



# Communications Planning 101



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# Our Goals

- Reduce stress by convincing you that communications are not that complicated.
- Explain why communications are WORTH doing.
- Provide a simple process to follow.





# Why do a communications plan?

- Captures everything in detail once, then offers roadmap to follow.
- Prior planning prevents poor performance.
- Keeps everyone on the same page.
- Tracks what worked/didn't for next time.



# Objectives

What is success?

Crafted with different models

- SMART (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**imely)
- Not all objectives can be easily measured

Valuable step in planning ... don't skip it!

- Focuses your effort and priorities
- Tells when to halt communications
- Guides next time





Example objective: Communicate to the community about the closure of a popular trail for 3 months due to construction, by April 3.



## Try it Yourself!

Select a scenario on the worksheet or write one.

Introduce yourself and share your objective with a nearby person.

# Audiences

- There is no “general public”
- Targeting is essential
- Who can you realistically reach?
  - Create and maintain contact lists
  - Save your big list for your big splash news







Example objective: Communicate to community about the closure of a popular trail for 3 months due to construction by April 3.

Audiences:

Board members

Neighbors

Media

Participants in programming

Recreation groups/clubs

Staff

Visitors to that area

Volunteers



# Try it Yourself!

Select your audiences on the worksheet or write a new one.

Introduce yourself and share your objective and audiences with a different person nearby.



# Messaging

- Always include the basics- Who, What, When, Where, Why, contact information
- Branding for your organization
- Consider audience
  - Use data
  - Consider their values and how you can connect with what matters to them
  - Relationships with key contacts who share with their networks, help you find language that resonates.
- Consider the “worst case scenario” and head off problems





Example objective: Communicate to community about the closure of a popular trail for 3 months due to construction by April 3.

Message:

The XYZ Trail will be closed from April 3 to July 3 for construction to build a more sustainable and safe trail. Try ZYX trail instead.

Attention Mountain Bikers- XYZ trail will be closed April 3 to July 3 to bring you a better experience. Construction will include new alternate lines for advanced cyclists.

**Try it  Yourself!**

Write a message that is tailored to your objectives and your audience.

Optional: Share with group.



# Budget

How much do you have to spend?

- Paid ads, print items, swag, etc. cost money
- Other tools are FREE!
- Free doesn't always mean boring or ineffective





# Tools

What do you have?

- Create a master list
- Highest impact for least cost

What tools work best to reach each audience?

- Goal is to deliver message to audience



Example objective: Communicate to community about the closure of a popular trail for 3 months due to construction by April 3.

Tools:

Enews

Flyer at trailhead kiosk

News release

Social media

Video (gather time lapse footage for later communications)

Personal email

Direct mail

Website posting



## Try it Yourself!

Accounting for your objective, message and audience, select your tools on the worksheet or write new one(s).

Optional: share with the group.





# Timetable/Task List

Determine who will do what and when

- Creates the action items that implement the plan
- Chart helps you make sure all audiences and tools are addressed

Due Date	Audience	Message	Tool	Person Responsible
Mid-March	Recreation Clubs	The trail is being improved for sustainability, safety and hiking/biking/equestrian visitor experience.	Personal email	TPR
March 25	Visitors	The trail is closed starting 4/3 for improvements.	Trailhead flyer	Rangers
Mailed March 29	Neighbors	Trailhead construction will create traffic delays, please plan ahead. Trail was approved in XX plan with public input.	Direct mail	ZS



# Try it Yourself

Example objective: Communicate to community about the closure of a popular trail for 3 months due to construction by April 3.

## **Timeline Statement example:**

By March 25 contact visitors to the open space trailhead via flyer on trailhead kiosk about closure basics – Rangers

Fill in the last section of worksheet



A group of people is silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky over a field. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a dark blue at the top. The people are standing on a grassy ridge, looking towards the horizon. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

# Monitor then Evaluate

- See how things are going, listen to conversation in the community
  - Increase/decrease if needed
  - Respond to feedback
- How did your objective go?
  - Can be simple notes about how many stories got picked up, website analytics, did you make your registration goal?
  - Use what you learned next time



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