

Atlantic57

COVID-19 Research with Communicators

Topline Findings

May 2020

Contents

01. Methodology

02. Topline Survey Results

01. Methodology

This document includes topline findings from a survey among members of The Communications Network. This survey was designed to understand how communications leaders at foundations and non-profits across the country are responding to COVID-19 and navigating the disruption that has resulted from the pandemic.

Atlantic 57 conducted this survey online among 275 respondents, and fieldwork took place April 29 and May 8, 2020.

While reading section two of this document, please note:

- Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.
- An asterisk (*) indicates less than half of one percent.
- Dashes (-) indicate no responses.
- Bases are total sample unless otherwise noted.

02. Topline Survey Results

Demographic/Organizational Context

Question 1	
Gender.	
FEMALE	75%
MALE	23%
TRANS FEMALE	-
TRANS MALE	-
GENDER NONCONFORMING/GENDERQUEER	-
NON-BINARY	*
NOT LISTED	*
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	1%

Question 2	
Region/Area	
NORTHEAST	20%
MIDWEST	15%
SOUTH	31%
WEST	30%
OTHER	4%
DON'T KNOW/REFUSED	*

Question 3

Which of the following best describes the organization where you work?

NON-PROFIT	47%
INDEPENDENT NATIONAL/GLOBAL FOUNDATION	10%
AGENCY/CONSULTANT	9%
FAMILY FOUNDATION	8%
INDEPENDENT REGIONAL FOUNDATION	7%
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION	7%
GOVERNMENT/STATE GOVERNMENT	2%
UNIVERSITY	2%
B-CORPS	1%
CORPORATE FOUNDATION	1%
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR	1%
OTHER	5%
FOUNDATION (TOTAL)	33%

Question 4

What is the approximate total number of employees your organization has at all locations?

0-10	25%
11-25	24%
26-50	12%
51-150	18%
151+	21%
DON'T KNOW/REFUSED	-
MEAN	523.7
MEDIAN	28.0

Question 5

And, approximately how many people work in Communications at your organization?

1	20%
2-3	32%
4-5	14%
6-10	11%
11+	20%
DON'T KNOW/REFUSED	-
MEAN	17.3
MEDIAN	3.0

Internal Functions and Communications

Question 6

Has your organization developed an internal working group to navigate the COVID-19 crisis?

YES	69%
NO	31%

Question 7

[ASKED IF Q6=1/ORGANIZATION HAS DEVELOPED AN INTERNAL WORKING GROUP]

What organizational functions are represented in this working group? Please select all that apply.

	n=190
LEADERSHIP/SENIOR EXECUTIVE TEAM	94%
COMMUNICATIONS	87%
PROGRAM/PROGRAMS OFFICERS	63%
OPERATIONS/FACILITIES	60%
TALENT AND CULTURE/HUMAN RESOURCES	57%
FINANCE	55%
LEGAL	27%
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	25%
BOARD/FUNDERS	14%
IT/TECHNOLOGY	3%
RISK MANAGEMENT/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT	1%
POLICY	1%
ADMINISTRATION	1%
OTHER	5%

Question 8

How involved have you and your team been in developing and distributing internal communications about COVID-19?

TOTAL ALL/SOME	76%
TOTAL INTERMITTENT/NONE	24%
I/MY TEAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OR MOST INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS	45%
I/MY TEAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS	31%
I/MY TEAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERMITTENT INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS	14%
I/MY TEAM IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS	11%

Question 9

[ASKED IF Q8=3 OR 4/TEAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERMITTENT INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS OR NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS]

How have internal communications about COVID-19 been handled at your organization?

