HCCC Communications Planning Guide

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Why develop a communications plan?

The world of social media isn't always easy to navigate. To add some clarity to the chaos, take a moment to think about **what you are aiming to accomplish through your communications work and what your plan is to achieve it**. These two questions are the building blocks of what a communications plan is.

A communications plan not only helps **build an effective blueprint on what your content on social media will look like and achieve**, but it also **sets the tone and direction**. To help your organization get started in the process of crafting a communications plan, we created this toolkit to to help you find meaning in your online messaging so it is clear, cohesive and creative!

**What are the benefits of developing
a communications plan?**

Targets communication accurately

Raises your profile, refines image

Creates effective and lasting messaging

Helps achieve specific goals

Questions to get you started

There is no clear cut process to follow when developing your communications plan, but use the following questions and tools to get some ideas flowing. We will get into specifics on some of these questions later in the toolkit.

1. What is your purpose?

2. What does your current communication's strategy look like?

3. Who is your main audience?

4. What are your communications goals?

5. What resources do you have?

6. What is the main message of your content?

7. Have you created an action plan or social media calendar?

8. How will you evaluate your strategy?

Helpful resources for developing a roadmap:

1 [Community Toolbox: Developing a Plan for Communication](#)

2 [Strategic Communications Planning eBook](#)

3 [Strategic Communications Planning](#)

Understand the language of goal-setting

One of the most important aspects of developing an effective communications plan is goal setting. Here is an example of a framework you can you can use to develop communications goals for your organization's work.

GOAL: A goal is a broad primary outcome. Normally there is no measurement in the goal, and it only gives you the general direction of what you want your content to accomplish**.**

> **Increase engagement with partners on Facebook**

OBJECTIVE: An objective is a measurable, specific step you take to achieve a strategy. It helps quantify the goal and sets a target so that the strategy can be planned around it.

> **Get partners to like/comment/reshare at least 50% of my monthly Facebook content**

STRATEGY: A strategy is an approach you take to achieve the goal or how your goal is going to be achieved.

> **Tag relevant project partners in social media posts, like/comment/reshare their posts, send direct messages**

TACTIC: A tactic is a tool you use in pursuing the objective associated with your strategy. Tactics are the "what's" of the equation and represent action.

> **Use Canva to create content my partners will want to engage with**

How should your goals progress over time?

- Stage 1: Activity-Based Goals
  - Start off by focusing goals on your activity
- Stage 2: Audience-Building Goals
  - Progress to centering your goals to be more around your audience
- Stage 3: Engagement Goals
  - Finally, think about increasing engagement by setting goals for metrics

Additional types of goal setting strategies:

7 Popular Goal-Setting Strategies That Will Help You Achieve Great Things on Social Media

Examples of goal progression:

Activity-Based Goals

number of blog posts per month, tweets per day

Audience-Building Goals

number of email subscribers to the blog, and followers on LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.

For more tips on setting social media goals, click here

Engagement Goals

the social reach of your content, and retweets, mentions, likes, and comments

Creating an action plan

Once you've pinpointed what you want to accomplish with your communications content, it is time to think about what your message is, who your audience is and through which channels you are going to be disseminating content.

Audience	You need to understand your core audience (personas, profiles, demographics etc.).
Goals	Refer back to pages 6 and 7 on how to develop goals, strategies, objectives and tactics.
Message	Craft your message with your audience in mind. Think about what emotions you want to appeal to and if you want your language to be informal/formal.
Channels	Think about where your audience engages. Place your message where they'll see it

Free templates:

1 **Mind Tools Communications Planning Template**

2 **Miro: Communications Plan Template**

Inclusive Design for Social Media: Tips for Creating Accessible Channels

Other key considerations:

- Any number of things can happen in the course of a communication effort. Make sure to anticipate obstacles and emergencies
- Identify roles within your team to identify who will be contributing to this process and how
- Remember to think about and incorporate accessibility best practices into your planning

Planning to evaluate

Success on social media goes beyond tracking "likes." Measuring key metrics and articulating clear performance indicators (KPIs) are critical to meeting the goals of your plan. Let's define some key metrics and then look at specific KPIs so you can identify how you want to measure success before sharing your content.

What are social media metrics?

Your social media goals are what determine your metrics. For every goal, you need a related metric, which will help determine if your social strategy is hitting the mark or not. Looking at a combination of metrics is a great way to learn more about what levers you can pull to meet your specific goals.

Engagement

The engagement rate is a metric often used to track how actively involved with your content your audience is and the number of interactions your content received from users (likes, comments, shares, saves etc.)

Reach

Reach is the potential unique viewers a post could have (usually your follower count and the followers of accounts that have shared your post).

Remember!

When measuring the success of your social media strategy, engagement is key, but reach encourages people to take action. You can't have engagement without reach.

What is KPI?

Social media key performance indicators (KPIs) let you measure the success of your communications plan and help you improve your online performance. Each metric has it's own KPI that can be measured.

Reach

Follower count: Look at how many followers and fans you have on each platform.
- To take things one step further, you can also calculate your audience growth rate

$$\frac{\text{New Followers}}{\text{Old Followers}} \times 100 = \text{Growth Rate \%}$$

Impressions: This shows how many times your posts showed up on a timeline or newsfeed.
- To calculate impressions:
  - Identify the number of impressions for a given post, on a given platform
  - Identify the reporting period to measure, such as a week, month or quarter
  - Compare to previous periods to see a trend

Web traffic: This is when social media users click your links to visit your website.
- Based on the platform you created your website on, you should be able to measure the following items:
  - Total visits
  - Pages per visit
  - Average visit duration

"What is KPI?" continued

Engagement

Clicks: Clicks are one of the simplest forms of engagement to measure. It is simply how many people are clicking on your content.

Likes: The more likes a post gets, the higher engagement it will cultivate.

Shares: While likes are one of the many social media key performance indicators you should measure, if you want to look at true engagement, then make sure you track shares and retweets.

Comments: If your content is relevant, interesting and informative, it will spark a conversation with your followers.

Mentions: Organic mentions, like @mentions that aren't part of a reply, or being tagged by other followers on social media (like your partners) indicates good brand awareness.