

Communications Strategy Toolbox

Mid-Columbia chapter of PRSA

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About me

Former “newspaperman”

- Page designer
- TCH alumni

S&T Communications

- Media relations
- National Security
- Science

Public Affairs-Communications Director



Georgetown
University

Poynter.

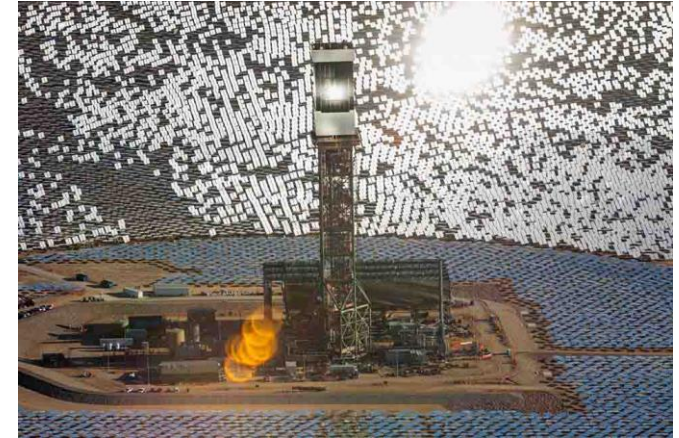


Bechtel & Hanford Vit Plant



Bechtel

- Mega project leadership
- Hoover Dam
- Ivanpah (largest thermal solar facility)
- English Channel Tunnel
- NASA mobile launcher
- \$20B revenue/year



Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant

- Department of Energy
- \$16.8B project
- 3,000 employees – craft and nonmanual
- Operational by 2023



Elements of a Communications Strategy

Business Alignment

Situational Analysis

Communication Plan Goals

Target Audience

Audience Characterization

Messaging

Tactics

Metrics

Schedule

Resources

Risks



**It's not what we do,
it's *how* we do it.**

Secure Business Alignment

Know their business goals and what they need from you

- It's about understanding the driver for and significance of goal

Ask your business partners:

- Why are you focused on this goal
- What happens if you don't achieve it
- What challenges do you expect or are afraid will arise
- Who is most critical to your success and why
- Who is your audience or customer for this goal and why

Seek their input frequently as develop strategy

- "If they weigh in, they will buy in"

Be clear when or what would prompt *revisiting the plan*

Agree on frequency and reporting of results



We "prep the field" for our business development, sales & management team's success.

Situational Analysis

Context for creating and executing Communications strategy

- Competitive landscape
- Political landscape
- Economic situation
- Employee morale

Show your leadership you understand their world.

Communications Goal(s)

Once aligned, where do you agree Communications can add value

Then decide which objectives or goals the plan will achieve

- Examples: Educate, Inform, Adopt, Act



TRAP:

- Having too many goals
- Not being specific enough

Be merciless in your clarity.

Target Audience(s)

Of those critical to business partner's success:

- Who can you reach directly
- Can you influence their thinking or behavior

Who do you want to reach

Why do you want to reach them

What's the **priority** of audiences



TRAP:

- Trying to make everyone happy or feel “seen”
- Too many for the budget
- Not prioritizing

Audience Characterization

Who are they – age, ethnicity, education, location

What's their level of awareness of your business

What's their perception of your business (your competitors?)

What motivates them

What keeps them up at night

How do they receive information

How do they *want* to receive information

What do *they* have that you need

What do *you* have that they need

Information is POWER



TRAP:

- Assuming you or your leadership knows your audience to depth required for a successful communications strategy
- Not ASKING your audience these questions directly

Case Study 1: WTP and video

Conduct Communications survey of employees every 2 years

In 2015, popularity of video growing in internal communications

- WTP survey showed only 11% of WTP employees wanted to receive information via video
- Only 9% in 2017
- Yet *every manager wanted a video!* And it was pulling limited resources from activities that *did* align with survey data



Result: Secured support of leadership in outsourcing videos

Sidenote: With pandemic teleworking, more and more employees expressed interest in videos. They miss “seeing” people. We are conducting our next survey in March.

Case Study 2: S&T Reputation project

Objective: ... **accelerate visibility** for PNNL with its S&T peers through development and implementation of a phased marketing **communications strategy** with the long-term goal of securing advocacy.

Research approach:

1. In-person interviews of PNNL scientists previously worked at these universities
2. In-depth phone interviews with prestigious scientists on PNNL external advisory boards
3. Email survey of 4,000 professors (full, associate, assistant) at 25 universities in chemistry, biology departments



*Presented at NAGC Annual Meeting 2015

Hone messages based on data

Top 3 messages that resonate with this audience

Be prepared with 'proof points' for each message



TRAP:

- Using messages that resonate with your *leadership* but not the audience

Develop tactics based on data

Analyze results to identify key opportunities that provide greatest impact

Build support by engaging leaders, employees in brainstorming tactics in context of data

S&T reputation project example of tactics:

- Revamped Director's Lecture Series to target most distinguished professors
- New push tool – Currents electronic newsletter
- New external web pages highlighting top Lab scientists and facilities/capabilities



TRAP:

- Doing what's fun not effective
- Doing what the boss wants even if it's not effective
- Trying to do too much

Example Audience Matrix

Audience	What we know about this audience	Goal
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Prefer to hear directly from managers- Low interest in receiving information via video- Want to see people in articles, videos etc- Positive view of management transparency- Overloaded with email- Concerned about teleworking opportunities post-COVID	Develop highly engaged and accountable staff driven to meet schedule with safety, quality.
Community Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Care about economic vitality of Tri-Cities (ie, jobs)	
Elected officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- No surprises	Build understanding and awareness of milestones reached

Prioritizing Tactics

Tactic	Staff	Community	Elected Officials	Customer	Timing	Comm Lead
<i>External Newsletter</i>		X	X	X	Bimonthly	Person 1
Fact sheets	X	X	X	X	Q1	Person 2
Virtual Tour	X	X	X	X	Q3	Person 3
News releases	X	X	X	X	Q1-Q4	Person 1
Charitable Giving	X	X	X	X	Q1-4	Person 2
Podcasts	X	X	X	X	Monthly	Person 3
Advertising	X	X	X	X	2X/year	Person 1
Social media	X	X	X	X	Q1-Q4	Person 2
Internal Daily E-News	X				Daily	Person 3
<i>Handwritten Message</i>	X	X	X	X	Q2-Q3	Person 1
Videos	X	X	X	X	Q1-Q4	Person 2
External website	X	X	X	X	Q1-4	Person 3
All-Employee Meetings	X			X	January + July	Person 1

Measurement

Tactic	Measurement
Daily E-News	Via PoliteMail: Open Rate, Read Rate?
External Newsletter	Constant Contact, Mail Chimp, etc: Open Rate?

Schedule

Create clear schedule of Start, End timelines

Assign to specific individuals



TRAP:

- Not holding people accountable

Resources

If any of these tactics are new or increased in frequency, will you need:

- More FTEs?
- Additional dollars for subcontracting?

Will this require reductions in other tactics to free up FTE for new ones?



TRAP:

- Agreeing to add or enhance tactics without increase in resources

Risks

Risks could be:

- Lack of leadership support
- Lack of cooperation from those you rely for information
- Lack of resources
- Changes in customer expectations
- External changes

Identify/plan how to mitigate or prevent the risks



TRAP:

- Not being clear WHO creates risks to YOUR strategy's success – ie, it may be your leadership if they haven't fully bought in

Thank you!

