

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

FOR NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICES

August 2019



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OVERVIEW: DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Communication of national statistics, and the work of national statistics offices, is essential. It helps the public to understand the neutrality and independence of NSOs, and the value of national statistics as the basic building blocks of governance and policymaking. This drives greater acceptance and use of national statistics by the public, journalists, and policymakers, thereby bolstering civic engagement.

Having a communications strategy, rather than an action plan, provides both a strategic vision and roadmap for communications over the long term. This helps to align communications activities and messaging with other NSO processes and frameworks, such as the national strategy for the development of statistics.

A communication strategy helps an organization map out a series of activities and programmes that not only help it engage with key stakeholders (internal and external) in an effective and streamlined way, but also help reach the organization's core objectives.

These guidelines aims to provide strategic guidance and outline the practical steps and resources needed for national statistics offices (NSOs) to develop an integrated communications strategy. It covers in detail each step of a five-step strategy development process: scoping, research, analysis, drafting and launch.

This is meant to be very practical, a mix of instructions, tips and resources. Some NSOs will find that this is all they need to proceed with strategy development independently. Others may find it necessary or valuable to engage external support for some or a large part of the analytical work.

Along those lines, these guidelines are not only for use by communications specialists. In fact, we strongly advise that a multidisciplinary team be involved in the strategy development. It goes to creating broader institutional buy-in as well as ensuring that a diversity of opinions is reflected in the choice of priorities and approaches.

Whether external support is employed or not, every organization using the resource kit will need to adapt its contents and approach to the particular circumstances it faces. In fact, the templates and guidance are all basic so as to allow application to a wide a range of situations. The resources in particular are meant to be enhanced and refined based on the organizational needs, context and culture. These include factors such as overall objectives, timeline, resource availability and the situation in which the strategy is being developed. Nonetheless, these guidelines should be seen as a foundation upon which any strategy development process can be carried out.

Note: You'll find links to any resources (templates, workplans and guidance documents) at the start of each Step)

STEPS TO DEVELOP A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

STEP 1: PREPARATION & SCOPING (1 WEEK)

DEFINE THE TEAM

INTERNAL SCOPING

DEVELOP ROADMAP

STEP 2: ANALYSIS & RESEARCH (2 WEEKS)

MARKET ANALYSIS

AUDITS

STEP 3: SYNTHESIS (2 WEEKS)

REVIEW EXISTING MATERIAL

SWOT ANALYSIS

BRASINSTORM STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

RISK ASSESSMENT

IDENTIFY CHANELS & MESSAGES

CONSOLIDATE SITUATION ANALYSIS

STEP 4: DRAFT THE STRATEGY (2 WEEKS)

WORK & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

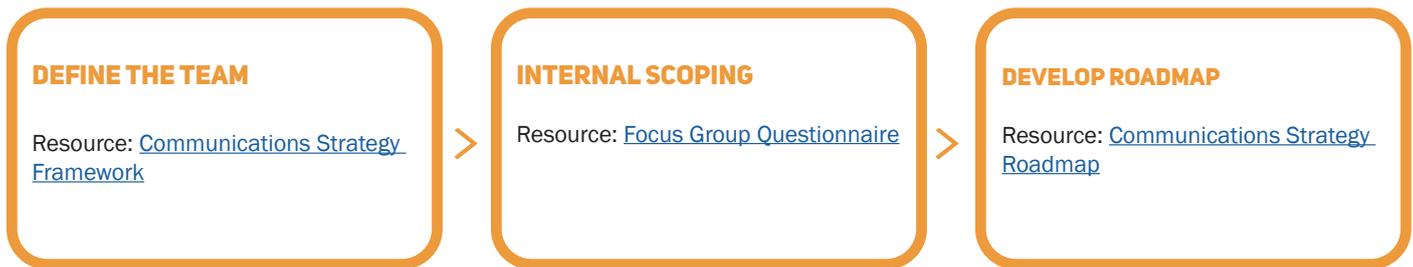
DRAFTING

STEP 5: STRATEGY APPROVAL & LAUNCH (1 WEEK)

STRATEGY APPROVAL

LAUNCH

STEP 1: PREPARATION & SCOPING



Before strategy development can begin, the parameters of the exercise must be clearly defined. This includes determining both the scope of the exercise and the process that will be followed in order to create a smart communications strategy. Getting this step right is essential because the information gathered will form the basis for the subsequent steps of the communications strategy development.

The first stage is to put together a team that will be responsible for seeing the project to completion. The first task of the team will be to assess the current state of communications within the organization.

