



# BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

A Centre for Strategic Communication Excellence toolkit

# HOW TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Have you ever felt that your efforts to engage staff are going nowhere? Worried that your communication isn't hitting the mark? Know that you need to communicate but don't know where to start? Well, this toolkit is definitely for you.

Frequently, the effort spent preparing and distributing communication fails to produce results, often because of a failure to plan that communication strategically.

Strategic communication focuses on analysis, integrated planning and implementation of activities that deliver business outcomes. However, strategic communication doesn't just happen; it is a product of a structured planning activity that considers the internal and external environment, business needs, research, audience, stakeholders, key messages, communication channels and measurement.

Do it well and your communication efforts will drive business results, build your reputation and earn you the role of trusted advisor and business partner within your organisation.

## **Using this toolkit**

Based on the Centre for Strategic Communication Excellence's planning process, this toolkit takes you through an easy-to-follow approach to strategic communication planning.

Communication planning is an iterative process – you may find that you need to revisit some of the steps several times to produce a robust, integrated and balanced communication strategy.

Essentially, your communication strategy relates proposed communication activity back to your strategic goals (business need and communication outcome), and thus provides a rationale for conducting them. Securely anchored in organisational strategy, it outlines key messages, audiences, communication channels and tactics and proposed measures of success. A successful communication strategy must cover all these components and be underpinned by a secure foundation of goals and objectives.

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLANNING PROCESS



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# BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

## PART 1: RESEARCH

It is important to be able to demonstrate that your communication strategy is based on a thorough knowledge of your organisation's communication preferences and best practices in strategic communication. This requires having a thorough understanding of your audiences and knowledge of current trends in communication. Of course, the stakeholder analysis activity will yield important information but this can be supplemented with other research. Even if you don't have a budget for original research, there are other options available. Chances are data already exists in-house. Failing that, conduct secondary online research and benchmark against best practices in the profession. Research as an input to strategic planning is the basis for establishing meaningful, measurable objectives, and deliberately measuring against them. In other words, benchmarks.

## PART 2: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A successful communication strategy needs a set of goals and objectives that clearly articulate what the strategy is aiming to achieve.



**Goals** are best described as broad, generic statements that set out the overall aims of the communication activity, for example:

- ▶ Inform staff about the appointment of a new CEO
- ▶ Present and explain the recent annual results to staff
- ▶ Substantially increase the number of staff participating in the corporate wellbeing program

Goals provide a good sense of the overall aim but don't give details of **what** needs to be achieved or **how** it will be done. So, the next step is to define objectives that will provide these details.

**Objectives** are precise statements that outline specific and measurable outcomes. The key to developing objectives is that they should be **SMART**:

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