	n=67
PROVIDER OF COMMUNICATIONS	67%
SENIOR LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT	33%
CEO/VP/PRESIDENT	27%
HR/HUMAN RESOURCES	21%
DEDICATED TEAM/COVID-19 TASKFORCE	6%
TYPE OF COMMUNICATIONS	57%
EMAILS/EMAIL CHAIN/STAFF WIDE EMAILS	34%
STAFF MEETINGS/ZOOM MEETINGS/MONTHLY/WEEKLY STAFF MEETINGS/VIDEO CALLS	30%
UPDATES/DAILY ALERTS (NON SPECIFIC)	7%
DEDICATED SPACE ON OUR INTRANET/FAQ DOCUMENT	7%
TOWN HALLS	6%
NEWSLETTER/WEEKLY NEWSLETTER	4%
MESSAGING	3%
OTHER MENTIONS	1%
FUNDING INFORMATION/TRACKING FUNDING FOR THE PANDEMIC	1%
POLICY CHANGES/ADDRESS CHANGES	-
OTHER	7%
NONE/NOTHING	4%
DON'T KNOW	-
REFUSED	-

External Communications

How frequently has your organization directed communications to each of the following audiences since the outbreak of COVID-19?

	AT LEAST A FEW TIMES A WEEK	WEEKL Y	EVERY FEW WEEK S	WE HAVE NOT SPECIFICALLY COMMUNICATED TO THIS AUDIENCE
10. Grantees	11%	20%	26%	43%
11. Board members	13%	37%	36%	14%
12. Funders	14%	25%	29%	31%
13. Philanthropic partners	15%	27%	34%	24%
14. Community partners	18%	28%	37%	17%
15. The general public	32%	25%	23%	20%
16. Media	17%	16%	33%	34%
17. Government agencies	12%	18%	19%	51%

Question 18

Which of the following words best describes the organizational tone you are striving for in external communications during this time? Please select all that apply.

INFORMATIVE	78%
EMPATHETIC	68%
ENCOURAGING	52%
STEADFAST	45%
GUIDING	41%
CONVERSATIONAL	24%
URGENT	23%
AUTHORITATIVE	11%
IMPARTIAL	9%
HELPFUL	2%
PROACTIVE/COLLABORATIVE/ACTION ORIENTED	2%
INSPIRATIONAL	1%
COMFORTING/CALM/REASSURING	1%
OTHER	5%

Question 19

What types of communications support or resources, if any, have you provided to your grantees, partners, and/or other external audiences since the outbreak of COVID-19? Please select all that apply.

GENERAL THOUGHT LEADERSHIP/OPINION PIECES	47%
ONLINE CONVENINGS TO OFFER SUPPORT OR TRAINING	41%
COMMUNICATIONS-RELEVANT INFORMATION CREATED BY HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE CDC, NIH, LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT	41%
GUIDANCE ON EVENTS OR CONVENINGS	37%
ACTIVE MEDIA OUTREACH	31%
RECOMMENDATIONS ON WEBSITE UPDATES/CONTENT	25%
ACTIVE FUNDRAISING EFFORTS DURING COVID-19	25%
GUIDANCE ON COMMUNICATING WITH THEIR DIRECT AUDIENCES	25%
RECOMMENDATIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA TACTICS	21%
GUIDANCE ON CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS IN GENERAL	17%
GUIDANCE ON STAFFING AND CAPACITY	14%
GUIDANCE ON HOW TO HANDLE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION	12%
TRAINING ON HOW TO HANDLE MEDIA AND THE PRESS	7%
COMMUNICATIONS/PROVIDING RESOURCES (GENERAL)	5%
FUNDING/HELP APPLYING FOR FUNDING	1%
POLICY UPDATES	1%
OTHER	4%
WE HAVE NOT PROVIDED COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT OR RESOURCES TO EXTERNAL AUDIENCES	16%

Communications Goals and Priorities

Question 20

How, if at all, have your communications goals and priorities for this year changed because of COVID-19?