With these elements in place, the team will draft a preliminary plan for the execution of the strategy. This “road map” will be a living document that will be continually added to and adjusted over the course of the work.

DEFINE THE TEAM

Identify who within the organization will drive the development process (i.e. be the main focal point) and who will participate on the development/drafting team. It is highly advisable that the communications chief or unit drive the process, as they will principally be implicated in implementing the resulting communications programme. However, a cross section of staff – in terms of area of expertise, seniority, and programmatic work – should also be included in the team.

When inviting team members, share with them the Communications Strategy Framework so that they understand the scope of the exercise.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ASKED WHEN CREATING THE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT TEAM:

- How large should the drafting team be given the size of the organization and the timeline? (Remember: a nimbler team moves more quickly, but there are also fewer people to share the burden of the work)
- Who should be the primary focal point driving the process?
- How will the team members be nominated?
- How much time should they expect to dedicate to the process weekly/monthly?
- Are the team members empowered by their managers to dedicate a portion of their work time to the strategy development, including participating in off-site workshops?

CONDUCT AN INTERNAL SCOPING

Once you have the team in place, you may find it easiest to convene them for a workshop (no longer than 4 hours) to undertake the scoping exercise and develop the framework.

The first brainstorm of the strategy development is to get everyone on the same page – in a very basic sense – as to the purpose of the exercise. Discussions should also cover why the strategy is being developed and why now, as well as what are the major issues that the strategy is expected to address.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ASKED DURING THE SCOPING WORKSHOP:

- What is the objective of the communication strategy?
- What problems does it aim to address?
- Why a communication strategy now?
- Who is the strategy for?
- What opportunities already exist to capitalize on?
- What are some of the major problem areas of communications (internal and external) that need addressing? Be specific citing mechanics and tactics.
- What was done in previous communications strategies?

Other issues for discussion include a preliminary look at and agreement upon how the final strategy should look, based on the sample strategy framework provided.

- Is the strategy going to be a public document?
- Who is the main audience of the strategy?
- Based on the previous two questions, what would drafting team members like to see added or taken away from the strategy framework?
- Will the team develop one integrated work plan, or several thematic work plans (internal communications, external communications, advocacy, etc.)?

Wherever possible, the development of the communications strategy should be aligned with the NSDS. This can be achieved in a number of ways. For example, including the communications head of unit in the NSDS development team, including specific outputs in the NSDS that have to do with communications, and incorporating communications evaluations into the M&E framework can all help to ensure this will ensure alignment early in the strategy development with the larger goals of the National Statistical Office. Those implications should be separated out and the team should brainstorm communications objectives that might address those specific issues.

Finally, and depending on the organization, this would also be the time to review any communications strategy that may exist, and any other internal charters or mechanisms that define how the institution communicates. These should be a point of reference during the analysis step and during drafting.

When undertaking your internal scoping, ensure that you solicit the views of a wide range of colleagues, to ensure that you have a full understanding of current communications (external and internal) challenges and opportunities.

The results of these discussions should be captured and included into the market analysis that you will undertake in Step 2.

DEVELOP ROADMAP

Resource: Communication Strategy Roadmap

Next, as a final step in the scoping workshop, using the excel template provided, define a preliminary roadmap or timeline for the strategy. It should clearly outline each of the strategy development stages and the major activities or milestones under each of these, mapped to a calendar. In addition, the timeline should show: (1) which department or partner implements each activity, (2) the method (workshop, desk research, mission, public event, etc.). Color-coding can be used to denote progress, showing which activities are scheduled, on-going, overdue and completed. It should also denote clearly the governance process—when senior management must approve the work so that the team can proceed to the next stage.

In order to establish when the strategy development work should begin, it is helpful to take the final delivery date and work backwards, estimating how long it will take to complete each activity.

Add the roadmap to the workshop report. This becomes both the strategic and tactical roadmap for the strategy development.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The outcomes of the initial brainstorm on the scope of the strategy (why this strategy, why now, for whom, challenges, opportunities, to address what, etc.) should inform later discussions on the strategy objectives as well as the situation analysis (this includes discussion of the NSDS and communications).
- The issues captured in the internal focus groups should be captured, paired with the findings of the external stakeholder audits and fed into the choice of activities during the planning step.
- When preparing your roadmap, start with the expected launch date and work backwards.

STEP 2: ANALYSIS & RESEARCH



Now that the groundwork has been laid for developing the strategy, the next step is to conduct a series of audits, research and external stakeholder consultations. These processes will dig deeper into the impressions that came out of the initial brainstorms, producing concrete evidence to support, modify or refute them. Eventually, during Step 3, they will help the team to make strategic and tactical choices that will be reflected in the strategy in terms of what stakeholder groups to target, where to prioritize efforts, what order to roll out the various activities, messaging, etc.

