The Comms Avenue

Development Communications Toolkit

A Practical Guide for Communications Professionals in the Development Sector

CONTENT

01 INTRODUCTION LAYING THE FOUNDATION

The Value Proposition of the Development Sector 12

Understanding Your Organisation 12

Your Role Within the Development Sector 12

02 COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

12 What Goes Into a Communications Plan?

12 Defining Your Communications Objectives

12 Gathering Insights for Your Communications Plan

03 AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

Defining Your Audience 12

Key Message Development 12

Matching Your Message to Your Audience 12

04 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

12 Communication Strategies for Development Organisations

12 Tactics and Channels to Leverage

05 COMMUNICATING YOUR MESSAGE

Building a Strong Brand for Your Organisation 12

Your Content Strategy 12

Impact Storytelling 12

Documenting Your Impact 12

06 BUILDING A COMMUNITY AROUND YOUR CAUSE

12 Improving Your Visibility and Engagement

12 Turning Your Followers to Ambassadors

12 Using Feedback Effectively

12 Nurturing Partnerships and Collaborations

07 MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

Steps for Effective Measurement 12

Your Measurement Framework 12

Measurement and Evaluation Tools 12

08 BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER - A Case Study of the Move for Parkinson's Disease Awareness Walk

09 RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

Inspired by a report titled Winning Hearts and Minds, this Toolkit has been created by The Comms Avenue to provide communications professionals with practical information and tips to function effectively in their role within the development and social impact sector.

In the Toolkit, you will find a step-by-step guide, as well as templates and resources that will help you to develop and execute communications strategies and tactics to advance the work of development organisations and change agents.

INTRODUCTION - LAYING THE FOUNDATION 01

Communications is a function that is pivotal to the success of any organisation. This is especially true for development and social impact organisations where strategic communications can be leveraged to demonstrate impact, change behaviour, influence policy, and build support for the work that they do.

To succeed in your role as a development communications professional, it is important to have a passion for development and social impact issues. Gaining an understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their relevance to the work your organisation does is a good starting point.

Beyond this, you need to understand the distinctive attributes and operational frameworks peculiar to the development sector. You must also possess an in-depth understanding of your organisation, its goals and its mission and vision.

THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

The starting point for a communications professional working in the development sector is to have a clear understanding of the sector and how it differs from other sectors. This is important because development organisations do not technically sell products and services; instead, they "sell" programmes and interventions that cover areas such as education, poverty, health, gender, advocacy and so on.

To develop your understanding of the sector, you can start by asking the following questions:

What makes the development sector unique?

What kind of language is used in this sector?

What are the issues tackled by development organisations?

Who are the key stakeholders that development organisations engage with?

Answering these questions will put you in a better position to function effectively within this sector because comprehension is the foundation on which effective communication is built.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ORGANISATION

Once you have gained an understanding of the sector, the next thing to do is to understand the specific organisation you work with. Since organisations within the development sector target various issues aligned with the SDGs, their objectives, methods, and interventions will be different. This is why you cannot use a one-size-fits-all approach when you work for a development organisation.

These are the things you need to know about your organisation:

Table 1: Understanding LAF Foundation (Example)

Questions for Lim Arc Foundation (LAF)	Answers to the Questions	Why it is important
What problem(s) is LAF seeking to tackle and why?	LAF provides young women living in low-income communities in Africa with practical skills and income-generation opportunities to lift them and their families out of poverty SDG 1 - No Poverty SDG 5 - Gender Equality SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth LAF believes that the empowerment of women is a strategic driver in boosting the economy of developing countries.	An understanding of the mission and vision of the organisation will help you to develop your communications objectives and strategies. In addition, when you know the SDGs that apply to the work your organisation does, you can ensure your organisation's work is well represented during conversations around those SDGs and you can position your organisation as a thought leader in that space. This will also form the benchmark through which your communication activities will be measured.
Which group(s) of people are impacted by the work the organisation does?	Young women between the ages of 18 and 25	This will ensure that: 1. Your strategies and tactics are well suited to the target audience. 2. Your messages will resonate well with the target audience. 3. The partnerships and collaborations you propose in your communications plan will make a difference to the target audience.
What are the goals of the organisation?	To lift 100,000 young women (and by extension, their families) in sub-Saharan Africa out of poverty by 2025.	This is also another way that your work will be benchmarked. Your communication activities should position the organisation to achieve its short-term and long-term goals.

