



Communication and fundraising plan handout

Communication strategy vs. communication plan

A communication strategy describes how different communication activities will contribute to realising the goals of your organisation. Communication is always subservient to your organisational goals. This is achieved by first describing your communication goal and subsequently formulating communication activities.

Large organisations distinguish between a communication strategy and a communication plan. The strategy describes, for example, the overarching communication goals, and the projects over a longer period of time. The strategy outlines what the planning is, without going into specifics such as the who, what, where, when and how. A communication plan *does* do this! For each new project, it describes a specific communication goal and the associated activities and planning.

“This is what I want to get across to this group of people with my text.”

Many smaller organisations choose to combine their communication strategy, communication plan, and fundraising plan. Every year, they formulate a communication goal and a number of communication activities. Every quarter they determine what the desired concrete output and/or results should be. You plan this for every quarter in advance. The advantage of this is that A) you can make timely adjustments if you notice that certain communication and fundraising activities do or do not contribute to achieving your goals, and B) you are able to retain the overview. Planning communication and fundraising activities for an entire year in advance on a detailed level is often difficult. As a result of this, many organisations do not stick to the planning they created earlier. Planning for shorter periods of time will help you to define a realistic output, and this motivates you to actually realise your goals.

In this hand-out, we will provide a guideline for making a communication/fundraising strategy and plan, by discussing possible elements you can incorporate into it.

The step-by-step plan

In the next seven steps, we will provide an overview on how to construct a communication and fundraising plan. Every step is further elaborated upon in the following sections.

Step 1. What is the mission?

Step 2. What goals do I want to achieve?

Step 3. What is the target group, what character traits does this group and the network they belong to possess, and what role do I have in mind with this target group?

Step 4. What is my message?

Step 5. Which means of communication will I use?

Step 6. Which fundraising activities will I choose?

Step 7. Evaluate frequently and adjust your goals.

Step 1: The mission

1.1 Defining the central theme.

Defining the theme is important. When creating a communication plan, it needs to be clear where the focus of the communication lies. How does it contribute to your organisational goal?

You can consider: fundraising, creating support for international collaboration, providing information on the right to education, creating visibility for the organisation.

1.2 Problem analysis

The next step is creating a problem analysis. When you understand the challenges you are facing, you can more clearly define the communication goal. Although we refer to it here as a problem or challenge, it does not have to be a negative situation. Your communication can also aim at increasing opportunities instead of eliminating problems.

In a problem analysis you, preferably together with a number of people and possibly also with the target group, note down all the problems that are associated with the central theme. Describe the problems and their consequences. Do you know what the potential causes are?

1.3 Demarcation and preconditions

It is also advisable to determine ahead of time what you will not be doing. This is called demarcation. Whatever ideas may be conceived, you will definitely not pursue these things.

Of course, there are also preconditions. Every plan has a number of constraints around it; this refers to means, time, and money. The communication plan needs to be executed within these boundaries.

Step 2: Determine your communication and fundraising goals

By formulating targets, you make the overall goal concrete and clear. A target is limited in scope and time, and as mentioned earlier, should be in line with the goal of the organisation. In the communication and fundraising goals you can perceive what you are trying to achieve, for whom, why, and in what timeframe.

You can consider three types of goals:

1. Knowledge
2. Attitude
3. Behaviour

With a knowledge goal, the central question should be: what should my target group know? The purpose is informing the audience and providing them with insight into a problem/cause and the solution or goal.

An attitude goal is concerned with influencing what your target group wants and thinks. It is about convincing and enthusing others, as well as influencing the opinion of the target group. For example: what does your audience think about your project and/or about international collaboration?

Behavioural goals are concerned with what you want your audience to do. You want to encourage them to do something and provoke action. For example: to donate, become a member, or actively participate in your project. As you can probably tell, this list has an increasing degree of difficulty. Transferring knowledge and information is a lot easier than getting your target group to be actively involved. To communicate effectively, it is important to have a clear image of the recipient, so that your message is as closely connected as possible to the person for whom the message is intended.