This will help make the case for what goes in the strategy and what does not. It will help whittle down and long list of possibilities to leave you with only those that feed directly into the objectives you will define. When in doubt as to what approach the strategy should take on a specific issue, your team should come back repeatedly to the results of these exercises.

MARKET ANALYSIS

Underpinning any good strategy is a solid understanding of the target audience. The resources, channels and messages that the NSO uses have to be appropriate to the needs and interests of that audience. This ensures both that any communications produced resonate with that audience, and that reach is maximized. In parallel, research should be undertaken to understand the environment in which national statistics are being communicated. For example, is there a particular civil society organization in the country that is producing ‘competing’ statistics or, conversely, that is particularly effective at communicating official statistics? Is the social media landscape in the country amplifying incorrect or misleading statistics?

Two areas of focus are important for a thorough market analysis:

Competitor/Peer Analysis

Resource: Competitor/Peer Matrix

While there is only one National Statistics Office in the country, there may be other entities (private sector, civil society, other government departments) that are producing and communicating statistics. It is important to know and understand why, how and what they do in order to be able to articulate the unique value of the NSO and official statistics. Map all possible competitor or peer organisations and, researching their websites, social media and other channels, make a matrix that answers the following questions:

- *Who are their audiences and why do they engage with them?*
- *What problems do they address?*
- *How do they communicate with their audiences?*
- *How is the NSO different to them?*

Target Audience Research and Segmentation

Resource: Audience Insights Matrix

Having explored the other organisations that are communicating statistics in your country, you should now turn your attention to learning everything that you can about your target audience. It is vital that you do not treat your audience as one homogenous group (eg citizens of your country). Otherwise, at best you will be wasting time and resources creating communications that are too broad to be impactful and, at worst, you will be missing a valuable opportunity to convey the value of your NSO and national statistics using a language and medium that resonates with your users.

To begin, make a list of population groups that you want to reach. For example, one group could be, “university academics working in the field of social sciences” or “farmers from tribe x”. Following this, write down what you think are the main motivations of each group to engage with national statistics and one message that you think could be convincing for them. Then, rank your audience to see who the most important target groups are. If possible, disaggregate the groups even more by demographics and interest. Finally, if possible, take the opportunity to conduct detailed interviews with individuals from your top target groups in order to gain further insights.

AUDITS

The following desk audits need to be carried out by staff internal to the organization. These audits are essential to understand how well the organization currently communicates and what resources it has at its disposal. This will in turn determine how best to leverage what is working well and where additional emphasis needs to be placed.

Brand Audit

Your 'brand' is the set of words, designs, symbols or other features that distinguish your NSO. Having a brand means that everything that you communicate should be instantly identifiable as belonging to your NSO. So, the colours, language, messaging, style, and even the fonts that you use should always be consistent and conform to your brand.

Review any of your existing communications materials, such as letters, newspaper adverts, recruitment adverts, press releases, programmes, agendas, brochures, power point presentations, banners, promotional materials, and reports. Do they all follow the same style, use the same fonts, have the same kinds of language, and use your logo in a consistent way? Would an outsider, looking at the material for the first time, identify it as being from your NSO within 5 seconds? If the answer to these things is no, you may wish to include as part of your communications strategy a brand guideline that clearly sets out the rules around how your communications look and feel, and the language that you use (you may wish to solicit the help of brand experts).

USEFUL QUESTIONS:

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ASKED DURING THE BRAND AUDIT:

- Do the materials adhere to one consistent look and feel?
- Is the correct logo used and in the right way (i.e. is it stretched or blurry)? Are the organization's contact details up to date (URL, social media addresses, etc.)? Is the same colour scheme and set of fonts always used?
- Are individual staff members acting on their own in terms of branding (creating their own templates, changing fonts and colours, etc.)?
- What "element" makes each communications output cohesive to the brand?
- Are your brand materials (logos in different formats, templates) and, if they exist, guidelines (fonts, colours, specifications) available for staff to easily access?
- Is there uniformity in how contact information is treated (i.e. information appears in the same order, same size, same place)?

Create a brief summary report of the audit that concludes with recommendations for managing cited inconsistencies. These should be fed into the final strategy work plan on activities that touch on brand development, strategic positioning and marketing.

Media Audit

A media audit is the process of reviewing how your NSO (and more generally, national statistics) are being portrayed in newspapers, television news, and on blogs and other mass communications channels. In carrying out the audit, you need to see where and how your NSO is being portrayed and whether there are opportunities to get more media coverage.

