



There are many different versions and “right answers” to a strategic communications plan. The right contents are what is right for your organization. Here are suggested sections to help you create a nonprofit strategic communications plan.

Use our template to help you create a strategic communications plan.

Overview

Simple introduction and high-level overview and purpose of the document and plan.

Organization Mission, Vision, Values

The guiding principles and purpose of your organization.

Organization History/Background/Important Statistics

The history, background, and any important statistics about your nonprofit organization. If a new staff person or intern were to pick up this plan and read it, what would you want this person to know to help give context to the plan?

Organization Objectives

Where is your organization going? What are the top priorities for the next two years? This is your north star. This is critical because your communications efforts must tie to your organizational efforts, otherwise, your communications will not be considered “strategic”!

Communications Strategies

How can communications advance the above organizational objectives? Just like finance, programs, human resources... communications should not function as an independent entity. It exists to serve. Decide what the communications achievements are that you want to strive for that support the direction of the organization as a whole. Three to four priorities are all you need. Do three things really well, rather than trying to spread yourself thin.

Communications Channels

This section can be as detailed or high-level as you prefer. You should identify your top external communications channels for distribution. This may include: website, email system, text messaging system, list all social media channels, mail, phone calls, etc.





Target Audiences

Who are the people you need to help achieve those goals? It may be teachers, nurses, legislators, donors... it depends on who you are and where you're going. Identify these segments of people, then get to know them. Create personas based on their behavior and preferences so you can communicate from their point of view (not yours).

Messaging

You know who your audience is and now you must be crystal-clear with what you want them to know and what you need from them. This isn't a script for every engagement, rather it's an underlying theme for all communications (from you and your non-communications colleagues).

Implementation Plan

How will this actually be put into action? Should include: timeline, persons responsible, budget, and any other logistical details.

Timeline

The best way to keep yourself and your team accountable to any plan is to schedule it. With a communications plan, a schedule also ensures coordination across all departments. It saves the organization from bombarding the same audience with various messages all at once.

Persons Responsible

Who is taking responsibility for this tactic? A communications plan is not an action plan for the communications team to tackle on their own. Think of the communications director as a conductor – someone who leads and coordinates the team, but not necessarily the one playing every instrument. Communications is an organization-wide effort, but busy colleagues need to know their role.

Budget

What is this tactic going to cost you both in money and hours? When you look at the resources required to implement a particular tactic, you may rethink it. Do you need a website overhaul? Will you need a consultant to manage data? What are printing costs?... You know better than anyone that your resources are limited. It's time to figure out where you'll get the best bang for your buck.

Evaluation

If this is your first communications plan – good news: you only have to start from scratch once! Track the success of your tactics. For example: Did you achieve what you set out to achieve with that Facebook campaign? By measuring success (and defining what success is), you'll know if it was a worthwhile effort and something you should continue.

What is in your strategic communications plan? Need a little guidance? Drop us a note at hola@cielostrategy.com

