what form of communication the content should take and what channels you should use to share it.

### 1. What Is The Purpose Of Your Communications Plan?

A clear purpose helps keep everyone on board. Make sure the right people hear your message when they are ready and in a way that you want them to hear it. Your communication objectives should be to answer these questions: Who do I need to reach? Why do I need to reach them? What will my communications say? How will I deliver this message at the time that will have the best impact on my audience (and for me)? And what channels am I using or can I use for delivery?

## **2. Who Are You Communicating With (Or Who Is Your Target Audience) And What Message Do They Need To Hear?**

Target audiences can vary from one time to another and may include your customers, employees or the media. Define who needs to hear what is happening in your organization. Every communications plan is different, but they should never be one-size-fits-all. It's a good idea to create an audience map that identifies key audiences and the messages they need to hear about your organization or cause in order for them to take action.

## **3. How Will This Message Be Communicated?**

Your communications strategy provides the framework for the company's outreach activities, including what needs to get out there through communication channels like social media, email marketing, blog posts, video content on YouTube or Vimeo and so on. In my experience, the more specific you are with your messaging (and visuals) — even if it seems repetitive — the better your chances of getting people engaged and taking action are.

## **4. When Should This Communication Happen — Right Now Or Later On?**

Organizations have to use their communications wisely and strategically in order to be successful with them. But the importance of timing is also important for communicating effectively. Your communications strategy should specify when the message should be communicated, including whether that's right now or later on. Your communications team should take these considerations into account as they develop your messaging and timing plan. In addition, I recommend developing two equally effective strategies: one for "now" and another that can be deployed in anticipation of events that might happen later down the road. A crisis communication plan helps cushion against unexpected turns of events, no matter what happens.

## **5. Who Will Be Responsible For The Communication?**

Communications professionals should be the ones responsible for communicating with external audiences, and they should do so often during a crisis. However, human resources departments may also need to communicate internally about any changes that may affect employees. Define key messages, and then decide who will deliver them. Define the audience and focus on what they need to know about this change. Be sure to provide information in a

timely way, but also keep the message concise so that employees can digest it easily.

### **Bottom Line**

A strategic communications plan can help you communicate your message to the right people at the most opportune time. By considering these five components, you can put together a solid strategy that could drive more success for your business and bring about your desired results in less time.