THE NONPROFIT COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

Acknowledgements

What needs to go on this page?
Supporter logos
Explanation of internship?
Promotional spot for Outburst?

DO YOU NEED THIS TOOLKIT?

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN?

YES · **NO** · **WE DON'T NEED ONE**

YES branch

DO STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS HAVE ACCESS TO THE PLAN AND USE IT?

YES · **NO**

- YES → **SO, THE PLAN IS EFFECTIVE?** → **YES** → **SO, THE PLAN IS EFFECTIVE?** → **YES** → **HOW DO YOU KNOW?** → **I JUST KNOW**
- YES → **SO, THE PLAN IS EFFECTIVE?** → **NO**
- NO → **SO, IT'S COLLECTING DUST?** → **NO**

WE DON'T NEED ONE branch

OH, REALLY? WHY?

WE'RE TOO SMALL · **WE'RE TOO BUSY** · **WE WON'T USE IT**

A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN WILL:

- EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES
- FOCUS EFFORTS AND RESOURCES
- ORGANIZE TASKS AND DUTIES
- CLARIFY RESPONSIBILITIES

YOU NEED THIS TOOLKIT

START WITH A PLAN

Nonprofits have complex visions and missions to increase awareness, advocate for a cause, improve clients' lives and so on. There are different objectives for different groups and not much time or resources to reach the right audiences effectively. This is why it is necessary to have a Communications Plan. The Nonprofit Communications Toolkit contains step-by-step exercises designed to get to the heart of your organization's needs to develop a strategic communications plan.

As you know plans come together in a variety of ways. Although this Toolkit was created to be useful for all nonprofits, you may find that it makes more sense for your organization to do some exercises in your own special way.

GETTING STARTED

You will need certain items in order to write your plan. Please collect to the best of your ability the following:

- Overall strategic plans of organization (Mission, Visions, Values, Goals)
- Any Communications plans, policies, or guidelines created so far
- Communication pieces from the organization
- Contact information for staff, volunteers, participants, members etc.
- Computer, Internet access, printer and phone
- File folder or binder for materials and notes
- Access to social media accounts, website and newsletter analytics

TIP: You should involve and consult staff, board members, supporters and volunteers in each step of writing your plan.

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

To write an effective Communications Plan, you will want to understand what has been done up to this point and where your organization currently stands. Ask yourself and your internal team these questions to discuss your current communications.

Are our marketing and communication efforts consistent with our mission?

Are your efforts effective at reaching your goals?

Who are you trying to reach and why?

Is there anyone on your board who has marketing or communications experience?

Who is responsible for the marketing and communications work? Is this effective?

What are your biggest challenges in regards to marketing and communications?

TIP: Your internal communications (between staff, board and your team) must be strong in order to have an effective and consistent external presence. Make sure all staff understand the importance of the Communications Plan and feel comfortable discussing it.
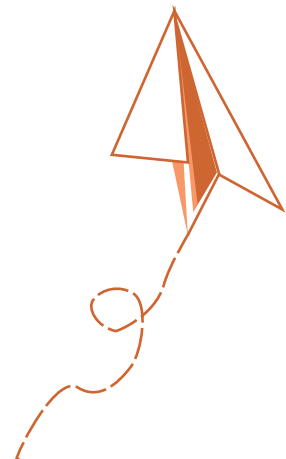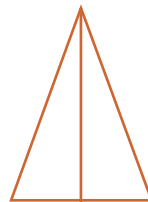
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Collect and lay out in front of you all the communication pieces your organization has sent out over the past year. Create a table with the name of communication piece listed along the top and evaluate based on the following.

EVALUATIONS	COMMUNICATION PIECES				
	WEBSITE	FACEBOOK	EVENTS	PRESS RELEASES	ENEWS
WHAT WAS THE GOAL?					
WHO WERE YOU TRYING TO REACH?					
HOW MUCH EFFORT WAS REQUIRED?					
IS IT CONSISTENT WITH BRANDING?					
HOW MUCH DID IT COST?					
WAS THE GOAL ACCOMPLISHED?					
IMPROVEMENTS/ SUGGESTIONS					

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

Asking yourself and your team these questions will help you prioritize and focus your efforts to create meaningful and achievable goals for your organization.

