

Developing a communications strategy

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Why communication is important

- Funders expect it
- An important part of all service delivery
- Enables mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders
- Influences a desired response

It doesn't matter how important, successful or creative your organisation's work is, if you can't communicate it, it doesn't mean a thing

Elements of an effective communications strategy

- Achievable objectives
- Target audiences
- Clear messages
- Appropriate transmission methods
- Evaluation

Objectives

What do you want to influence your audience(s) to do or to change?

- Change their behavior?
- Adopt a particular policy?
- Donate money?
- Make a particular decision?
- Influence others to do any of the above?

Audiences

Who are they? What do you know about their:

- background
- prejudices
- experience
- existing knowledge/understanding
- gaps in their knowledge/understanding

What impact will this have on the way you present your messages?

Messaging

Types of messages

1. Over-arching message
2. Key messages

Examples of over-arching messages

Shelter:

Everyone has the right to a decent home

Charter 88

We need constitutional change in order to become a fair and modern democracy

Key messages

- Need to focus on **two or three** key messages
- A key message can be a statement, an argument, a call to action, or even a killer fact

Key messages continued

Don't confuse messages with information.
Work out what your messages are and **back them up** with:

- information
- evidence
- examples/case studies
- anecdotes
- background and context
- third party endorsement

Interference

What is the environment through which your messages will pass

- Noise
- Information overload
- Competing messages
- Audience's circumstances
- Audience's behavior

Language for key messages

- Short simple memorable phrases
- Clear and concise, not fuzzy
- Get to the heart of the matter
- Avoid long words if a short one will do
- Avoid jargon
- Don't drown us in statistics, say 'more than half' not 52.66%
- Compelling - appeal to the heart and the head
- Unique

Soundbites

Pithy phrases that make your message stand out

- **Trebles** - *'Education Education Education'*
- **Metaphors/similes** - *'Bombing Afghanistan is like taking a blow-torch to cure cancer (Prof M Howard)*

- **Chiasmus** - *'You can take the city out of the girl, but you can't take the girl out of the city'*
- **Comparison** - *'Where I live in East London it's easier to find a hit man than it is to get hold of a decent plumber.'* (Jeff Howell)
- **Popular phrases** - *'William Hague, you are the weakest link. Goodbye.'* (Tony Blair.)
- **References to what's in the news** - *'It's like a 100-metre sprint'* during the Olympics
- **Alliteration** - *Arts projects help young refugees build their creativity, confidence and communication skills*

Message transmission

- Internet - websites, e-zines
- Editorial coverage in the media
- Advertising
- Publications - newsletters, brochures, annual reports
- Exhibitions
- Events - organising your own or participating in others
- Face to face - presentations, networking, meetings
- Third party endorsement
- Letters

Process for developing and implementing your strategy

- Determine priorities
- Schedule of activities
- Identify roles and accountabilities
- Allocate resources/budget
- Sustainability plan
- Evaluate