USEFUL QUESTIONS:

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ASKED WHEN AUDITING PAST MEDIA COVERAGE:

- How often is your NSO in the news or covered by the media? Is this enough?
- Is your NSO represented fairly in the media? What do they get wrong? What do they get right?
- What aspects of the organization resonated most with journalists, producers, bloggers and editors?
- What news pieces have been most shared and why do you think that is?
- What about the quality of the coverage (how frequent, type, placement, accuracy, visibility of media outlet/article, include photo/video etc.)
- How well did past coverage communicate the organization's intended key messages?

Armed with this information, it's possible to identify the parts of your communications strategy that should be adjusted to maximize the quantity and quality of your media coverage. Summarize those recommended actions and incorporate them in the strategy work plan for activities related to media relations, brand visibility, events and dissemination.

Social Media Audit

With so many digital marketing channels at our disposal it is easy to lose track of what's working and where there is room for improvement. That is where a careful audit of your organization's presence online can be of service. You can do an audit of your digital marketing to gather and analyse data coming from different sources, and then use that information to guide strategy and decision-making.

You should begin with an audit of your website. A website audit is a full analysis of traffic to your website, engagement, search visibility, user experience. It includes information like the number of visitors to a website and the number of page views, how long visitors stay on a page; how they come to the website, how often people download specific content, etc.

A complete and detailed audit will give you a deeper understanding of how and how often your website is being consulted and how to improve both. You can of course use Google Analytics to see how your website is doing.

Some information can be gleaned from a critical review of the website's pages; this information will also emerge in your external stakeholder interviews where they are asked to discuss where they go to retrieve information disseminated by the NSO (see External stakeholder interviews and focus groups).

Resource: Social Media Audit Worksheet

Following the audit of the website, an audit of your social media channels should also be carried out as part of the digital audit. A social media audit is necessary to review which of your social media platforms is working well, which is failing and what can be done to improve your use of each.

The social media audit template will help with this audit process. First, you need to list all the social media channels used by the organization. Then, you should include the following information for each:

- Profile information: name and URL of the channel
- Posting frequency: list date of latest activity and frequency of posts.
- Engagements: the number of times a user interacts with your message through comments, replies, sharing your message, etc.
- Referral traffic: clicks per post
- Channel specific metrics: for example, Facebook reach or Twitter follower count.

TIP: Most social media channels provide free in-built analytics that allow you to measure these variables and the effectiveness of your messages. For example, for Twitter you can use Twitter analytics: <https://analytics.twitter.com> and for Facebook you can get Facebook Insights by clicking Insights at the top of your Facebook page.

In your summary of the digital media audit, you should make recommendations for which social channels should be kept and which should be abandoned, based on the return on time invested

in maintaining the platform and an identification of where to best reach the target audience. It should also address how to improve website traffic and experience (i.e. how easy it is to navigate, organization of information, the interface, how quickly it loads on slow connections etc.). These findings should inform which communications channels are prioritized under the strategy.

Human Capacity & Skills Audit

This audit takes a careful look at the human resources and skills already available within the organization to help implement the strategy. The purpose is to recognize strengths and identify any gaps so that decisions can be made either to hire full- or part-time staff, or to outsource functions to local service providers.

The first part of the audit can be done as a brainstorm among the drafting team members. It will highlight perceived gaps in capacity as well as what resources are lacking to exploit the capacity that does exist (software, platforms, etc.).

Resource: Human Capacity & Skills Worksheet

As skills audits are often a regular part of the human resources function of an organization, this information may already be available for all skills. In that case, all that would be needed is to extract the relevant findings for communications.

The strategy’s success is contingent upon the hiring of the necessary staff, acquiring certain skills and possibly having certain resources/platforms/software made available. As such, note any risks in the SWOT analysis that you will undertake in Step 3.

STEP 3. SYNTHESIS



In Step 3, you’ll make a series of analyses and choices that will determine the focus of the strategy. After this , it should be clear to the team what activities should be carried out, for whom, why and how those activities will help meet long-term objectives. If done well, it will lead smoothly into the drafting step where all of these findings will be captured and worked into one coherent narrative.

Using the results of the scoping exercise, research, audits, interviews and focus groups, the group will synthesize the meanings of those findings and begin to make the first strategic decisions, including defining more specifically the strategy's objectives and situation analysis, the two grounding factors of the final document. Each activity will yield a data point (or points) that should be reflected directly in the strategy, as noted below.

It is strongly advised that this step take place through a full-day workshop.

REVIEW EXISTING MATERIAL

To kick-off the first workshop, the drafting team needs to review the key outcomes of everything carried out to date: the scoping exercises, research and audits, the strategy road map and the basic strategy outline drafted during the previous step.