What are the overall goals of your organization? (i.e., What change would you be able to see) What is most important to your organization right now?

What tangible outcomes would you like to achieve through a communications effort? How will you know you are achieving your goals? (Be specific. What would you see, hear, or have in-hand that would let you know you are successful?)

What is your communications budget?

Your challenge is to be specific! Here are some examples:

•Acquiring new donors
•Engaging target audiences
•Raising brand awareness
•Retaining current donors
•Thought leadership positioning ourselves as experts
•Increase website traffic
•Acquiring program participants
•Building contact lists
•Recruiting new volunteers
•Retaining current participants

Is your brand consistent? Is it powerful?

TIP: Remember a goal can be achieved and measured

WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK?

Understanding your audiences is essential to creating messages that appeal to them. Consider creating an anonymous survey or telephone interview to ask participants, volunteers, donors and supporters and funders a couple questions about your organization.

1. How did you first hear about us and what made you want to become involved?

2. What is the most unique thing about us?

3. Why do you support us?

4. How do you receive information from us?

5. Are you happy with how you receive information from us?

TIP: Free and easy online survey tools are available from www.surveymonkey.com

WHO DO YOU NEED?

Brainstorm the groups of people you need to achieve your goals. Think about what groups you currently interact with, and ones you would like too to improve your work. These groups will become your "Target Audiences." The point of the exercise is to understand the groups and population around your organization and how you can create messaging that resonates with them.

| TARGET AUDIENCE | | | | | |
AUDIENCES	CHARACTERISITICS	WHERE CAN WE REACH THEM?	WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?	WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?	KEY MESSAGES

WHAT IS YOUR BRAND?

Looking at your mission, vision and goals, the main groups you serve and the sector in which you work, you can generate your Positioning Statement. A Positioning Statement is an "internal tool to guide marketing practices that identifies the target audience, the product and its category, a specific benefit, and is differentiable..." As a Mission Statement guides the work of your organization, a positioning statements guides the communication.

AN EXAMPLE OF A NONPROFIT POSITIONING STATEMENT:
"MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING (MADD)—CRUSADERS FOR AGGRESSIVE DRUNK DRIVING POLICY AND ACTION AND NATIONAL LEADERS IN PREVENTION AND VICTIM-ASSISTANCE."

These questions will help generate the information required to create your own positioning statement.

1) Who are the main individuals you serve?

2) What service do you provide? What does your programming seek to accomplish?

3) What makes you unique? (What separates you from other nonprofits? Other nonprofits in your service?)

4) What are the reasons people believe or support your organization?

HERE IS A FORMULA FOR WRITING YOUR POSITIONING STATEMENT. USING YOUR ANSWERS ABOVE, FILL IN THE BLANKS TO CREATE YOUR STATEMENT.

To...(target group that we serve), (Organization A) is the (service/term of reference) that (unique feature/point of difference/emotional benefit) and that is because (reasons to believe).

BRANDING GUIDELINES

Your logo, typeface, tone must all be consistent throughout your communications. Your frontline communication must also be in line with your Vision, Mission and Positioning Statement. Consistent communications not only increases credibility but increases the likelihood of brand recall in an individual's mind.

TONE — HOW SHOULD WE SOUND? WHO ARE WE?
Some examples of tone and character:
Thought leader
Political commentator
Helpful friend
Optimistic

LOGO — DO WE HAVE A SET LOGO THAT IS VISIBLE ON ALL OUR PIECES? WHAT ARE THE BEST MEASUREMENTS FOR IT? IS IT AVAILABLE IN BLACK AND WHITE?

FONTS — ARE ALL OF OUR FORMS AND PRESS RELEASES USING THE SAME FONT? WHAT FONT IS EASY TO READ AND VISUALLY APPEALING?

TIP: Serif fonts are good for print. Sans Serif fonts are preferred for web and larger displays.

COLOURS — WHAT ARE OUR BRAND COLOURS?

