About this
Communications Plan

We often find that organizations don’t have a written communications plan that outlines their goals and activities for the year. The excuses vary but range from, “I’m a one-person team, what’s the point?” to “Things in my organization move so quickly that a plan would immediately become obsolete.”

##

## Every association needs a communications plan.

Communications plans are essential because they help you:

* Focus on strategy vs. tactics
* Set priorities
* Support your reasoning with colleagues
* Get the team moving in sync
* Build a budget

**A few notes about this template:**

We’ve provided text in italics to get you thinking about how to answer each question. This text should be deleted before you share the plan with colleagues. We’ve also shared examples where appropriate to provide context. Throughout this plan, we’ve referred to “customers,” but this can be adapted to be “members,” “partners,” “purchasers,” etc. as best fits your organization. We know associations often have large audiences that are not members.

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Communications Plan

**<Date>**

**By: <Name and Title of the person responsible for the plan>**

# Communications Plan Executive Summary

*The executive summary is a short, summarized version of your communications plan. Most executives don’t have time to read your full communications plan, so this is meant to give them the full picture without all of the details. The main objective is to briefly list and describe:*

* *Key dates, anniversaries, or milestones*
* *Initiatives your organization will focus on this year*
* *Overarching goals (below)*

We’ll know we’ve been successful if we reach these goals (see measurable metrics of success in the [Goals](#_cp5ehsxa92tj) section):

* <Goal 1>
* <Goal 2>
* <Goal 3>

#

# The Association

## Organizational overview

*This is a high-level overview of your association. Imagine if someone who didn’t know you read this overview. What facts would they need to know about your organization? (ex. How is the organization structured? When was the organization established? Where are you located and do you serve multiple regions? Have you had any recent acquisitions?)*

## Vision statement

*What kind of future do you imagine?*

## Mission statement

*What are you doing to accomplish your vision?*

## Member value proposition

## What do your members view as the value you provide? This is not a list of benefits but a statement on your members’ rationale for choosing you. If you don’t know this, you should ask your members.

## Products/services

*What products and/or services do you provide? Give an overview here and then list each below with key deliverables.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Product/Service** | **Deliverables** |
| Example:Membership | Example:Access to member content and community |
| Example:Events/Meetings | Example:Conferences, webinars, networking |
| Name of Service/Product | List of deliverables |
| Name of Service/Product | List of deliverables |
| Name of Service/Product | List of deliverables |

##

## Communications personnel

*How is your communications team structured? What are team members responsible for? Are communications personnel within the same department or spread across the association? Do you get support from others in the association? Give an overview here and then list each team member below with key responsibilities.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Job Title** | **Name** | **Responsibilities** |
| Example:VP of Communications | Example:Shonda Jones | Example:Strategic leadership, oversee budget and plan, PR |
| Example:Marketing Manager | Example:Jane Smith | Example:Manage technology, content, and campaign creation |
| <Title> | <Name> | <List major responsibilities> |
| <Title> | <Name> | <List major responsibilities> |

## Budget

*How much will your organization spend on communications efforts this year? You might want to link to your budget spreadsheet here if you have one.*

# Market Analysis

## Market/Industry research and trends

*What are the current challenges that your organization and your communications team face? Are there market changes that affect your association or your industry (ex. shift from in-person meetings to virtual, declining membership among younger audiences, etc.)?*

## Market position

*Where do you sit in the marketplace? Where are you especially compelling? What metrics do you use to compare yourself to your competitors? Are you comparing your association to others regionally? Nationally? Internationally? Is there industry benchmark data that helps you rank your organization against your peers?*

## Unique selling proposition

*What is your unique selling proposition? What separates you from your competitors? How do you best compete against them?*

## Competitors

*Who are your competitors? How are they performing? Remember, your competitors aren’t just other associations. What organizations are competing for your audiences’ attention?*

#

# Audiences

## Audience demographics

*List any demographics that apply to your audience(s) below. Some examples are provided for your reference.*

* Age
* Gender
* Education-level
* Social Status
* Politics
* Interests
* Location

####

## Audience segments

*List each unique audience segment below. This could include the different ways you segment your members (ex. prospective, current, lapsed, etc.) or could include other types of audiences like attendees, volunteers, donors, legislators, product purchasers, etc. For each, note what challenges they face. What are they trying to do when they engage with you? What gets in their way? If you’ve developed Personas, you should link out to those here.*

* Audience 1
* Audience 2
* Audience 3

##

## Key current “customers”

*List the current relationships you need to focus on most. How can you expand these relationships?*

## Key target “customers”

*List the names of key people/organizations you need to engage with in order to achieve your goals.*

## Channels

*What media do your audiences and target “customers” engage with? Where can you find them? How can you reach them? What channels have been successful for you in the past?*

#

# Goals and Tactics

## Goals, activities, metrics, and tactics

*What must be accomplished this year? List your goals in priority order. These communications goals should ladder up to your association’s strategic goals for the year. How can communications help the organization reach its overarching goals? For each of your goals, what activities do you need to undertake to reach the goal? How will you measure success for each activity? What tactics must you complete for each activity?*

* #1 Overarching goal (ex. Retain member growth from previous year)
	+ #1 Activity you need to complete to accomplish the goal (ex. Improve the onboarding experience)
		- Measurable Metric: How you’ll measure the activity to know you’ve been successful (ex. 80% renewal in Year 1)
		- Measurable Stretch Metric: Setting a stretch metric can be helpful if you often find yourself shooting past your original metrics or if you’re not quite sure what the initial measurable metric should be (ie. if this is the first time you’re doing something). (ex. 90% renewal in Year 1)
		- Tactics to complete the Activity:
			* Ex. Welcome packet with clear directions on how to register online and access members-only content, association badge, and benefit reminder document.
			* Ex. Monthly social posts, emails, and postcards showcasing a single benefit with easy steps on how to use it.
			* Ex. Welcome call from the local chapter, welcome social post from National.
			* Ex. Review new member activity stats and identify trends / contact points for inactive members.
	+ #2 Activity you need to complete to accomplish the goal
		- Measurable Metric:
		- Measurable Stretch Metric:
		- Tactics to complete the Activity:
	+ #3 Activity you need to complete to accomplish the goal (if needed)
		- Measurable Metric:
		- Measurable Stretch Metric:
		- Tactics to complete the Activity:
* #2 Overarching goal
	+ #1 Activity you need to complete to accomplish the goal
		- Measurable Metric:
		- Measurable Stretch Metric:
		- Tactics to complete the Activity:
	+ #2 Activity you need to complete to accomplish the goal
		- Measurable Metric:
		- Measurable Stretch Metric:
		- Tactics to complete the Activity:
* #3 Overarching goal
	+ #1 Activity you need to complete to accomplish the goal
		- Measurable Metric:
		- Measurable Stretch Metric:
		- Tactics to complete the Activity:
	+ #2 Activity you need to complete to accomplish the goal
		- Measurable Metric:
		- Measurable Stretch Metric:
		- Tactics to complete the Activity:

**Keep in mind**

It’s likely that you may need to supplement this communications plan with additional resources like an [editorial content calendar](https://www.mightycitizen.com/insights/tools-and-training/editorial-content-calendar-template), a budget spreadsheet, an email marketing plan, and/or a [specific marketing campaign plan](https://www.mightycitizen.com/insights/tools-and-training/marketing-campaign-template).

