

# Communication Plan

In its simplest form, a communications plan outlines who you need to communicate with, what you are going to communicate, how you're going to do it, and how often.

For some clubs and organisations, the idea of developing a communications plan might seem a bit daunting and may not be a high priority. In fact, compiling a communications plan is as simple as going through some simple steps and answering a few questions

Developing a communications plan should be an ongoing process. As your club grows and changes, the way and what you communicate will also need to change.

**TOP TIP: Start with who, what and how.**

## Setting objectives

The key element of a communication plan is its objectives. These must clearly support your club in achieving its stated goals. If you are clear about what your club's business is, where it is heading and what it is trying to achieve, it is much easier to work out how you can support this through communication. You also need to be realistic about the resources and budget you have to support your objectives.

## Target audience

Many clubs overlook who it is they are really trying to communicate with. It is no use having something to say if you are targeting the wrong audience, so it is essential to be clear on who is the target. There will be a number of target audiences to communicate with that can influence the success of your club and it is important that you undertake a realistic assessment of this and what messages each will be interested in and prioritise them.

## Key messages

Conflicting messages create confusion. For this reason, it is essential that you define the key messages your club wants to communicate and ensure it they are understood by your board, committee, staff, volunteers and anyone else likely to be communicating about you to others.

If you don't know what you want to say to people, or what they need to know about your club, your communication activities will be wasted. A common mistake is to talk about the things that are important to you, but not what is important or relevant to your audiences.

Ideally, you should have a set of 3-5 overarching messages that are applicable to all of your audiences, and a second set that are specific and relevant to each of your target audiences.

## Communication channels

Once you have worked out your key messages and target audiences, you need to then choose the right channels to convey your message. There are many ways of getting your message across – from flyers, newsletters, electronic newsletters, local media (newspapers, radio, TV), website and engaging an online audience via email or social media.



Regardless of how you decide to communicate your message to your key stakeholders and audiences, you need to ensure you use the right one for each group. For example, if your audience is young teenagers, social media could be the ideal way to get your message across.

You must keep very firmly in mind what you can realistically do given your budget and the skills and resources available to you. This will also help you determine the frequency of your messaging.

Ideas for communicating with your members:

- **E-Newsletters** – a weekly or monthly email update is great if you have a database of email addresses for your members and stakeholders.
- **Flyers** – particularly useful if your target audience is in a particular area or neighbourhood. Also useful for schools, local councils, placing on community noticeboards or directly into letterboxes.
- **Website** – an essential communication tool for most audiences. This is generally the most used resource for communicating to your current and future audiences. It is essential you keep it up to date.
- **Social media** – establishing a Twitter feed or Facebook page for your club can be a good way of getting your message across to a large online audience. Ensure your messages are up to date and to the point. If you are not able to monitor your social channels regularly, turn off comments.
- **Local media** – local papers are an excellent way of getting your message out to the wider community. You can get free PR if you send a good story and photo opportunity to the editor or local journalist.

## Monitoring and reviewing

Once you have developed your communication strategy, it is important to monitor its effectiveness against the objectives you set. This could be as simple as asking members if they have seen the news article in the local paper or received their e-newsletter and their thoughts on it. You can also look at the number of visits to your website, the pages most visited and the level of engagement on your social channels.

A good communication plan is not static. It constantly changes according to the nature of your club, the messages you need to communicate and the effectiveness of the channels you use.

By constantly reviewing and updating your communication plan, you can learn new ways of communicating with your audience and ensuring the success for your club.

