



2019 Communications Planning Tips

A communication plan is your road map for getting your message delivered to your audience. It's an essential tool for ensuring your organization sends a clear, specific message with measurable results. Writing a communication plan can be time-consuming. Here are six steps that will help you create an effective communication plan for your business.

1. **Perform a situation analysis.**

Conduct an audit to evaluate where you currently stand in terms of communications. You need to gather and analyze all relevant information within your organization. To conduct your own communications audit, you may need to do the following:

- Brainstorm with other communications professionals.
- Conduct surveys and focus groups.
- Talk to other departments in your organization.

2. **Define objectives.**

After you collect and evaluate all information, define your overall communications *objectives*. *What are the results you want to achieve?* What do you want to accomplish by implementing this communication plan? Your objectives should be SMART:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable.
- **A**chievable.
- **R**ealistic.
- **T**ime-focused.

3. **Define key audiences.**

You need to know to whom you are delivering your messages. List all the *key audiences* of your organization.

These may include the following:

- Members/non-members.
- Clients.
- Related associations.
- Educators.
- Local government officials.
- Media representatives.

4. Identify media channels.

Plan to deliver your messages to your key recipients through multiple media channels. Decide which media channels would be the most effective to get your message delivered to your target audiences.

5. Establish a timetable.

In order to achieve communications objectives, you need to plan and time your steps for the best results. Based on your research and your resources, develop a solid timing strategy to execute the steps of your communication plan.

6. Evaluate the results.

It's always important to measure your results to understand whether you achieved your objectives. If you aren't satisfied with the results, make necessary adjustments in order to perform better next time. Your evaluation might take the form of the following:

- Annual reports.
- Monthly reports.
- Progress reports.
- Reports from other departments.

Developing a written communication plan will take some effort – and it's worth it. A communication plan is your main tool for successfully delivering messages to key audiences to develop your mutually beneficial relationships. A well-written plan will help you achieve your business objectives and maximize your performance.