The team can be divided into four groups to extract the main takeaways of each of the results of the previous steps. One team can summarize the main takeaways of the scoping exercise, another the different audits, another the strategy road map and another the outline. Each group can then summarize the main takeaways of each exercise for the entire drafting team.

SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis is a useful resource for understanding the strategic needs of the organization. It offers a concise look at the underlying strengths and weaknesses of the organization, while also revealing external factors that could become opportunities or threats. The SWOT analysis will feed into the situation analysis of the communications strategy. If one of the weaknesses of the organization is not having enough staff to carry out the communication activity from start to finish, this should be reflected in the number of activities and actions to be included in the strategy.

Resource: [SWOT Analysis Worksheet](#)

TIP: Strengths and weaknesses are often internal to your organization, while opportunities and threats generally relate to external factors.

During this activity, the allocated time should be divided evenly to cover each of the four elements of the SWOT analysis, plus a final session in which to analyse how to maximize strengths and opportunities and how to minimize weaknesses and threats.

It is recommended to follow the order stated below because the strengths and weaknesses, which are mostly internal factors, will help to define more clearly the opportunities and threats.

1. Strengths: When analysing strengths, list the characteristics of the NSO that might be considered as its strong benefit. Analyse strengths from an internal perspective using the audits carried out during Step 2.

Useful questions to ask:

- What do you do well?
- What unique resources can you draw on?
- What do others see as your strengths?

2. Weaknesses: Analyse internal weaknesses using the results of the external stakeholder interviews and focus groups, and the brand, media, digital and human capacity audits. Weaknesses can also be identified by comparing your service to other statistical offices in the region using the results of the benchmarking research carried out in Step II to inform this discussion.

Useful questions to ask:

- What could you improve?
- Where do you have fewer resources than others?
- What are others likely to see as weaknesses?

3. Opportunities: This session should start by reviewing the strengths and weaknesses identified during the two previous sessions of the workshop. Analyse if the strengths identified could create new opportunities and, conversely, if opportunities could arise through the elimination of some of the identified weaknesses.

Useful questions to ask:

- What opportunities are open to you?
- What trends could you take advantage of?
- How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?

4. Threats: For this penultimate session, the team will need to brainstorm existing and potential factors that might have repercussions on the work of the NSO.

Useful questions to ask:

- What threats could harm you?
- What is your competition or other regional NSO doing?
- What threats do your weaknesses expose you to?

5. SWOT analysis in action: This final session builds on the answers of the previous SWOT analysis to develop a strategic vision. Use the table and tips below to find ways of matching the internal dynamics (both positive and negative) with external possibilities for the organization.

- Strengths–Opportunities. Use your internal strengths to take advantage of opportunities.
- Strengths-Threats. Use your strengths to minimize threats.
- Weaknesses-Opportunities. Improve weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities.
- Weaknesses-Threats. Work to eliminate weaknesses to avoid threats.

The outcome of this activity will help inform the Situation Analysis as well as the Risk and Assumptions section of the final strategy.

BRAINSTORM STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

The feedback emerging from the internal focus groups, audits, and external stakeholder interviews should be the basis for the brainstorming of a list of strategy objectives.

These objectives are the goals that you want to achieve with your communications. Each of them should be formulated as “To do....” and have a clearly stated outcome or outcomes. The communication objectives should tie in very closely with the NSO organizational objectives. These objectives need to be specific and measurable. Once they are achieved, they can be replaced by another goal to adapt to the larger goals of the NSO. In case the NSDS is updated, these objectives should be reviewed and adapted accordingly.

When setting objectives, be realistic. For a more detailed explanation of how to achieve this, you can make use of the optional Activity III.VIX Results-based logical framework, where each objective will be prioritized, matched to an expected set of outcomes, audiences and performance indicators.

TIP: It is important to take some time to think about the number of objectives that can be realistically achieved. If you set too few you are probably not stretching yourself and if you set too many you will be unlikely to achieve them. As a rule of thumb – this can vary when tying strategic objectives into the larger organizational plans – you should have a maximum of 5 strategic objectives.

Writing strategy objectives:

1. Keep things simple, avoid jargon. Objectives should be easy to remember and understood by everyone within the organization.
2. Keep the objectives one sentence long. More details can be added in the logframe activity.
3. You can use a simple structure like “Action + Detail + Deadline”.
4. Start with a verb to force you to be specific about what you are trying to achieve.

TIP: The communication strategy objectives should adhere to the same timeframe as the organizational plans and operational goals of strategy.

