



Module 5

Communication Channels

Introduction to the module



Module 5:
Channels
of
communication

All messages in a NGO have to pass through proper channels. A message that has to be passed needs a channel (which can be a person as well) who passes the information, a channel that might hold an important position in the hierarchical system of the organisation.

How you deliver information is just as important as what information you deliver to an audience. It is important to understand the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of communication channels: choose the correct one (whether it be oral, written or visual communication material you want to transmit) and work out a communication plan regards to which channels you will use.

In this module you can learn about:

- the different communications vehicles
- methods to manage Digital Communication Channels



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Choice of communication channels

People and organizations communicate with others for a variety of reasons: to inform, persuade, prevent misunderstandings, present a point of view or reduce barriers.

Communications can help

- Provide support/services
- Increase awareness/visibility
- Support policy change
- Help gain support and recognition
- Increase funding
- Change behavior or attitudes
- Recruit volunteers
- Attract members, clients, donors, etc.
- Organize community
- Change behavior or attitudes

the sound of silence





The choice of vehicles

There are many communications vehicles available from which to choose. To narrow down your choices, you have to consider:

- 1. Your resources:** Evaluate the resources you already have, use your already existing communication channels to reach your target audiences and influence them with your message(s). If they don't seem to be efficient, think about investing in other channels or come up with new strategies.
- 2. Timing** is another very important consideration when choosing your communications vehicles. You don't want your message to "compete" unnecessarily with other information; nowadays people are overwhelmed by information, choose wisely, be simple and direct; choose a channel that people use throughout the day so you can set an exact time for your message.
- 3.** Finally, there is **the budget**. Don't let a limited budget discourage you. There are many inexpensive communication vehicles





Communication channels

Below you can find some examples of different types of communication channels and tools:

Paid Advertising

- Print, newspapers, magazines: good for conveying details
- Radio: effective if carefully targeted
- Television: effective in reaching broad target audiences, expensive
- Outdoor: good for mobile audiences
- Transit ads: good for urban audiences
- Mall displays: good consumer targeting

Print Materials

- Brochures/pamphlets/publications: are good communications tools if they are targeted to those who need the information and are open to the message
- Posters: highly visible for a long time, can suggest a special occasion
- Newsletters: a good communications tool when targeted carefully
- Annual report: important corporate information





Media relations (an indirect communication)

- Media relations (an indirect communication)
- Regular contact with journalists
- Mailing lists must be well maintained
- One-on-one interviews with the media
- News releases - News conferences
- Electronic releases - video, audio
- Talk shows
- Information kits with background information
- Issue spokesperson: having someone available to speak about an issue or announcement
- Feature articles (blog, web site postings...)

Community Relations

- Direct mail: direct, expensive
- Public speaking: very effective personal contact, needs time commitment
- Audio Visual presentations: provide a dramatic message
- Personal contacts: effective, time consuming
- Public meetings: bring people together, can provide competition or opposition with a platform
- Site tours: provide in-depth information, can eliminate suspicions
- Educational opportunities: visit classrooms, meet with teachers
- Sponsorship opportunities



Government Relations

Regular contact with key officials
Add government officials/offices to your mailing list
Briefings/briefing documents

Organization/Corporate Communications

Spokesperson
Speeches
Special events
Displays
Trade shows or special client-group meetings
Annual and other reports
Annual meetings

Internal Communications

Meetings
Newsletters
Employee annual report
Information in pay envelopes
Letters sent to employees' homes
Bulletin board messages
Electronic mail messages
Employee special events

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Digital Communication Channels

Microsite or Website

A microsite is a simple website that is highly focused and makes it easy for the viewer to find exactly what they came for. This is in contrast to a general company website that is designed to deliver many different messages and risks losing the viewer before they find what you want them to read.

We highly recommend microsites for targeted large-scale internal communication initiatives for several reasons: They are quick to produce, effective, highly focused, and provide great analytics.

Blog

Blogs are a versatile internal communication channel they offer an inexpensive and personal way to communicate. They're also a good way to create more personal connections. The challenge is to keep the content coming. You likely have blogs you follow that can inspire you with possibilities as well.

Social Media

Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter are among the highest-traffic social media channels and can be targeted by interest groups, departments, or topics. These interactive channels can be suited to sharing ideas and issues and for monitoring feedback from colleagues, volunteers, collaborators, reference figures.

The downside, of course, is that social media cannot be controlled, which means it remains one of the most challenging channels for communicators to monitor and influence.





App

The apps that are dedicated to communication are on the rise: they provide a customizable channel for delivering text, audio, and video content, allowing to communicate beyond email and phone calls. Apps vary by vendor but can allow preference settings and be used to deliver:

- News
- Executive updates
- Videos
- Recognition
- Blogs
- Notifications
- Surveys

Email

Email is still the most frequently used channel for internal communication (96% use it). It can be challenging, however, to reach those whose inboxes are full or who don't have desk jobs.

Here are some tips on getting your internal communication emails read.:





1. Start with the main point in a single sentence.

We're sometimes tempted to start at the beginning to tell the whole story, thinking that a reader needs to understand what led to the point. Start with a summary statement that gives them enough information if they go no further—or a reason to proceed.

2. Invest in writing a good subject line.

This not only helps someone decide if he or she should read it, but helps them find it later. Retrieval of emails later can be time-consuming and downright frustrating if the subject line isn't clear.

3. Make it easy to browse.

Use subheads to help the reader find the section pertinent to him or her.

Use bullets instead of paragraphs.

Underline, highlight, or change font colors on the key point





Newsletters

Newsletters, magazines, and other print channels aren't dead, but complement your digital channels. They:

- Help reach non-desk employees
- Are easily shared
- Are good for the pick-up-since-it's-handy impulse
- Can be repurposed digitally
- Since they can be more costly than other channels and are harder to measure than many digital options, use them in situations where other channels aren't effective.

Podcast

Podcasts are being used for communication because they giving content to listen to while engaged in other activities that don't require visual focus. Whether doing chores, or exercising, people increasingly crave content to enrich life's more mundane activities.

A podcast:

- Can be authentic and believable
- Can feature voices of a organization
- Can personalize leaders

Podcasts are a versatile tool, but companies that use them will need to have an effective delivery channel (think apps and e-letters).



Environmental Channels



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Wall Messaging

Yes, your walls can talk! They are free communication channels that can reach people many times a day. Think of them as ideal places to communicate some of your most timeless messages—your mission, your history, your values.

Walls are versatile and suitable for digital as well as traditional messages. If your main traffic areas aren't delivering your signature messages to your team, it's time to make use of these targeted channels.

Displays and banners

Portable displays are good for targeting specific messages that need to be shared in different locations.

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