BY MAKING SOME INITIAL DECISIONS ABOUT THESE DESIGN ELEMENTS AND INCLUDING IT IN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY, YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN HAVE A CONSISTENT PRESENCE ACROSS ALL CHANNELS.

THE TOOLS

This exercise is meant to determine the best tools for your organization and which to add to your Communications Activities section of your strategy.

ITEM/ TOOL	PURPOSE	CONSISTENT MESSAGING AND DESIGN	FREQUENCY (SCHEDULE)	COST (ANNUAL)	RESPONSIBILITIY (STAFF, VOLUNTEER, ETC)
WEBSITE					
FRONTLINE STAFF					
PRESS RELEASE					
NETWORKING EVENT					
LOGO					
BROCHURE					
WEBINAR					
NEWSLETTER					
ANNUAL REPORT					

MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

Plan when you will formally evaluate your communications. It is recommended that a formal evaluation should take place semi-annually to annually. A formal evaluation of your communications will take the form of a written document. The report will comment on the status of communication objectives and audience perception based on your Communications Strategy.

If you are not currently measuring your efforts, consider recording and establishing benchmarks for metrics of engagement and reach. How many more likes does your Facebook page have? Did you receive more donations online? This quantitative data serves as a benchmark for your communication efforts so that you have a point of reference for what is working and what could use improvement.

Your evaluation is trying to determine the following:
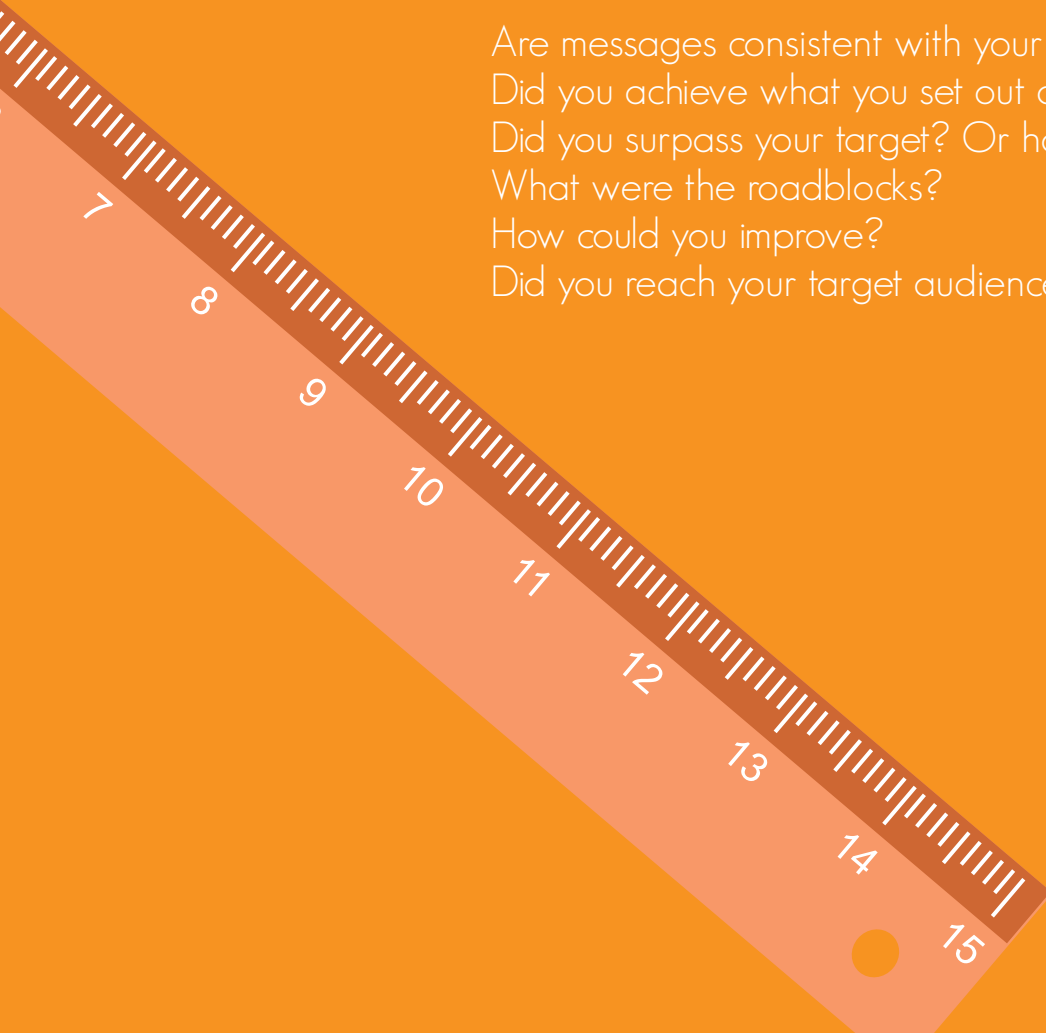
Are messages consistent with your organization?
Did you achieve what you set out do?
Did you surpass your target? Or how far were you off the mark?
What were the roadblocks?
How could you improve?
Did you reach your target audience?