The output of this stage should be used for the objectives sections of the communication strategy.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE

For this activity, the team will need to brainstorm potential threats to the NSO and create a list of the 5-10 most important ones. Once a threat has been identified, the team will need to define the major consequences, who or what is at risk (i.e. for example, if a civil society organisation misrepresents official statistics in its communications, this may undermine trust in official statistics), and anticipate the worst possible outcome.

Resource: Risk Assessment Worksheet

The team should also categorize the likelihood of occurrence (definite, likely, occasional, seldom or unlikely) and potential impact (insignificant, marginal, moderate, critical or catastrophic). Finally, this activity should end with another brainstorming session to identify possible control measures for each identified risk.

The outcomes of this activity should be used to inform the situation analysis and but most importantly the Risks and Assumptions section of the final strategy.

IDENTIFY CHANNELS & MESSAGES

Channels

This activity helps to identify how to communicate effectively with stakeholders. The team should take into account the results of the previous activities: internal and external focus groups/interviews, especially, but also audits and the SWOT Analysis. Based on these outcomes, the team should brainstorm a list of appropriate channels through which to communicate the strategy objectives.

This list will identify the channels that can be used internally for communication within the organization, as well as externally to reach stakeholders. It should take into account their preferences, as expressed in the feedback surveys carried out during the external stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

You can identify appropriate channels by doing the following:

1. First isolate the channels currently used within the organization for internal and external communication.

2. Discuss which of these has been the most effective so far and which have not worked so well. Choose the 5 most effective and the 5 least effective channels, giving specific examples of successes and failures.
3. Following this discussion, identify new potential channels that might be more effective for the different communication needs.

Examples of common channels for internal communications: face to face interviews, emails, meetings, calls, newsletters, appraisals, intranet, internal messaging service, management meetings, all staff meetings, press digest, weekly news, memoranda to staff, presentations, ...

Examples of common channels for external communications: press releases, website, emails, social media, face to face interviews, emails, meetings, mass media, calls, newsletters, advertising, mail, publications (print and electronic), events, spokesperson briefing to the press, videos, blogs, webinars, ...

Use the channels identified here when thinking about activities through which to implement the objectives of the strategy. They can also be useful when thinking about monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.

Messages

Resource: Message Development Worksheet

Communications goes beyond sending press releases or publishing reports. For the communications of the organization to be effective, the organization needs to adopt key messages around what it does, for whom and for what purpose. These messages should be tied to larger organizational positioning goals (i.e. how you want to be seen) and highlight the unique value and role of your organization in the larger NSS landscape.

The best strategic messages are clear and concise. They should be memorable and compelling and seek to educate, persuade, create awareness and call to action.

- 1. GEE WHIZ:** The wow factor, designed to impress, arouse wonder and distinguish your organization from others. This is about your organization and why it, or a specific product, campaign, etc. is different and special.
- 2. SO WHAT:** Once you have created a sense of wonder you need to leverage this by answering 'so what?' What does that wow factor mean in terms of added value for the target audience?

It is critical that there is an awareness about the key messages that extends beyond the communications team to the entire organization. The message is more consistent and focused when everyone in the organization is "on script" and internal confusion is eliminated. A coordinated message also reinforces professionalism, which creates greater confidence in the organization's capacities.

FUNDAMENTALS OF COMMUNICATING

When thinking about messaging, in particular, but all forms of communication in general, there are six fundamental laws that apply:

Law #1: Everything speaks. Every action taken, letter written, idea floated, word uttered, event attended or meeting held is an opportunity to communicate and an opportunity for others to judge the value and worth of your information, knowledge, values and goals.

Law #2: Everything must speak the same message. The only way to raise your group's voice above the cacophony of others is to sing in unison.

Law #3: Everything must be repeated. Communications is about persistence and repetition. Your message must be omnipresent and unavoidable. It needs to come from all directions and from a variety of sources to build urgency and attention.

Law #4: Everything that speaks must speak in turn. Effective communications depend on effective orchestration. Coordinating and prioritizing messages and messengers brings the power of a symphony to what would otherwise be a collection of people playing different instruments.

Law #5: The message is everything, everything is the message. Effective communications depend on an effective message. The message dictates how you communicate and how you orchestrate. The message is the mantra.

Law #6: Stay on message until the message gains power and influence. This is especially important for all staff because the NSO has the ability to communicate messages on a number of different levels and fronts. Staff can give power to its message by speaking repeatedly in one voice.

(Adapted from United Nations Development Programme MDG messaging guidelines.)