How is the organisation funded - through grants or donations from stakeholders? Or both?	LAF receives funding from the parent company, Lim Arc Group.	Knowing how the organisation is funded is important for donor communications. Since LAF is funded by a parent group, the foundation will not be heavily involved in fundraising activities. Instead, it will have to communicate how the funding allocated has been used. On the other hand, if an organisation is funded through grants or donations from the public, more effort needs to go towards donor communications. In both cases, it will be important to know what the donor requires from the organisation in terms of engagement and the metrics to use when reporting on how funding was used.
How is the organisation structured?	LAF has a formal, hierarchical structure with an Executive Director at the head of the organisation and Department Heads for Programmes, Communications and Finance. LAF also has a board that oversees its activities.	Understanding the organisational structure will help you to determine how your work within the organisation needs to be done and the key stakeholders that you need to carry along. Where there is more structure, the reporting lines and expectations of the communications team are often clearer.
What are the approval and reporting requirements?	LAF has a separate department for communications and the Communications Manager reports to the head of the communications department. There are two approval layers required: one from the head of the communications department and the other from the Executive Director.	This helps you to know who has oversight for your work and the layers of approval you will need to work through to execute your plans and strategies. If there is a complex approval process, it means you'll need to factor this in when creating campaigns or content that needs to be urgently released for example.

What regulatory framework(s) applies to the organisation?	LAF has to comply with privacy regulations within the countries where they work to protect the private information of beneficiaries.	Depending on the specific problem the organisation is solving and the country/ region that the organisation works in, you may discover that there are some things that the organisation may not be allowed to do from a regulatory perspective. This will help you avoid putting out content or information that may lead to a crisis for the organisation. When dealing with personal data, it is important to ensure that you comply with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and local data protection laws. Do obtain consent before using any personal information or picture in your communication.
What are the channels of communication the organisation currently has?	LAF primarily communicates through its website. It also has an active profile on Facebook and because of the peculiar nature of its target audience, it has an active WhatsApp group for engaging with beneficiaries.	It will be necessary to do an audit of the way your organisation communicates and the communication channels that are used. You need to know what already exists and where there are gaps. For example, if your organisation does not have a channel where it effectively communicates with its donors, this needs to be corrected.

YOUR ROLE WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

Since communications is crucial to the work that development and social impact organisations do, your role is an important one. What this means is that your job goes beyond taking pictures on the field and posting them on social media. Your role is to:

Develop a strategic framework to build the reputation of the organisation and position it as a thought leader within the thematic areas(s) that are aligned to its mission. .

Document and report the impact of the organisation's programmes and interventions.

Communicate the mission and the vision of the organisation in a way that will resonate with the target audience and stakeholders.

Contribute to programme design and ensure programmes are effectively delivered to the target audience.

Laying the foundation by understanding the development sector and the organisation you work with will place you in a better position to make positive contributions to your organisation's goals through your communications role.

To perform your communications role effectively, you need to know how to create a solid communications plan that is aligned with the goals of your organisation.

What Goes Into a Communications Plan?

Before you create your communications plan, you need to answer the following questions:

Table 2: Communications Planning Questions

What does my organisation want to achieve?	You need to know why your organisation needs this communications plan or activity. Do they need more visibility? Are they looking for more donors? Does the organisation want to be strategically positioned within the development sector in a country or region?
What do we want to achieve through the communications activity?	In what way will your communications activity support the organisation's goals? The more specific you are, the better aligned your strategies and tactics will be to your organisational goals.
How will we know that we have achieved our goals?	When you implement your communications plan, how will you know that your strategy and tactics have helped your organisation to achieve its goals?
What does success look like?	From the perspective of the leaders of the organisation and the board, what are the most important success metrics? More donors? Increased stakeholder engagement? More impact stories? Visibility on the right platforms? Or Awards?
How are we going to collect our baseline figures?	You need baseline figures to measure if your communications plan made a positive contribution to your organisational goals. For example, let's say the level of donor engagement was 35% before the implementation of your plan. If that figure rises to 60%, you can establish a correlation between your communications activity and the increase in the engagement level. (*Read more in Section 7 of this Toolkit*)