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THE TEMPLATE

MISSION STATEMENT:

COMMUNICATION GOALS:

POSITIONING STATEMENT:

BRANDING GUIDELINES:

TARGET AUDIENCE					
AUDIENCES	CHARACTERISITICS	WHERE CAN WE REACH THEM?	WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?	WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?	KEY MESSAGES

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

ITEM/TOOL	PURPOSE	AVAILABLE METRICS (IMPACT)	DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION	DISTRIBUTION (PLACE/DATE)	THEME/FEATURE	RESPONSIBILITY (STAFF, VOLUNTEER, ETC)
WEBSITE						
BLOG						
PRESS RELEASE						
NETWORKING EVENT						
LOGO						
BROCHURE						
WEBINAR						
NEWSLETTER						
ANNUAL REPORT						

YOUR WEBSITE

Your website is your online headquarters. It should be updated frequently and all other communications should lead back to your website. For these reasons, you need a user-friendly content management system for your website. A content management system is a computer program that allows the editing, updating and publishing of content from a central location for your website. Because nonprofits do not usually have in their budget the salary for a webmaster, your website design and development should be handled by an outside web developer. This can be a heavy initial cost but is worth the investment. Website design and maintenance can get very complicated very quickly, so shop around for web developers who will set you up with a content management system and some basic training.

One of the most popular and recommended content management systems is Wordpress.org. This service allows a designer to have free reign with design for your site but is also simple enough so that staff is able to update and maintain the site. Having the freedom of being able to update your site in-house will be worth the initial cost and training.

THE WEBSITE CHECKLIST

Your website should at minimum contain the following information:

- Your Mission
- About
- Get Involved
- Donate
- Events
- Programs/Services
- Contact Us
- Social Media links (including newsletter signup)

TIP: Your Website Should:

- Be true to your organization
- Inspire action
- Have a clean, professional look and consistent tone
- Tell and share stories with compelling high quality imagery
- Have easy navigation with one click access
- Be different and memorable

SOCIAL MEDIA

Find below a description of the social media tool your nonprofit can add to your Communications Strategy, how you can use it and an example of a nonprofit that is nailing it! You will find some tools are more appropriate for your organization than others, be sure that whatever tools you choose to use are part of your overall strategy.

BLOG

- Great way to get exposure by having frequent updates and content
- High quality content generates discussion and engagement
- Your blog can give inside look into your organization, speak as an expert in your field or sector or update donors, volunteers and participants on programming

NONPROFIT NAILING IT: Charity Water http://www.charitywater.org/blog/

NEWSLETTER

- Can segment information to be available in your volunteer's donor's funders and sponsors mailboxes
- A scheduled point of contact your audience can look forward too on a weekly, bi-weekly, monthly basis
- MailChimp - Free account for mailing lists up to 2000 subscribers

NONPROFIT NAILING IT: The Nourish and Develop Foundation www.tndf.ca Participants and community members rejoiced when TNDF started using MailChimp. The online newsletter allowed TNDF to provide its audiences with program information and an events calendar.