CONSOLIDATE SITUATION ANALYSIS

This activity builds on the research carried out in Step 2 and the strategic focus that has been developed so far in Step 3. It helps to bridge the ideas identified in the workshop with the drafting of the final plan. The first step in drafting the situation analysis is to note the main issues to be addressed by the new communications strategy. The content will feed directly into the situation analysis section of the communications strategy.

The situation analysis should also point out the opportunities for the organization, which emerged from the SWOT analysis. Write down the resources available and the challenges and obstacles that are present. Again, you can refer to the SWOT analysis for this section. Refer to the risk assessment worksheet to identify the potential risks and ways to avoid them. You don't need to go into great detail on risks, as those will be covered in the risk section of the strategy but you should show cognizance of factors potentially affecting the success of the strategy.

Once the workshops and activities have been carried out, it is important to inform senior management of the key findings. This should be done with a presentation to all senior managers who will eventually be asked to approve the final strategy. This activity allows senior management to raise questions or concerns early enough to be considered in the drafting, and it gives the team the possibility to respond to their concerns and determine how best to address them in the final strategy document.

The presentations should include the following key takeaways from the activities conducted.

After the presentation, one person in the team should be responsible for noting down and synthesizing the reactions of senior management. This document should be circulated to managers for them to approve. Management feedback can then be added to the strategy framework and taken into consideration during Step 4 – Draft the Strategy.

TIP: At the end of this activity, synthesize takeaways and include them in the relevant sections of the communication strategy document, which will be drafted during Step 4.

Step 4: Draft the Strategy

KEY TAKEAWAYS

BY THE END OF THE WORKSHOP(S), THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE COMPLETED:

- A SWOT analysis
- A stakeholder mapping and engagement plan
- A situation analysis
- Risk assessment plan
- Basic strategy messaging
- A commitment to specific channels
- A communication strategy workplan
- An activity implementation plan
- Senior management feedback on the first set of strategic decisions taken by the drafting team
- A draft activity/implementation plan for the strategy.

STEP 4: DRAFT THE STRATEGY



The drafting step should commence when all research, inputs and workshops have been concluded. It is also important, at this stage, to develop an editorial calendar to track the progress of the strategy drafting

WORK AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Draw up a table that indicates the key communications activities per objective. To fill in the different categories, the team first needs to use the objectives defined during the Brainstorm Strategy Objectives activity. Each objective should be matched to several activities. Be realistic about what you can do (see How to choose activities below).

You will also provide a brief description of the activity and identify the channels of communication, target audience, strategic value, cost and effort for each activity. (If there are specific projects, events or publications that will take place, these should be highlighted.) Use the results of the Audits and the SWOT Analysis to fill in these columns. The work plan should also include proposed timescales (from which quarter and year, to which quarter and year (e.g. Q1 2018-Q3 2018)) and identify particular milestones within the strategy. These timeframes will be captured in the implementation plan and the milestones can be considered for monitoring and evaluation. Both will allow you to measure clear steps towards ultimate goals.

Resource: Communication Strategy Workplan

Using the Communications Strategy Workplan template, carry out a brainstorming session to generate ideas about the most useful activities. Always keep the objectives in mind.

- Choose activities that are feasible for the organization. See the results of the various audits. Think about available resources and channels, time involved and return on investment, taking into consideration the effort and resources involved.
- Think about the target audience for each activity and the stakeholders to be engaged. To determine this, use the results obtained in the stakeholder mapping and match them accordingly.
- The results of the communication and dissemination channel identification should be used to match each activity with an appropriate channel of communication.
- Assign an expected launch or finalization date for each activity.

Resource: Editorial Calendar

Working backwards from when you want to launch your strategy, create a simple timeline of milestones and major tasks to be done. Hold regular meetings to measure progress against various stages (draft, revision, approval, edit, eg).

DRAFTING

Resource: Communication Strategy Framework

The key to writing a good strategy document is always to keep in mind the target audience and the essential message. The document should be concise and to the point and free of confusing jargon.

Although the workshops so far have been team based, it is helpful when drafting to have one person as lead writer to ensure a consistent narrative voice and writing style.

Once the document has been drafted, an editor will finesse the style and iron out any errors. Additionally, a graphic designer should be tasked with creating a nice visual presentation of the document.

To structure the strategy, go back to the Strategy Framework template (which will have been updated over time to reflect areas where your organization wants to place emphasis) and fill in the document with the key takeaways from the previous steps. See the Communication strategy framework for instructions on what should be included in each section. Below are a few additional pointers.

1. Current situation and background. This section is grounded in the relevant information gathered in Activity III.VIII. Consolidate Situation Analysis. Other analysis and insight can be used to fill it out.