Once you have answered these questions, you can go ahead to create your communications plan. These are the key sections your communications plan needs to have:

01 **Background**. For every communications plan you create, you will need to do some research. In this section, include a summary of the key insights from your research. This should cover insights about the current situation within the organisation, industry or country insights, the organisational need and the communication opportunity.

02 **Objectives**. This section will contain your organisation's objectives and your communications objectives. Your objectives must be as specific as possible and they must be measurable.

03 **Audience Analysis**. It is important to know who your target audience is and the best way to communicate with them. In this section, you will provide an in-depth analysis of the audience your communications activity is aimed at. Who are they, what are their needs and how do they consume information?

04 **Key Messages**. After you define your audience, you need to create key messages that they can easily resonate with. This is what this section is for. You will include a number of brief messages that will convey the information you want to pass across to your audience and your call to action.

05 **Strategy**. In this section, you will outline the overarching idea that will help you to achieve the objectives you have created for this plan. You should only work on this section after you have done your background research, defined your objectives and you have done your audience analysis.

06 **Tactics**. Based on your strategy, what are the specific tools, channels and content you will use to implement your strategy? Include this information in this section. Again, the tactics you choose must be aligned with the previous sections of the plan.

07 **Timeline**. It is important to create a timeline that will provide an overview of the time it will take to implement the tactical activities in your plan. Doing this will help you to identify timing issues that may affect your execution.

08 **Budget**. In this section, you will provide an estimate of how much it will cost to implement your plan. You will need to take into consideration the tactics you have outlined in the plan and any third parties you may need to engage for execution.

09 **Measurement and Evaluation**. Without measurement and evaluation, you won't be able to know whether your communications plan was successful or not. In this section, you will list the relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and metrics to track to determine the success of your plan and the baseline figures that need to be collected.

Use this Guide and Template to develop your communications plan.

Defining Your Communications Objectives

Your objectives will help you to define what you need to achieve through your communications plan and activity.

Your Objectives Need To Be Aligned

To be effective, your objectives must be aligned with your organisation's goals. For example, if your organisation wants to increase the use of mosquito nets (behaviour change) among families living in rural communities (target audience) through its programmes and interventions, then your communications plan needs to help your organisation achieve this.

If after implementing your plan, you cannot state how communications contributed to the target audience adopting the required behaviour change, then that plan was not a successful one.

Your Objectives Need To Be Quantifiable

It is also important for your objectives to be quantifiable. This means that your objectives should include specifics on the Who, the What, the When and the By How Much.

Table 3: Creating Communications Objectives

	Description	Example
Who	The stakeholder group(s) or audience you want to reach.	Parents with toddlers between the ages of 1 and 3.
What	What you are trying to accomplish.	An increase in the adoption of best practices in nutrition and feeding of toddlers.
When	The timeframe to achieve what you want to do.	12 months.
How Much	The desired degree of change on the 'what'.	A 55% increase in adoption rate.

Your Objectives Need to Be SMART

Finally, your objectives need to be:

Table 4: Creating Communications Objectives (Example One)

	Example One Objective - Make all our campaigns go viral on social media.
Specific	This objective is not specific because it does not define the what, the who, the when and the by how much.
Measurable	'Go viral' is not a metric that can be objectively measured.
Achievable	Since the objective is not specific and measurable, it will be difficult to achieve. Will all the campaigns go viral on social media at once? Which social media platforms will be leveraged?
Realistic	Similarly, bearing in mind the internal resources and capacity of the communications team, this will turn out to be an unrealistic objective.
Time-bound	Since there is no timing element to this objective, it will be difficult to establish the endpoint.