FACEBOOK

- Most popular social media site
- Can share images, video, information and articles
- Over %70 of Canadian users are daily users
- Should post minimum 5 times a week
- Focus on the positive and personal side of stories and make content "shareable"

NONPROFIT NAILING IT: ONE https://www.facebook.com/ONE

SOCIAL MEDIA

TWITTER

- Considered a micro-blogging site
- Users upload posts with possible photos, videos, links that are limited by 140 characters
- Second most popular social media site in Canada
- Users "follow" pages and can "retweet" content
- Twitter works well for real-time reporting of events and fundraising efforts

NONPROFIT NAILING IT: World Wildlife Foundation https://twitter.com/WWF

YOUTUBE

- Video hosting and sharing social media site
- Second largest search engine
- Video offers a unique form of storytelling for your nonprofit
- You can now record, edit and publish a video on YouTube using your webcam

NONPROFIT NAILING IT: It Gets Better http://www.youtube.com/user/itgetsbetterproject

LINKEDIN

- Professional social media sphere, used for networking, job hunting and recruiting
- Your personal profile is essentially your online resume
- LinkedIn Groups offers professional networking and discussion over relevant topics with your peers
- Create a LinkedIn Company page for your nonprofit to share updates and find volunteers

NONPROFIT NAILING IT: Unicef https://www.linkedin.com/company/unicef

PINTEREST

- Pinboard style image-sharing site
- Allows you to catalogue photos under different categories (ex. Events, Recipes, Workouts) and easily share with audiences
- Show personality through imagery

NONPROFIT NAILING IT: PETA http://www.pinterest.com/officialpeta/

SOCIAL MEDIA

GOOGLE+

• Over 625 million users sharing information and networking
• Considered a "social layer" tool, allows you to organize contacts into "Circles"
• Comes with a lot of additional features including Google hangouts, an online teleconferencing tool
• If your nonprofit has a Google+ page, it will be ranked higher in Google search

NONPROFIT NAILING IT: KIVA https://plus.google.com/u/0/+Kiva/posts

INSTAGRAM

• Online photo and video sharing social network
• Allows user to take, apply filters, edit and share videos and images
• Integrates with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Flickr
• Spread awareness of your cause on global scale by sharing behind the scenes visuals and moving imagery

NONPROFIT NAILING IT: To Write Love on Her Arms http://instagram.com/twloha

VINE

• Video sharing mobile app and site owned by Twitter
• Allows users to upload and share 6 seconds of video
• Do not need a huge budget, lots of time or never-ending editing for this video site
• Can share the personality of your organization through short video clips

NONPROFIT NAILING IT: The Humane Society https://vine.co/u/926260518480650240

TIP: Before your organization starts using a tool, ask the following questions:

Does my audience use this tool?

What can I do with this tool?

How can I use this tool?
As the different tools have different capabilities, you can use them for different purposes.

Will I be able to regularly update this tool?

FURTHER READING

BLOGS AND WEBSITES

BETH'S BLOG
How Networked Nonprofits Leverage Networks and Data for Social Change
http://www.bethkanter.org/

NETWORK FOR GOOD
Nonprofit Marketing Blog
http://nonprofitmarketingblog.com/

NONPROFIT TECH FOR GOOD
A Social & Mobile Media Blog for Nonprofits
http://www.nptechforgood.com/

NONPROFIT MARCOMMUNITY
Your Guide for Marketing Communications for a Cause
http://nonprofitmarcommunity.com/

THE NONPROFIT MARKETING GUIDE
Training and Tips for do-it-yourself nonprofit marketers
http://www.nonprofitmarketingguide.com/resources/

BOOKS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS
Seven Steps to Creating a Successful Plan (2009) By Sally J. Patterson and Janel M. Radtke

CONTENT MARKETING FOR NONPROFITS
A Communications Map for Engaging your Community, Becoming a Favourite Cause, and Raising More Money (2013) Kivi Leroux Miller

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS FOR LOCAL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS
Targets and Tools (2001) Donald R. Self, DBA, Walter W. Wymer, Jr., Teri Kline Henley, MBA