2. Strategy objectives. Make sure each objective is clear and distinct from the other. If two objectives are similar in substance, try to combine them into one.

3. Key strategy stakeholders. Fill in the major groups outlined during the stakeholder mapping activity and divide them into primary and secondary stakeholders. To do this, first analyse the relationship with each stakeholder to determine which groups are primary stakeholders and which are secondary. The stakeholders should be as specifically defined as possible.

4. Activities. This section is in many ways the heart of the strategy as it will shape im

plementation. It should outline the activities defined during work and implementation plan development, which have already been matched to an objective, with an indication of which audiences the activity engages and its strategic value. Make sure you take into consideration the capacity assessment audit to define realistically what can be carried out.

5. Communications work plan. The activities should be organized in a calendar, indicating starting date and due date. It is recommended to list activities in sequence, so that more complex activities build on the work previously done by simpler activities.

TIP: If there are plans to develop any major campaigns or publications it is recommended to create separate work plans and calendars for each action. This does not have to be done as part of the strategy; but it should be done. This will help to keep track of the work and ensure timely delivery.

6. Monitoring and Impact Evaluation. This section should provide a list of indicators to monitor and evaluate the activities for each objective. Select the indicators in line with the capacities listed in the Step II Audits exercise, ensuring that expectations are reasonable and achievable according to the resources of the organization.

TIP: It is helpful also to establish baseline indicators, against which progress can be measured.

7. Risks and Assumptions. This section will list factors that might have an impact on the strategy's implementation and success. It covers what is needed to succeed (assumptions) and what may be beyond the purview of the organization but nonetheless have a negative impact on it. Use the key risks identified during the activity Risk assessment and strategy for mitigating risks. Also think about what assumptions underlie the strategy and what is being done to test these assumptions.

8. Others. Some NSOs choose to include a background section before the situation analysis, which covers the institutional mandate, values, objectives, etc. of the organization.

The background section might also list and review past and existing communications strategies. It could also refer to the relevant NSDS sections, which were used to inform the strategy.

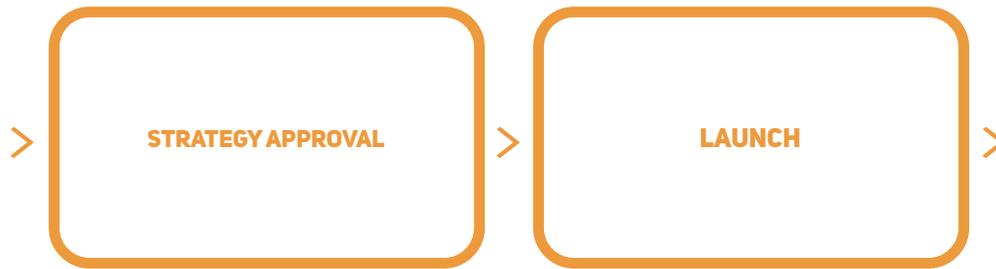
This places the strategy into the much larger context of the history of the organization and the other institutional factors at play in the strategy's development and implementation. If the final strategy document is to be made public, it is advisable to include this background.

9. Annex. In this section you can include any supporting documentation that might be relevant for understanding the strategy.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A clear division of labor and editorial calendar for drafting
- The production of a well-written, easy-to-read document that succinctly maps the new strategic vision, well-articulated activities, a guide to implementation and evidence of the logical foundation that justifies all three
- The strategy document reflects the values and objectives of the organization and ensures effective communication at all levels

STEP 5: STRATEGY APPROVAL AND LAUNCH



Once the strategy has taken shape, there are only a couple of remaining steps to take before implementation begins. First, the strategy document needs to be endorsed by senior management. Then, the strategy should be launched internally so that all staff are aware of it and understand the implications for their work.

PRESENT TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT FOR APPROVAL

Once the strategy is drafted the final version needs to be cleared by the same set of senior managers who approved the findings at the end of Step 3.

LAUNCH

After the final strategy has been approved, plan its launch. When planning the launch it is important to consider the need for a launch, define its main objectives and list the key opportunities that this launch might represent for the success of the strategy.

The specific form that your launch takes will take different forms depending on your organisation. It could be in the form of an all-staff lunch, an email sent to all staff, or simply printing out copies and distributing them among colleagues. However you launch it, ensure that you include a simple one-page overview that conveys:

- Why the strategy was developed
- How it will help your NSO achieve its mission
- What the implications are for staff
- Who they can contact for further guidance

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The launch of a new strategy document approved by senior management with the right foundations to ensure successful implementation
- The presence of key stakeholders at the launch so to ensure early buy-in and engagement

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