Table 5: Creating Communications Objectives (Example Two)

	Example Two Objective - Increase awareness of the Save a Life campaign by 40% among millennial women within six months.
Specific	This objective is specific because it states: - The what - Increase awareness of Save a Life Campaign - The who - Millennial women - The when - Within six months - By how much - 40% increase
Measurable	It is possible to objectively measure whether or not an increase in awareness for the campaign has been achieved.
Achievable	The objective looks achievable because the increase to be achieved has been spread over six months.
Realistic	The objective is also a realistic one because it appears to be based on insight and realistic expectations.
Time-bound	The time frame to achieve this objective is well-defined.

The Objective-Setting Formula

Improve ***(WHAT)*** by ***(HOW MUCH)*** among ***(WHO)*** within ***(WHEN/ TIMEFRAME)***

For example - Increase the number of new volunteer sign-ups (THE WHAT) by 100 (THE HOW MUCH) among young adult males between 18 and 25 (THE WHO) by the end of 2023 (THE WHEN).

Three Types of Objectives You Need

01 Outputs-objectives

This objective measures the volume with regards to the media vehicle or communication channels that you use.

For example, the number of website visits, the number of people who attended a press event, the number of placements from a press release, the number of posts or tweets, the number of potential readers from a media coverage and so on.

02 Outcome-objectives

This objective measures the effect of the communication on the target audience with regards to awareness, understanding, preference and behaviour.

For example, the increase in understanding of an issue, the change of attitude or behaviour, the change in preference or increase in trust and so on.

03 Impact-objectives

This objective evaluates how the changes produced by your outputs and the outcomes have an impact on organisational objectives.

For example, increase in donations, improvement of reputation, change in policy or social behaviour, and so on.

Most Common Communication Goals for Development Organisations

Table 6: Most Common Communication Goals

Community Engagement and Education Goals	Engaging our community to keep people inspired by and active in our work
	Raising awareness of our issues to educate people about our cause.
	Advocating on our issues to win hearts and minds.
Brand and Leadership Goals	Brand building and reputation management for the organisation.
	Positioning our executives and staff as thought leaders or experts.
	Communicating internally with our staff or board.

Programme Recruitment Goals	Recruiting and engaging participants for our programmes.
	Building our membership by recruiting and serving members of our organisation.
	Recruiting and engaging volunteers to help deliver our programmes and interventions.
Fundraising Goals	Supporting fundraising from individuals making small to medium donations.
	Supporting major donor fundraising.
	Supporting event fundraising (galas, walks, etc.)

Source: *Kivi Leroux Miller, The Nonprofit Marketing Guide (2021)*

Most Common Objectives for Development Organisations

Gathering Insights for Your Communications Plan

Since your organisation does not exist in a vacuum, trends and other things that take place within the industry, nation and the global landscape will have an impact on the work your organisation does. You, therefore, need to pay attention to all that's happening around you and what is happening in the world of your target audience.

Before you create your communications plan, take some time to listen and gather insights that will help shape the elements of your plan. These are some of the ways you can gather useful insights:

Talk to your target audience

Avoid making assumptions about your target audience. Observe, listen and talk to them. This will give you the opportunity to get to know them and what's important to them. You can have one-on-one conversations with individuals within the group you want to target. Alternatively, you can put together an informal focus group to gain insights on how the target group interacts with your organisation and what can be done better. You can also conduct online surveys to collate quantitative data about your target audience.

Review your existing channels

Your website, newsletter and social media channels have a lot of useful insights that can make a difference to your communications work if you take the time to analyse the data. By reviewing how your existing community and audience interact with your online content, you can learn a lot about them and what they care about. For example, reviewing your website analytics can show you the type of content people are interested in while Google Analytics will show you the search terms people often use to find your website.

The same applies to social media. When you review analytics on Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn, you will discover the kind of posts and content formats that get the most engagement. This means you can then focus on creating the kind of content that your target audience will find useful and interesting.