TOTAL COMPLETELY/SOMEWHAT	83%
TOTAL LITTLE/NONE	17%
OUR GOALS AND PRIORITIES HAVE SHIFTED COMPLETELY	21%
OUR GOALS AND PRIORITIES HAVE SHIFTED SOMEWHAT	62%
OUR GOALS AND PRIORITIES HAVE SHIFTED A LITTLE	14%
OUR GOALS AND PRIORITIES HAVE NOT CHANGED	4%

Question 21

[ASKED IF Q20=1, 2, 3/IF COMMUNICATIONS GOALS AND PRIORITIES HAVE SHIFTED COMPLETELY, SOMEWHAT, OR A LITTLE]

How have your communications goals and priorities changed? Please select all that apply.

	n=265
THE WAYS WE ORGANIZE OR CONVENE HAVE CHANGED	78%
THE MESSAGES WE HOPED TO AMPLIFY THIS YEAR HAVE CHANGED	71%
CAMPAIGNS HAVE BEEN PAUSED OR CANCELLED	62%
THE STORIES WE TELL ABOUT OUR WORK HAVE CHANGED	60%
THE COMMUNICATIONS TACTICS WE USE/PLANNED TO USE HAVE CHANGED	56%
THE TONE OF OUR COMMUNICATIONS HAVE CHANGED	53%
THE WAYS WE SUPPORT COMMUNITIES HAVE CHANGED	46%
THE AUDIENCE WE ARE SPEAKING TO HAS SHIFTED	18%
OTHER	1%

Question 22

In what way has your approach to storytelling changed? Please select all that apply.

OUR STORIES HAVE BEEN REFRAMED TO INCLUDE COVID-19 RELATED THEMES, EXPERIENCES, AND/OR INSIGHTS	81%
WE ARE MORE FOCUSED ON ENSURING OUR STORYTELLING FEELS RELEVANT	61%
WE ARE ACTIVELY LISTENING AND SEEKING MORE INPUT FROM THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE	43%
WE ARE NOW THINKING MORE ABOUT OUR AUDIENCES AND THEIR HABITS AS WE CREATE CONTENT	32%
OUR STORIES ARE EVEN MORE FOCUSED ON AMPLIFYING THE WORK OF GRANTEEES AND PARTNERS	28%
OUR STORIES HAVE MORE OF A CALL TO ACTION	23%
WE ARE USING OUR STORYTELLING TO HELP SHIFT THE ORGANIZATION'S NARRATIVE	21%
WE ARE USING SOCIAL LISTENING TOOLS TO INFORM OUR APPROACH	20%
OUR STORIES HAVE AN ADDED RACIAL EQUITY LENS	19%
OUR STORIES FOCUS LESS ON THE SERVICES WE PROVIDE AND MORE ON STRATEGY	14%
OUR STORIES HAVE MORE DATA THAN THEY USUALLY DO	8%
OUR STORIES HAVE AN ADDED GENDER EQUITY LENS	2%
SHORTER STORIES MORE OFTEN/NOT TAKING DAYS/ WEEKS TO STORY TELL/SHARING MORE OFTEN	1%
OTHER	2%
OUR APPROACH TO STORYTELLING HASN'T CHANGED	5%

Question 23

How flexible has your organization been when it comes to adjusting communications in response to the COVID-19 crisis?

TOTAL FLEXIBLE	97%
TOTAL NOT FLEXIBLE	3%
VERY FLEXIBLE	72%
FAIRLY FLEXIBLE	26%
NOT TOO FLEXIBLE	2%
NOT AT ALL FLEXIBLE	*

How would you describe the change, if any, to different types of external communications from your organization since the outbreak of COVID-19?

	INCREASED	STAYED THE SAME	DECREASED	STOPPED ENTIRELY	NOT APPLICABLE
24. Website updates	64%	28%	5%	*	2%
25. Blog posts	35%	38%	8%	*	19%
26. Email newsletters	42%	43%	7%	1%	7%
27. Social media posts	43%	42%	12%	-	4%
28. Videos	25%	36%	12%	5%	21%
29. Earned media	29%	34%	14%	2%	21%
30. Graphics [infographics, data visualizations, photography, etc.]	25%	49%	12%	*	13%

Question 31

How much have your organization's communications tactics changed as a result of shifts in consumer media habits during COVID-19?

