

REASONS TO COMMUNICATE

To get attention

To create a buzz

To inform

To inspire

To build trust

To organize

To connect

To change public perception

To build a movement

To counter apathy or opposition

To engage

To change policy

To disseminate information

To build bridges

To sustain reform

To uncover strengths

To increase visibility of leaders

To be prepared in case of a public problem or media crisis

PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION

- ❖ Communication does not stand alone. It is not an afterthought or an add-on to the real work of reform. Communication follows substance, which means the leadership of the reform effort should be integrally involved in planning communication activities.
- ❖ A communication strategy has many different activities and products, but they are all connected under an umbrella of the overall reform goals.
- ❖ Effective communication is both *proactive* and *reactive*, both planned and opportunistic.
- ❖ Effective communication is grounded in the culture and practice of the community in which it is implemented.
- ❖ Regardless of the strategy, effective communication involves multiple players and there is a clear understanding that, in some ways, everyone is a communicator.
- ❖ Spokespeople are prepared and are trusted by the community with whom they communicate.
- ❖ The communicators, and those implementing a communication strategy, are partners to the substance of the project, know the issues well, and understand the rules, regulations, politics and bureaucracies of the relevant systems.
- ❖ There is a communication budget that is adequate, but not necessarily lavish. A web site is almost always essential.
- ❖ Effective communication does not avoid debate. An open discussion can air controversies and misconceptions and deal with them, which in the end is more likely to lead to informed consensus.
- ❖ Communication activities are tracked and evaluated to show what works. The results and lessons are shared with others.
- ❖ Effective communication is fun.

TIPS FOR FRAMING EFFECTIVE MESSAGES

- ❖ Effective messages keep your overall goals front and center at all times. Messages are the most important component of a communication strategy.
- ❖ Effective messages are targeted to specific audiences. Different messages—even about the same project—are useful for different audiences.
- ❖ Effective messages capture the life and action of the work taking place.
- ❖ Effective messages are clear, consistent, and free of jargon. Even scientific reports, which by definition include scientific language, can be attentive to clarity and avoid unnecessary jargon.
- ❖ Effective messages are based on an understanding of attitudes and opinions about the issues you are working on. If you know in advance how informed your target audience is, for example, and if you understand their attitudes, you will be better able to design appropriate messages.
- ❖ Effective messages include both stories about individual people and information about issues. Spokespeople are good storytellers who bring in the policy implications and context of every personal story.
- ❖ Effective messages are culturally appropriate and accessible for each audience. Activities and materials are inclusive of various language groups who are key to the reform.
- ❖ Effective messages are realistic and truthful. Spokespeople don't promise more than they can deliver, and they are prepared to talk about what doesn't work as well as what does—and the lessons learned from both.
- ❖ Effective messages are communicated through materials that are visually interesting and through a variety of activities. Core messages are repeated over and over again.
- ❖ Effective messages often begin with a noncontroversial head-nodder that everyone can agree with and move from there to more controversial elements.
- ❖ Effective messages include logos, web sites, and phone numbers on every product. They invite the audience to stay in touch and to remember you.

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