

Strategic Communications in a Nutshell

Strategic communications involves four *core competencies*: analysis (research), planning (deciding actions to be taken), communication (effective implementation), and evaluation (assessment of results). These core competencies are applied in the various parts of a written program or campaign proposal as outlined below. The organization or structure of a proposal will vary, but the same basic questions must be addressed. Updated February 2010.

PROGRAMS/CAMPAIGNS OVERVIEW

Core Competencies

Program/Campaign Plan Elements

Analysis/Research

Developing an understanding of the problem or opportunity through knowledge about

- Organization
- Opinions of publics
- Opportunities to communicate

1. Problem Statement and Situation Analysis

Planning

Distilling research to decide on most effective approach

- Creative Process
- Recommendations based on
 - . Goals, needs, objectives
 - . Organization culture
 - . Time
 - . Budget
 - . Communication Practices
 - . Ethics
 - . Law
 - . External Developments
- Culminates in strategy: "What you want to say to whom through what medium"
- Deliverable: A written proposal for client approval

2. Organizational goals (desired outcomes, consistent with mission, plans)
3. Communication Objectives (changes in awareness, attitudes, actions to achieve business goals -- Follows SMART formula: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-framed)
4. Action Strategies (policy changes, facilities or systems, additional research, or other prerequisites for effective implementation)
5. Communication Strategy
 - Audience/Public (Segmented based on stakeholder role, demographics, geography, psychographics, and/or behavior--including knowledge on involvement. Prioritized based on importance (primary v. secondary), timing (immediate v. later), influence (role as as intermediary to reach target audience), accessibility, other factors.
 - Themes/messages. Key messages based on benefits, newsworthiness or information utility for audience
 - Media: Pick specific channels or tools from among public media, controlled media, interactive media, events or one-on-one communication options.

GOST formula: Goals, objectives, strategies, tactics

Communication/Implementation

- Involves day-to-day development of plans as opportunities, problems present themselves
- Need to avoid major deviations from the plan or revise objectives and adapt strategy if needed.
- Follow principles of effective communication

6. Tactics/Tasks (Details of production, quality control, copy testing)
7. Calendaring (scheduling or timetable based based on production or target distribution dates)
8. Staffing (Assignment of duties to staff, agencies, freelancer, vendors)
9. Budget (overall spending plan, monitoring/control to stay within approved allocations)

Evaluation/Assessment

- Flows out of objectives
- Essential part of plan
- Focuses on effectiveness (Were objectives reached?) and efficiency (Results obtained at lowest possible cost compared to alternatives?)
- Provides valuable feedback for future programs
- Both qualitative and quantitative measures valuable

10. Evaluation
 - Production (Quality Measures)
 - Message Exposure
 - Awareness (Recognition, recall)
 - Attitudes (Favorability, behavioral intent)
 - Actions (Buying, investing/donating, working, voting, adoption of beliefs, risk avoidance, engagement in activity, etc.)
 - Return on investment (financial contribution to organization relative to expenditure)