Engage in social listening

Millions of conversations happen online every day about different topics and issues. It is best practice to pay attention. What are people talking about and why? Are there ways your organisation can positively contribute to the conversation? What are they saying about your organisation and the issue(s) you care about?

Aside from paying attention to real-time conversations, you should also perform keyword and hashtag searches to track what's being said on multiple platforms. It is important to know how people are talking about your organisation and your cause.

Tips and Takeaways

It is always important to have a thorough understanding of your organisation, the programmes that are implemented, the target audience and the development sector and region in which your organisation operates.

Never rush to create a communications strategy or plan without gathering insights and defining what your objectives are.

Always ask, 'To what degree do our communications objectives reflect the organisational goals and objectives?'

Choose strategies and tactics that will help you to achieve your communication and organisational objectives.

Your communications plan is a living document so feel free to make necessary changes when certain facts or insights on which the plan was based have changed.

To communicate effectively for your organisation, you need to clearly define who you are communicating with. You also need to have an in-depth understanding of what their needs, preferences and interests are.

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to believe that you are communicating with everybody or the general public. Even if your organisation does work that impacts a wide range of people, the truth is that not everyone will care about the work your organisation does and the solutions you offer. Instead of trying to lump everyone together, a better approach will be to divide your audience into groups or segments and then spend your time and resources on the groups that matter most to your organisation.

Defining Your Audience

To properly define your audience, you need to answer the following questions:

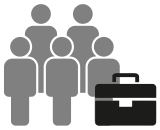
Table 7: How to Define Your Target Audience

Questions	Some Reflections
Who are you trying to reach or communicate with?	What are their characteristics or identifying attributes? Are they male or female? Young or old? Fully educated or less educated?
What do they care about the most?	What are they interested in? How do they spend their time?
What is important to them? What is not important to them?	What are their priorities? What do they need? Are they focused on survival or they are looking for something more?
What is their current level of interest in your organisation and your cause?	Does the work your organisation do appeal to them or they could care less? Are they interested in the cause your organisation deals with?
How much knowledge do they already have about your organisation and your cause?	Do they know about your organisation and the cause your organisation is focused on? How much do they know? Is what they know accurate?

Segmenting Your Target Audience

Given that it is difficult to communicate with everyone simultaneously, you will find it useful to divide your target audience into groups or segments. This is because development organisations typically communicate with at least two groups of people:

The people they serve.



The people who support the work financially.

You can segment your audience using the following:

Table 8: Audience Segmentation

Demographics (The shared characteristics your audience has)	■ Is the majority of your target audience male or female? ■ What age bracket do they fall into? ■ In what location do most of them live or work? ■ What is their occupation? ■ If relevant, what is their income or education level? ■ Are most of them part of a particular ethnic group? Do they practise a particular religion? ■ Are they married or single?
Behaviour/ Knowledge (What they know and how they interact with your organisation)	■ What do they know about your cause/issue? ■ How does the cause/ issue impact them? ■ What do they know about your organisation? ■ How can your organisation benefit them? ■ In what way(s) do they engage with your organisation?
Psychographics (Characteristics that influence how they behave or engage)	■ What are their inner beliefs and values? ■ Do they have strong likes and dislikes? What are they? ■ What is their lifestyle? ■ What is their attitude towards your organisation and cause? ■ What are their priorities ■ What are their motivations
Stages of Change (Readiness to make a behaviour change)	■ Which of the stages of change do they belong to - Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action or Maintenance? ■ Do they recognise a problem exists? ■ How willing are they to make the desired behaviour change?

Stages of Change (Expanded)

It is useful to understand the stages of change especially if the goal is to achieve behaviour change. This is because the needs of someone who is in the precontemplation stage will be very different from the needs of those who are in the preparation stage. As a result, how you communicate with them will be different.

Table 9: The Stages of Change Model

Stage	Description
Precontemplation	No recognition that the problem exists or an intent to change.
Contemplation	There is recognition that the problem exists but many reasons are given why the problem cannot be addressed.
Preparation	There is a willingness to take action to make a change.
Action	Definite steps are taken to make a change
Maintenance	Effort is made towards maintaining the change that has been made.

