

Communications Plan

First Example Presbyterian Church

***Situational Analysis:** As a preamble to your plan, write an introductory paragraph describing the current status of your ministry area. 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 directors and key program staff. This could provide valuable input and initial buy-in of plan.*

Sample Situational Analysis

First Example Presbyterian Church is a 200-member, 100-year-old congregation affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA). Our church is dedicated to nurturing spiritual growth and demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ. Our members believe the love of God extends far beyond the walls of the church as demonstrated through outreach ministries (locally and globally), education for children and adults and nurture and fellowship.

First Example struggles with some of the same issues facing many Presbyterian churches: an aging church population, decreasing attendance, few young people in the pews and shrinking budgets, aging facilities and unmet capital needs, declining pledge income, fewer members living in close proximity to First Example, leader burnout. From a communications standpoint, challenges include lack of staff, not enough volunteers.

***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.*

Sample Goal: Enhance internal communications focus, raise external awareness, increase engagement with existing and prospective members.

***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.*

Sample Objectives

1. Increase attendance at First Example Presbyterian Church by five percent.
2. Increase member engagement across six program areas by 10 percent.
3. Increase the number of new families with young children (birth – elementary) by 10 percent over four years.
4. Increase financial giving by five percent over three years.
5. Grow our digital and online presence by:
 - a. Increasing engagement, “likes” and comments on Facebook by five percent in one year.
 - b. Increasing Twitter followers by ten percent in one year.
6. Cultivate 10 new church leaders and 15 new volunteers over the next two years.

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

Sample Strategies

1. Empower each person in the pew to be an ambassador by equipping them with necessary tools.
2. Increase digital communication focus and capabilities while not losing touch with audiences accessible only through print.
3. Utilize media relations to bring awareness to First Example Presbyterian
4. Leverage relationship with national PCUSA offices to get national exposure for First Example Presbyterian.

Strategies with Tactics

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

Sample Strategies with Tactics

1. Empower each member to be an ambassador by equipping them with necessary tools.
 - a. Conduct a time and talent assessment to determine capabilities of church members
 - b. Identify external communications channels (everything from asking members to post on FB to sending announcement to local radio station)
 - c. Conduct a communications assessment to evaluate the effectiveness and message consistency in both electronic and print communications
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
 - g.
2. Increase digital communication focus and capabilities while not losing touch with audiences accessible only through print.
 - a. Survey the congregation on preferred methods of communication: text, email, print, web, phone, etc.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
3. Utilize media relations to bring awareness to First Example Presbyterian
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

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- d.
4. Leverage relationship with national PCUSA offices to get national exposure for First Example Presbyterian.
 - a. “Pitch” stories of mission at First Example Presbyterian to the national communications office for use on the PCUSA website an social media.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
 - g.
- 5.

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

Sample Audiences

- Existing church members
- Prospective church members
 - Families with young children
 - General public
- Local/Regional Media outlets
- Presbytery leaders
- National PCUSA offices
- Ecumenical/Interfaith partners
- Mission partners

Key Messaging

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.

Sample Key Messaging

First Example Presbyterian Church believes the love of God extends beyond the walls of the church. We are dedicated to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ in our community through outreach ministries, education for children and fellowship

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Resources/Staff

Consider the funds and personnel needed to enact your communications plan.

Long-Term Projects

Good ideas that you want to hold on to and consider at some point.

Timeline

Please note that your plan does not have to take place over the course of a year. Consider the timeframe that works best for your church then lay out a reasonable timeline.

Budget

Don't let budget keep you from dreaming big. Consider all opportunities, then pare down as budgets dictate.

On-going Evaluation Tweak your plan as needed. Measurable objectives can help you determine whether you're meeting your goal.