TOTAL CHANGED	73%
CHANGED A LOT	18%
CHANGED A LITTLE	55%
HAVE NOT CHANGED AS A RESULT OF CHANGES IN CONSUMER MEDIA HABITS	27%

Question 32

How important are events and convenings for your organization?

TOTAL IMPORTANT	88%
TOTAL NOT IMPORTANT/DON'T HOST	12%
VERY IMPORTANT	46%
FAIRLY IMPORTANT	42%
NOT TOO IMPORTANT	8%
WE DON'T TEND TO HOST OR SUPPORT EVENTS AND CONVENINGS	4%

Question 33

[ASKED IF Q32=1, 2, 3/IF EVENTS AND CONVENINGS ARE VERY IMPORTANT, FAIRLY IMPORTANT OR NOT TOO IMPORTANT]

Which of the following best describes your current thinking or planning around events and convenings?

Please select all that apply.

	n=265
ALL EVENTS AND CONVENINGS HAVE BEEN CANCELLED	17%
ALL EVENTS AND CONVENINGS HAVE BEEN INDEFINITELY POSTPONED	24%
WE HAVE CANCELLED EVENTS FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS BUT ARE STILL HOPING TO HOLD THEM IN THE FALL/WINTER OF 2020	35%
RESCHEDULED FOR A YEAR/RESCHEDULING FOR 2021	*
WE HAVE CONVERTED SOME IN-PERSON EVENTS OR CONVENINGS INTO VIRTUAL GATHERINGS	71%
WE ARE CONSIDERING CONDUCTING SOME OF OUR EVENTS OR CONVENINGS VIRTUALLY	38%
OTHER	*

Question 34

What other ways have your communications and strategies changed as a result of COVID-19?

CONTENT/COMMUNICATION FOCUS	38%
COVID-19 FOCUS/HIGHLIGHTING COVID RESOURCES/COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND	19%
INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS/FOCUS ON INTERNAL RATHER THAN EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS	5%
FEATURING SPECIFIC GRANTEE PARTNERS/USING COMMUNICATIONS TO SUPPORT OUR GRANTEES	5%
CONTENT HAS SHIFTED/CHANGED (NON SPECIFIC)	3%
URGENT COMMUNICATIONS/FOCUS ONLY ON NECESSARY COMMUNICATIONS	3%
FAMILY OR CHILDREN FOCUS/FOCUS ON PARENTS AND FAMILIES	2%
NOT COMMUNICATING ON COVID-19/NOT FOCUSING ON THE PANDEMIC	2%
OTHER MENTIONS	31%
INCREASED COMMUNICATIONS/MORE FREQUENT COMMUNICATIONS	12%
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES HAS CHANGED (GENERAL)	8%
TO BE MORE EMPATHY/SHOWING MORE EMPATHY RATHER THAN EXCITEMENT	7%
LIMIT COMMUNICATIONS/DON'T DO A LOT OF COMMUNICATIONS	3%
ONLINE/VIRTUAL USAGE	14%
ONLINE USAGE/DIGITAL COMMUNICATION (NON SPECIFIC)	7%
VIRTUAL MEETINGS/ZOOM MEETINGS	4%
CANCELLED EVENTS/GATHERINGS/RETREATS/VIRTUAL EVENTS	3%
OTHER	4%
NONE/NOTHING	15%
DON'T KNOW	-
REFUSED	5%

Other Resources

Question 35

How easy or difficult has it been to find external resources focused on managing communications during COVID-19?

TOTAL EASY	87%
TOTAL DIFFICULT	13%
VERY EASY	39%
SOMEWHAT EASY	48%
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT	11%
VERY DIFFICULT	1%

Question 36

When you are looking for information on managing communications during COVID-19, do you tend to turn to internal sources or external sources more frequently?

INTERNAL SOURCES	11%
EXTERNAL SOURCES	46%
BOTH ABOUT EQUALLY	43%

Question 37

Which of the following external sources do you turn to for information and resources to guide your communications efforts during COVID-19? Please select all that apply.