Prioritising Your Audience

After you have segmented and narrowed down your audience, it will also be useful to prioritise your audience. This is particularly helpful when you do not have a large budget to work with to effectively communicate with all your target groups.

Table 10: Prioritising Audience Segments

Name	Description	Example
Primary Audience	The audience segment that you have chosen to focus on. Essentially, your ideal audience.	Male teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17
Secondary Audience	The group of people that you have chosen not to pursue directly but they have some similarities, needs or behaviour to your primary audience.	Male young adults between the ages of 18 and 20
Influencing Audience	The group of people that influence or have an impact on the decisions of your primary and secondary audiences.	Teachers in secondary schools or universities

Key Information to Know About Your Audience

01 »

Primary and Secondary Audiences

- What are their needs?
- How connected/ engaged/ interested are they with your organisation/ cause?
- How does your organisation's mission and values align with them?
- How is the work your organisation does relevant t o them?
- What channels do they use most to communicate and engage?

02 »

Influencing Audience

- Who influences your primary audience?
- In what way do they influence your primary audience?
- How much influence do they have - strong or moderate?
- How does their influence impact the way they engage with your organisation or issue(s)
- What channels do they use most to communicate and engage?

Creating Your Audience Personas

An audience persona is a summary of the details of the target audience that outlines some of the following: current behaviours, motivation, emotions, values and attitudes, age, etc. They are a good example of the individuals who are typical of the target group.

The single profile should reflect the primary barriers your audience faces. To better visualise the persona, it is helpful to include a name and an image.

Example

Audience category:

- **High school teen**

Background:

- **Occupation**
  Student
- **Educational background**
  Currently in high school
- **Hobbies, Interests**
  Entertainment, Technology

Demographics:

- **Age range**
  13 to 17
- **Gender**
  Male
- **Household income**
  Not earning an income
- **Where they live (urban/rural)**
  In the country's capital

Connection to Organisation:

- **What do they know about your organisation?** Familiar with MILA Foundation
- **What do they think about the work your organisation does?** Sees the usefulness of the work MILA Foundation does
- **Are they interested in getting involved?** Yes
- **In what way (s) would they like to get involved?** Interested in MILA Foundation's student ambassador programme

Digital Behaviour & Information Habits:

- **What communication channels do they use?** Tik-Tok, Instagram and WhatsApp
- **Where do they get their information - traditional or social media?** Mainly social media
- **Do they follow your organisation on social media?** No
- **Are they subscribed to your email list, and do they open/click your emails?** No
- **Do they frequently share information about your organisation with their networks?** No

Key Message Development

Once you define your audience, you need to be clear about what you want to say to them. To win the hearts and minds of your target audience, you should create specific messages that will resonate with them and inspire them to take action. These are known as key messages.

A key message contains the important information you need your audience and stakeholders to receive, understand and remember about your organisation. To be effective, a key message needs to:

1. Be clear and straight to the point. It needs to be free of jargon and technical language.
2. Communicate basic information about what your organisation does, how you make an impact and the why behind what you do.
3. Be segmented by audience group. Don't try to communicate exactly the same key message to everyone.
4. Guide your communications, both internally and externally.
5. Be communicated consistently to improve resonance.

Creating your key message

1. **What people should know about your organisation**

Start to create your key message by identifying the top three messages that capture the heart of your organisation. To do this, you'll need to answer the following questions:

Why? Why is this cause or issue important? Why should your audience care?

How? How do you do what you say you do?

What? What is the impact of your work?

2. Picture one person

Since people are more compelled to act when they feel a direct connection with one person, it is important to speak to your audience and stakeholders as individuals. So, picture the individual you are speaking to while you create your key message. You should also communicate the impact and importance of the work your organisation does from the lens of one person.

3. Have a clear call to action

To inspire action, you need to infuse a call to action into your message and by extension, into your content. When your audience engages with your organisation, what do you want them to do? What steps will they need to take after reading your newsletter, for example? Why should your message or call to action matter to them? And most importantly, what's in it for them? If you want people to take action, you need to make them see why they should care and why they should act now.