Your goal describes:

What? A clear description of what has changed or has been achieved as a result of your communication and fundraising activities.

Who? For what target group, for whom is this communication intended (including the size of the target group)?

When? What are the start and end dates of the communication or fundraising activity?

Where? Where will the communication or fundraising activity take place?

Step 3: Target group and context analysis

3.1 Target group

Proper understanding of your target group (the people you want to reach) can make or break effective communication and fundraising. Take enough time to think about your target group; you cannot know enough about them.

The following questions can help you gain understanding of your target group.

1. What does my target group know (knowledge)?
 - What do they know about the subject?
 - What do they know about me as the transmitter?
2. What does my target group think (attitude)?
 - What attitude do they have towards the subject?
 - What attitude do they have towards you as the transmitter of the message?
 - Which values play a role?
 - Which interests does my audience have towards the theme?
 - What role could my audience fulfil?
 - Which opinion leaders are important to my target group?
3. How does my target group act (behaviour)?
 - Which specific behaviour does my audience display towards the subject?
 - To which network does my audience belong?
 - What types of media do they use?
 - What type of language does the audience use?

And finally, how big is the target group?

You can visualise meeting your audience. You can create a 'mood board' or write a short description on what the daily life of an *average* person from your audience looks like (and give this person a name).

100 communication tools

Advertisement
Advertisement on
busses
Agenda
Annual report
Balloons
Banner
Banners
Billboard
Blog
Book
Book launch
Briefing
Brochure
Calendar
Checklist
Christmas card
Clothing
Coaching
Coffee cup
Commercials
Company movie
Company visits
Conference/symposium
Conversation
Corporate identity
Course
Curriculum
Debate
Direct mail
Discussion forum
Discussion meetings
Displays
Door-to-door leaflets
DVD
E-mail
Employee magazine
Event print material
Events
Excursions
Exhibition
Extranet
Ezines
Factsheet
FAQs
Festival
Flags
Flyer
Free publicity
Freebies
Games
Gift
Guided tour
Help desk
Home visit
Induction programme
Info desk
Information market
Information package

3.2 Context

Besides knowing your target group, it is also important to know something about the context, the environment in which you want your communication and fundraising to reach your audience. What goes on inside the world in which your message will be broadcasted?

You can consider the following:

- Are there other messages that can exert a negative influence on my message?
- Are there other messages that can exert a positive influence on my message?
- Are there others broadcasting a similar message?
- Are there others broadcasting a conflicting message?

Step 4: Message

You can tell many things about your organisation: when it was founded, what activities you carry out, which areas you are active in, how the contributions of donors are used, what results have been achieved, what local people think of the project, policy changes which have an influence, new employees or volunteers, upcoming travel, setbacks, new projects, new partnerships, etc.

With each target group it is important to ask yourself: what do I want to accomplish with this group? What does this group want to know? Based on these questions, you can decide what information you will share with a specific target group.

Your donor could, for example, be curious about the results that have been achieved and how you have used financial resources. The local partner wants to know in detail what plans you have and how you will collaborate. Volunteers want to know how they can participate, etc.

It is also important to determine how you want to formulate your message. When deciding about this, make use of the information available about using frames. You want to choose a frame that fits with your organisation as well as with the reality of your target group. This is the most effective approach.

Step 5: Choice of a means of communication

The final step is to decide what form best fits the message that you want to communicate. For this, it is useful to have an overview of the various means of communication and their related characteristics.

Choosing from a good mix of tools is a creative process. Don't hesitate to organise a brainstorming session with one another to select the right tool. It may also be useful to invite a communication expert from your circle of friends to help brainstorm.

The following questions will play a role in determining the means of communication:

- Is the communication interpersonal or is it mass communication?
- Are you opting for written or oral communication, or a combination of both?
- Are you opting for verbal or non-verbal communication, or a combination of both?
- What is your available budget?

Next, you will choose from the various media (digital and analogue) that is available, such as a weblog, newsletter, website, press release, movie or video (YouTube).

Always ensure that your choice of communication method and the medium that you use for it connect to your target group's reality. A notice in the paper is nice, but if your target group doesn't read the paper, this probably won't contribute to achieving your goal.