PEERS AT OTHER ORGANIZATIONS	71%
MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS	60%
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION	52%
MEDIA/JOURNALISTS	46%
MEDIA/JOURNALISTS	46%
YOUR STATE GOVERNMENT	39%
YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT	36%
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION	34%
COMMUNITY OF ORGANIZATIONS	1%
GRANTEES	1%
OTHER	4%
NONE/NOTHING/NOT COMMUNICATING	1%

Future Planning

Question 38

Thinking about your communications strategy following COVID-19 recovery, how much do you expect your organization's narrative to change in a permanent way as a result of the pandemic?

TOTAL GREAT DEAL/SOMEWHAT	75%
TOTAL LITTLE/NONE	25%
A GREAT DEAL	18%
SOMEWHAT	57%
ONLY A LITTLE	22%
NOT AT ALL	3%

Question 39

And, how much do you expect the narratives that underpin the issues that you work on to change in a permanent way following COVID-19 recovery?

TOTAL GREAT DEAL/SOMEWHAT	79%
TOTAL LITTLE/NONE	21%
A GREAT DEAL	29%
SOMEWHAT	50%
ONLY A LITTLE	17%
NOT AT ALL	4%

Question 40

Which of the following areas do you believe presents an opportunity to capture momentum and drive progress forward following recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, if any? Please select all that apply.

PUBLIC HEALTH	80%
RACIAL EQUITY	67%
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY	67%
SOCIAL JUSTICE	63%
ROLE OF GOVERNMENT	54%
K-12 EDUCATION	47%
CLIMATE	45%
HOMELESSNESS	40%
ENVIRONMENT	39%
CRIMINAL JUSTICE	31%
IMMIGRATION	29%
HIGHER EDUCATION	28%
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	27%
GENDER EQUITY	22%
NATIONAL SECURITY	11%
HEALTHCARE	3%
FOOD SECURITY	2%
EARLY CHILDHOOD/CHILDCARE	1%
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	1%
MENTAL HEALTH	1%
DISABILITY JUSTICE	1%
OTHER	6%
NONE OF THE ABOVE	1%

Question 41

What creative new practices and solutions have you seen evolving in the landscape as a result of the COVID-19 crisis?

TECHNOLOGY/VIRTUAL USAGE	44%
VIRTUAL MEETINGS/REMOTE MEETINGS/MEETINGS ONLINE/ZOOM	21%
TECHNOLOGY USE/CREATIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY (NON SPECIFIC)	10%
EVENTS/VIRTUAL EVENTS/FUNDRAISERS ONLINE	8%
SOCIAL MEDIA	4%
WEBINARS	3%
REMOTE WORK/WORK FROM HOME	3%
SCHOOL ONLINE/REMOTE LEARNING	3%
TELEHEALTH	1%
EXPECT MORE VIRTUAL USE IN THE FUTURE	1%
PARTNERSHIPS/COMMUNICATIONS	23%
COLLABORATION/BREAKDOWN OF SILOS	8%
COMMUNICATION/BETTER COMMUNICATION	7%
SHARING OF RESOURCES/SHARE CONTENT	6%
PARTNERSHIPS/NETWORKING (NON SPECIFIC)	3%
PLAIN LANGUAGE/PROVIDING MORE SUBSTANCE/LESS POLISHED	2%
TRANSPARENCY	*
OTHER MENTIONS	19%
VOLUNTEERING/DONATIONS	5%
FLEXIBLE GRANTS/LESS HOOPS TO JUMP THROUGH	4%
ADDRESSING INEQUITIES	4%
FUNDING/FUNDRAISERS	3%
EMPATHETIC/MORE EMPATHY	2%
INNOVATIONS	1%
FOOD PROVIDED TO STUDENTS/SERVING FOOD IN CREATIVE WAYS	1%
JUSTICE SYSTEM/SHIFTS IN JUVENILE JUSTICE/HOW COURT CASES ARE DONE	1%
OTHER	6%
NONE/NOTHING	17%
DON'T KNOW	1%
REFUSED	7%