



Communications Planning IV: How to Engage and Measure Effectiveness

Effective communication is essential in winning new customers or donors, recruiting, and retaining great employees, influencing key audiences, and keeping pace with change. It's too important to approach haphazardly. Don't look at your communications plan as another box to check. Instead, think of it as a useful tool to move you and your organization forward.

FINDING THE RIGHT COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Today there are a myriad of ways to reach and engage your target audiences, so many in fact it can feel overwhelming. Finding the right channel at the right time is critical. That's why it is so important to understand your audiences, their needs and aspirations, and how and where they get information and connect with the people and companies they desire.

To determine the best channels, ask yourself the following questions:

- **How well do you know your audiences?**
 - Age, gender, location, education level, and income. Interests, values, lifestyle, and pain points
 - Media they consume, preferred communication styles, and buying behaviors.
 - Platforms they trust, and the types of content they engage with (e.g., video, email, social media).

- **What are the sources of information that are most credible for your audiences?**
 - Review studies or reports about which channels perform best for your audience demographics.
 - Look at what your competitors are doing and the channels they use
 - Evaluate industry trends

- **What Channels do your customers use and engage with?**
 - Younger audiences tend to prefer TikTok, Snapchat, or Instagram while professionals tend to use LinkedIn or pay attention to email newsletters. Your audiences also consume mass media, such as major digital, TV, and radio outlets.
 - Use tools like Google Analytics, social media insights, or CRM systems to assess which channels are driving traffic, engagement, and conversions.
 - Analyze past campaigns to see which channels were most effective.
 - Use A and B testing where you try two different messages and see which one pulls better

ACCOUNTABILITY AND MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

Set Clear Objectives and Expectations

If you don't define your goals and objectives, then it is hard to measure them. Ask yourself what you hope to accomplish through your communication. Be realistic. Your metrics must align with your objectives.



- Generate leads
- Increase your brand awareness
- Mobilize your audience to advocate for your cause or take action
- Build your authority and thought leadership
- Change customer and public perceptions of your company or organization
- Change behavior
- Provide feedback

As you are defining your objectives, it is important to think carefully about whether there are changes that can be observed and quantified, and how you might trace a business ROI to your communications efforts. Finally it is important to make sure you have allocated resources to measure your results.

Monitor Your Selected Channels

Traditional Media

If you are using traditional media (radio, TV news outlets like your local business newspaper, major national outlets like The Washington Post, New York Times, or targeted industry media or niche outlets, think about:

- How many outlets covered your story?
- Were the mentions positive, neutral, or negative?
- Were you featured in articles or stories that included quotes and photos or were you simply mentioned?
- Did your company or organization appear in well-respected, high-caliber outlets relevant to your audience?
- Are you seeing an increase in requests from the media for your company or organization representatives to offer their opinions and expertise as sources?

Google Alerts are a good first to help you track coverage, although they sometimes miss articles. If you are serious about media relations, you may want to look at professional media monitoring.

Your Website

Track changes in website activity during and after the campaign. Take note of traffic prior to launching a communications effort to be able to quantify the change. When tracking website traffic, ask yourself

- Did the campaign increase referral traffic, driving visitors from media or partner sites?
- **Are visitors spending more time on your site, and** engaging with your content?
- Did campaign-specific landing pages perform well?

Social Media

Assess how your communication efforts are resonating with your audience online:

- Are your audiences liking, sharing, commenting, and mentioning you? Getting lots of likes is good but even better are comments and mentions. .
- Are your efforts bringing new followers?
- Are people discussing your brand or campaign and is the sentiment positive?

Lead Generation and Conversions

If your campaign included a call-to-action, you can measure its effectiveness by asking



- Is there an increase in the number of inquiries by potential clients/customers about your services and products? Did the number of inquiries or sign-ups increase?
- Did sales, downloads, event registrations, or other desired actions meet your targets?

Audience Feedback and Surveys

You can gauge changes in perception and awareness through a variety of customer feedback mechanisms. Note that the very act of asking for feedback, if done well, is an engagement strategy and can help further connect you to your audiences.

Some ways to measure perception change include:

- Surveys to get a sense of customer sentiment. Conduct a survey before the launch of a new communications effort to serve as a baseline followed by a repeat survey within a few months or a year to see if perceptions or opinions have changed.
- Comments from your audiences via your website.
- Focus groups of your target audiences. Focus groups can be helpful before a new communications effort to get a sense of audience sentiment as well as to hear the words they use when describing your company or organization. This can help you design your communication. Focus groups post-campaign can also provide useful information.

EVALUATE YOUR PROGRESS

Review your plan every couple of months to understand how well your strategies are working. If you aren't getting the results you expected and desire, ask yourself:

- Is the strategy flawed?
- Are your assumptions incorrect?
- Has there been a shift internally or externally?
- Is there a problem with implementation or timing?
- Was there the right investment of dollars or time?
- How might you refocus?
- Should you abandon the strategy and try something else?

Have questions? Need help? Book a 30-minute free consultation with Liz Wainger [here](#).

Copyright Wainger Group 2024 All Rights Reserved