



How to Create a Communication Plan

A successful communications plan serves as a roadmap and helps everyone to deliver a consistent message. Remember to focus on two-way communication — how you will distribute information and also how the public will communicate with you. A successful campaign promotes partnerships and provides value by giving people information they can use.

Overview

Explain the main points of the communications plan, the need for it, and its importance.

Background and Concerns

Include any relevant history, information about past communication efforts on this topic, and other background. Determine the concerns. How did we get here? Is the Council involved? Chapel Hill 2020? Show Connections.

Audience

Target your tactics and actions to specific audiences. Who is your primary audience? Who is impacted by your initiative?

Directing communications for specific audiences is much more effective than mass distribution.

Partners

Think about stakeholders (organizations, groups, departments, etc.) that share an interest in spreading your message. Got experts? Involve partners/affected groups early to vet your campaign. Also, identify opponents.

Goals

What do you want to accomplish? Focus on the big issues. Identify long-term and short-term goals of your communication efforts. Good goals are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely.

Tactics and Actions

Choose the tactics and actions to reach your goals. See “How to Get the Word Out” for examples.

Key Messages and Talking Points

What are three key messages? Repeat. Keep brief, tweetable. Create hashtags. Use a unique URL.

Important Dates to Remember

Create a timeline. List events and dates related to your message. Are there holidays or days devoted to your topic? Are there events where you can partner and promote your message? Take care of potential scheduling conflicts.

Evaluating and Listening

How will you evaluate the successes or weaknesses of the campaign? Continually evaluate your strategies. Find out what the public is saying. How will you address their concerns? What strategies will you employ to show the community that its priorities are being addressed? Which techniques can be used to counter misconceptions?

