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## **COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: THE MAIN ASPECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS**

To run efficiently, companies need to implement effective communication strategies. This lesson reviews types of communication strategies and provides examples.

Communication is the exchange of information between a sender and a receiver. It used to be that you only had to worry about the way you communicated face-to-face or on paper. Technology has changed this completely. It is important for people to take into account every aspect of how they are relaying information. This is where communication strategies come into play. Communication strategies are the blueprints for how this information will be exchanged.

Strategic communication can mean either communicating a concept, a process, or data that satisfies a long term strategic goal of an organization by allowing facilitation of advanced planning, or communicating over long distances usually using international telecommunications or dedicated global network assets to coordinate actions and activities of operationally significant commercial, non-commercial and military business or combat and logistic subunits. It can also mean the related function within an organization, which handles internal and external communication processes.

Communication strategies can be verbal, nonverbal, or visual. Integrating all the strategies together will allow you to see the most success. This allows a business to meet employee needs and increase workplace knowledge.

Verbal communication strategies can be broken down into the two categories of written and oral communication. Written strategies consist of avenues such as e-mail, text, and chat.

Nonverbal communication strategies consist of mostly visual cues, such as body language, facial expressions, physical distance between communicators, or the tone of your voice.

Visual communication strategies can be seen through signs, webpages, and illustrations. These strategies are used in the workplace to draw attention and provide documentation.

Communication strategy shows how effective communications can:

- help us achieve our overall organisational objectives;
- engage effectively with stakeholders;
- demonstrate the success of our work;
- ensure people understand what we do;
- change behaviour and perceptions where necessary.

The introductory part of the communications strategy should briefly outline what our organisation does, what its main functions are and where it operates. It should also look at our organisation's communications strengths – what has been successful and what hasn't worked well over the last five years or so. The following tools can be used to help analyse our organisation's current situation.

#### a) PEST Analysis

This involves listing the Political, Economic, Social and Technological factors that could affect your organisation's work. These could be positive or negative factors and should include issues that are likely to have an impact on how our organisation operates.

#### b) SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis involves listing your organisation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

#### c) Competitor Analysis

This can be a relatively simple exercise where we identify our main competitors and rank them against certain criteria.

Any communications strategy should closely reflect our overall organisational plan. In this section we should look at our organisation's overall vision and core aims and objectives. We should then suggest how communications can help deliver these goals. As well as referring to specific objectives, this section should give an overall sense of the principles of communications that underpin the strategy and the key messages that the organisation wants to convey. It is important that our communications objectives should be seen to contribute to the achievement of the overall objectives of the organisation. In this way they will be recognised not as an "add-on", but something as fundamental as operational or policy objectives to achieving the organisation's overall mission.

Identifying stakeholders - in this section, we should give a detailed description of our main audiences – both external and internal. These might include the public, politicians, service users and staff. We might also refer to potential audiences that our organisation is keen to connect with.

Many organisations will find that they have lots of audiences who they need to interact with. One part of the strategy might look at which audiences will be interested in which parts of our organisation or activities.

Once we have identified our audiences, the next task is to break down our objectives into relevant messages for each of those audiences. Start with the audiences that are the highest priority. It is important that all of our stakeholders understand what kind of organisation we are, so our messaging needs always to link back to our key organisational objectives and values. For each audience identified in our previous section, we should now indicate the most appropriate channels for communicating with them. These might include an e-bulletin, conference, workshop, leaflet, press release, event – or broader methods such as media and our website.

Once we have looked at the channels we have, we can begin to construct our communications plan, linking audiences, messages and channels. With our audiences and key communications methods identified, the next step is to draw up a table that indicates the key communications activities, budget, and resources allocated to delivering the strategy. The work plan should also include proposed timescales and identify particular milestones within the strategy. This will allow us to measure clear steps towards ultimate goals. There may be specific projects, events or publications that will take place, and these should be highlighted.

The communication strategy should conclude with a section on evaluation. Here we should indicate the tools we will use to evaluate various sections of our communications. These could be simple measures such as the number of responses to e-bulletins, hits to the website or increases in donations following a mail-out.