



Developing a Strategic Communications & Marketing Plan

Key steps in developing a comprehensive and integrated strategic plan for communications and marketing

Definitions (definitions often vary from organization to organization for the following)

- Communication – the activity of conveying meaningful information. Communication requires a sender, a message, and an intended recipient. The communication process is complete once the receiver has understood the intended message of the sender.
- Business communications – encompasses a variety of areas, including marketing, branding, customer relations, advertising, public relations, public affairs and public policy, corporate communication, board relations, government and community relations, employee communication, online communication, promotion, event management and research and measurement.
- Branding – employing a unified story and image of your company and product.
- Marketing – an integrated process used to determine what products or services may be of interest to customers, and the strategy through which companies build strong customer relationships and create value for their customers and for themselves.
- Advertising – a communication technique used to persuade an audience to take some action with respect to products, ideas, or services using traditional media, new media and websites.
- Promotion – the communication link between sellers and buyers for the purpose of influencing, informing, or persuading a potential buyer's purchasing decision.
- Sales – act of selling a product or service in return for money or other compensation.
- Public relations – actions taken by an organization to promote goodwill between itself and the public, the community, employees, customers, often utilizing the media and events.
- Media relations – involves working with various media for the purpose of informing the public of an organization's mission, policies, products and services.
- Government relations – lobbying or trying to influence opinions and actions of government bodies and officials.
- Board relations – communicating with your board of directors or board of advisors
- Social media – communication technique using web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue.
- Difference between marketing in a nonprofit vs. for-profit business – virtually none

Strategic communications plan

- Comprehensive and integrated plan touching all aspects of communication within organization
- Defines and ensures understanding of expectations
- Addresses all audiences, internal and external
- Aligns messaging and communications strategies with vision, mission, values, goals and culture
- Ensures consistency of brand and messaging
- Creates systematic, coordinated and timely delivery of messages and communications initiatives
- Ensures specific identification and understanding of audiences
- Creates specific plans for communication with all audiences
- Extends reach through partnerships and relationships
- Ensures measurement and evaluation of communication success and ROI

Identify audiences, including

- External
 - Customers, clients, constituents or members
 - Prospective customers, clients, members
 - Government and community relationships
 - Funders
 - Press and media
 - General audience
 - New vs. established of above
- Internal
 - Employees
 - Members
 - Volunteers
 - Board
 - Advisors and mentors
 - Vendors and suppliers
 - Partners and alliances
 - Investors, sponsors and funders
 - Stakeholders and shareholders

Key considerations in marketing anything

- What do you want to do?
- Who is the audience?
- What are your expectations of your audience?
- What messages, vehicles and distribution channels will best reach your audience?
- Leverage relationships for extended reach
- Consider all options, tools and resources
- Measure effectiveness and readjust
- Be flexible

Key elements of a marketing plan

- Market research and analysis
 - Research methodology – simple to complex
 - What is the marketplace?
 - Need for your product or solution?
 - What is the competition?
 - How is your product/service unique?
- Marketing goals for product or service
- Strategies and tactics to reach goals
- Identifying audience/s
- Key messages
- Marketing vehicles and tools can include:
 - Logo, stationary, business cards
 - Website
 - Signage
 - Yellow pages or online listings
 - Brochures / Flyers / Collateral
 - Annual report
 - Ads – pro-bono and paid

- Social Media pages and groups (Facebook and LinkedIn)
- Blogs
- Electronic vehicles, e.g., emails, email blasts, newsletters
- Event invitations
- Press releases
- Articles
- White papers and reports
- Thank you notes and gifts
- Giveaways with your logo on them
- Events and programs
- Alliance partner's vehicles
- Distribution channels
 - Website
 - Direct mail
 - Electronic mail
 - Emails
 - Email blasts
 - Newsletters
 - E-invitations and promotions
 - Social media
 - Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.
 - Your blogs
 - Other's blogs
 - Press and media / public relations
 - Press releases
 - Articles and interviews
 - Calendar listings
 - Advertorials
 - Speaking engagements
 - Television and video exposure (YouTube)
 - Advertising
 - Events
 - Word of mouth
- Budget considerations and opportunities
 - Direct costs
 - Sponsored services
 - In-kind contributions and donations
- Timeline – pre, production, execution, follow-up
- Tracking results and measurement
 - Determining metrics
 - Surveys
- Evaluation, reporting and adjustment

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