Communications Planning 101

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Our Goals

• Reduce stress by convincing you that communications are not that complicated.

• Explain why communications are WORTH doing.

• Provide a simple process to follow.
Why do a communications plan?

- Captures everything in detail once, then offers roadmap to follow.
- Prior planning prevents poor performance.
- Keeps everyone on the same page.
- Tracks what worked/didn’t for next time.
Objectives

What is success?

Crafted with different models
- SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely)
- Not all objectives can be easily measured

Valuable step in planning … don’t skip it!
- Focuses your effort and priorities
- Tells when to halt communications
- Guides next time
Example objective: Communicate to the community about the closure of a popular trail for 3 months due to construction, by April 3.

Try it Yourself!

Select a scenario on the worksheet or write one.

Introduce yourself and share your objective with a nearby person.
Audiences

• There is no “general public”
• Targeting is essential
• Who can you realistically reach?
  • Create and maintain contact lists
  • Save your big list for your big splash news
Example objective: Communicate to community about the closure of a popular trail for 3 months due to construction by April 3.

Audiences:
Board members
Neighbors
Media
Participants in programming
Recreation groups/clubs
Staff
Visitors to that area
Volunteers

Try it Yourself!

Select your audiences on the worksheet or write a new one.

Introduce yourself and share your objective and audiences with a different person nearby.
Messaging

- Always include the basics- Who, What, When, Where, Why, contact information
- Branding for your organization
- Consider audience
  - Use data
  - Consider their values and how you can connect with what matters to them
  - Relationships with key contacts who share with their networks, help you find language that resonates.
- Consider the “worst case scenario” and head off problems
Example objective: Communicate to community about the closure of a popular trail for 3 months due to construction by April 3.

Message:
The XYZ Trail will be closed from April 3 to July 3 for construction to build a more sustainable and safe trail. Try ZYX trail instead.

Attention Mountain Bikers- XYZ trail will be closed April 3 to July 3 to bring you a better experience. Construction will include new alternate lines for advanced cyclists.
Budget

How much do you have to spend?

- Paid ads, print items, swag, etc. cost money
- Other tools are FREE!
- Free doesn’t always mean boring or ineffective
Tools

What do you have?
• Create a master list
• Highest impact for least cost

What tools work best to reach each audience?
• Goal is to deliver message to audience
Example objective: Communicate to community about the closure of a popular trail for 3 months due to construction by April 3.

Tools:
- Enews
- Flyer at trailhead kiosk
- News release
- Social media
- Video (gather time lapse footage for later communications)
- Personal email
- Direct mail
- Website posting

Optional: share with the group.
### Timetable/Task List

Determine who will do what and when
- Creates the action items that implement the plan
- Chart helps you make sure all audiences and tools are addressed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-March</td>
<td>Recreation Clubs</td>
<td>The trail is being improved for sustainability, safety and hiking/biking/equestrian visitor experience.</td>
<td>Personal email</td>
<td>TPR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 25</td>
<td>Visitors</td>
<td>The trail is closed starting 4/3 for improvements.</td>
<td>Trailhead flyer</td>
<td>Rangers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailed March 29</td>
<td>Neighbors</td>
<td>Trailhead construction will create traffic delays, please plan ahead. Trail was approved in XX plan with public input.</td>
<td>Direct mail</td>
<td>ZS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example objective: Communicate to community about the closure of a popular trail for 3 months due to construction by April 3.

Timeline Statement example:
By March 25 contact visitors to the open space trailhead via flyer on trailhead kiosk about closure basics – Rangers

Fill in the last section of worksheet
Monitor then Evaluate

- See how things are going, listen to conversation in the community
  - Increase/decrease if needed
  - Respond to feedback

- How did your objective go?
  - Can be simple notes about how many stories got picked up, website analytics, did you make your registration goal?
  - Use what you learned next time
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