

Communications Planning

Creating a strategic communications plan may be one of the most overwhelming, challenging and frustrating tasks for any communicator. However, a sound communications plan is key to conveying your church's message to your congregation as well as local and national communities. Communications planning is an intentional process that looks at what each of your church's audiences need to hear from you. Below is a communications plan template to help you develop a strategic communications plan to help keep the congregation and community informed and engaged with your church.

Communications Plan Template

Situational Analysis As a preamble to your plan, write an introductory paragraph describing the current status of your church or ministry. This will help make the case for the Goals, Objectives, Strategy and Tactics easier to explain. You might also consider a SWOT (strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats) analysis with the pastor and key ministry staff. This could provide valuable input and initial buy-in of plan.

Communications Goals Goals are longer term and not necessarily tangible. They define the desired outcome - the results we strive to achieve. Goals provide direction and a purpose and express general intentions – they are broad, intangible, abstract.

Objectives Objectives are specific, tangible points leading to your goal. They are shorter term and should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-oriented (SMART). Objectives support the achievement of related goals.

Strategies Strategies are general approaches used to achieve complicated goals or objectives.

Tactics Tactics are action steps or tools used to help implement the strategies, achieve objectives and attain goals.

Key Messages Your key messages are simple, clear ideas that summarize the essence of your program or project. They should function as guiding principles for all kinds of communications, from brochures and videos to online information, media interviews or conversations with your stakeholders. The main point is that messages must be clear and consistent across all kinds of communications.

Target Audiences Who do you want to reach with your message?

Long-Term Projects Good ideas that you want to hold on to and consider at some point.

Calendar By Month Decide the best times to implement the activities in your plan and how you will continue implementation over the length of the plan. Be intentional. However, remember time frames are often tentative and may need to be revised during the life of your plan.

Budget Don't let budget keep you from dreaming big for your church. Consider all opportunities. You can always pare down the plan as budgets dictate.

On-going Evaluation You can tweak your plans as needed. Your plan shouldn't be written in stone and placed on a shelf to collect dust. You should keep your plans at your fingertips and evaluate it often.