Step 6: Fundraising activities

Think about what fundraising activities you wish to do. Ensure that these connect well to your target group. If your target group is 65+, you won't want to organise a charity run, but an art auction might be a good idea. In Chapter 7 of our toolkit, you will find a great deal of fundraising tips.

Step 7: Evaluation

Once you have executed your plan, evaluate it. For organisations that receive support, be it financial or otherwise, insight into the impact of their communication and fundraising is expected. How many people have you reached? What does the target group look like? What was the result?

The goal of evaluation is to gain insight into the impact of your means of communication and the communication process. It is a good way to learn from successes and to identify areas for improvement.

To determine whether the desired results were achieved, you will collect information and/or conduct research (or outsource this). Depending on the formulated objectives, this may include measuring:

- The response of target groups
- The number of requests for information
- The number of people who follow your blog
- The number of visitors to your website
- The influence of the communication and fundraising on the knowledge and attitude of the target group

Before you carry out the communication and fundraising plan, it is important to

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Information phone
Informational panels
Infotainment
Intranet
Introduction binder
Jackets
Jingle
Lecture day
Lecture materials
Letter
Lobby
Magazine
Meetings
Movies, videos
Music: jingles
Music: songs
Narrowcasting
Newsletter
Newspaper advertising
Notice board
Personal approach
Personal sales calls
Phone
Photo
Policy paper
Postcard
Poster
Presentation
Press conference
Press release
Press tour
Promotional items
Quiz
Relationship magazine
Roundtable
conversation
Sample
SMS
Social media
Sound system
Speech
Sponsorship
Stickers
Teletext
Theatre show
Ticker
Trade show
Trial copy
TV broadcast
Twitter
User manual
Video screen
Videos and movie
Voicemail
Website
Work meetings
Working breakfast
Workshop

take into account the implementation of a subsequent evaluation. In an early stage, you should think about which effects you wish to measure and in what way. For instance, make sure to have evaluation forms (following a presentation) and a visitor counter on your website.

Finally

Now that the plan is ready, you can execute it. You will now actually be writing texts, making videos, publishing, reproducing, distributing, etc.

A number of final comments:

1. With regard to fundraising: it is wise to provide information both during and following the execution of the project. By showing people what happened with their money, what results were achieved, and what the future plans are, you can ensure that they feel more involved with the project, and for a longer time. You create a support base for your own project. Also, to successfully solicit donations from individuals, you'll need to communicate in a clever way.
2. Use a project-oriented approach in your communication as well.
3. Make sure to set realistic communication and fundraising goals. It's demotivating to conclude each year that your goals haven't been achieved again. It is also useful, for example, to aim for very concrete results each quarter. This way, you can determine each quarter in the short term if you've achieved the planned results. That motivates you to once again plan and carry out project-oriented communication and fundraising activities for the following quarter! Moreover, you will have time to make adjustments if you notice that certain activities are proving to be either effective or ineffective.

Tips:

- Make sure that your communication and fundraising plan is in line with the project or organisation plan. The mission and vision and the goal of the project are determining factors for the content of the communication and fundraising plan.
- Make contact with a journalist from a regional newspaper.
- You need to be able to describe the core idea of your message in a few keywords.
- The message needs to be interesting, surprising, and exciting enough to remember.
- It is best to formulate the message in a positive way, indicating not what should not happen, but what indeed can.
- Connect the message well to the target group (knowledge, interests, attitudes, and behaviour)
- Make it clear what you expect from the target group by offering a perspective on the transaction. What do you want the target group to do? Donate, sign something, or sign up as a volunteer?

Order of your message:
1. Why are you doing it?
2. How are you doing it?
3. What are you doing?

Sources: *Toolkit Voorlichting*, NCDO, 2006; www.leren.nl, www.communicatieonline.nl (Dutch source)

Further reading: *Verleiden met een dialoog, een strategie voor het schrijven van commerciële teksten*, Pascal Boogaert & Communicatie NU, Betteke van Ruler (Dutch source)