Examples of calls of action that development organisations use include: Take the pledge, Join the community, Share your story, Sign up, and so on.

Your messaging framework

A messaging framework guides how you communicate with your target audience and key stakeholders. This includes your internal staff, beneficiaries/clients, volunteers, partners, and donors/ funders. It also helps you to communicate the right message to the right audience.

Table 11: Sample Messaging Framework

Positioning Statement

Organizational	Core Message 01 Proof Points Examples	Core Message 02 Proof Points Examples	Core Message 03 Proof Points Examples

Target Audiences	Key Messages, Audience 01 Proof Points Examples & Anecdotes	Key Messages, Audience 02 Proof Points Examples & Anecdotes	Key Messages, Audience 03 Proof Points Examples & Anecdotes	Key Messages, Audience 04 Proof Points Examples & Anecdotes

Source: https://smackdabcommunications.com/2018/06/28/developing-key-messages-for-specific-target-audiences/

Testing your key message

Before you begin to use your key messages, it is important to test them. Pick a sample from your target audience and test your message against the following:

01
Compelling
Do your messages inspire the desired action from your target audience?

02
Relevance
Are your messages relevant to your target audience? Do those messages resonate with their interests?

03
Simplicity
Are your messages succinct and easy to understand?

04
Memorable
Are your messages easy to remember and do they leave a lasting impression?

Matching Your Message to Your Audience

To effectively match your message to your audience, you need to find that sweet spot where what you want your audience to know and do connects with what they really care about. To match your message to your audience:

- Describe your programmes and call to action in a way that appeals to the values and needs of your audience.
- Empower them with your message. That means your message should inspire them to do something they consider important to them.
- Communicate your message from the perspective of what's in it for them.

Tips and Takeaways

- Talk to your audience and put yourself in their shoes. Don't make assumptions.
- Make it your goal to deeply understand what your audience knows, thinks or feels about your organisation and your cause.
- Your audience profile should mirror the experiences of real people. This is why you must engage with them.
- Craft your messages with your audience profile in mind so that your messages will resonate with them.
- Always monitor how your audience changes and adjust your strategies accordingly. Your audience profile can always be refined.

Your communication strategy is the big picture that covers how you plan to achieve your objectives and meet the goals of your organisation. Your strategy must always be based on research and clearly defined objectives that show what is to be achieved.

Communication Strategies for Development Organisations

Here are some communications strategies for development organisations:

Content strategy. This involves the creation and distribution of valuable content to capture your audience's interest and buy-in for the work your organisation does. You can use content to draw people into your organisation's mission and convert them into supporters who believe in your organisation's cause.

Permission-based communications. This strategy focuses on the people who already support the work your organisation does or the people who have signed up or subscribed to one or more of your programmes, activities or communications output, for example, your newsletter.

Event or experiential strategy. This involves creating events or activities that allow your target audience to have an in-person participatory experience of your organisation, the internal team and the work of your organisation. This strategy helps your target audience to become familiar with your organisation, especially those who may have never interacted with your organisation before.

Thought leadership strategy. This strategy helps you to position the leaders and key staff members of the organisation as experts and thought leaders to potentially create more visibility for the organisation, build support for your work and ensure that your organisation becomes top of mind during conversations around the topics or issues the organisation deals with.

Media relations strategy. This is a well-thought-out engagement with the media to showcase impact stories and information about the organisation that the general public will find valuable. A media relations strategy can help to significantly amplify the work your organisation does to new audiences.

Relationship strategy. This strategy involves nurturing the existing relationship with key stakeholders such as your volunteers and donors. Instead of having a one-off interaction with them, this strategy helps you to build a strong and long-term relationship with these stakeholders and turn them into loyal advocates for the organisation.

Tactics and Channels to Leverage

Once you decide on the strategy that will work best for the objectives you have set, you have to choose the tactics that will help you to successfully implement your strategy. Your tactics include the content you will create and the channels you will use to distribute that content

Here is a summary of the tactics that are useful for development organisations:

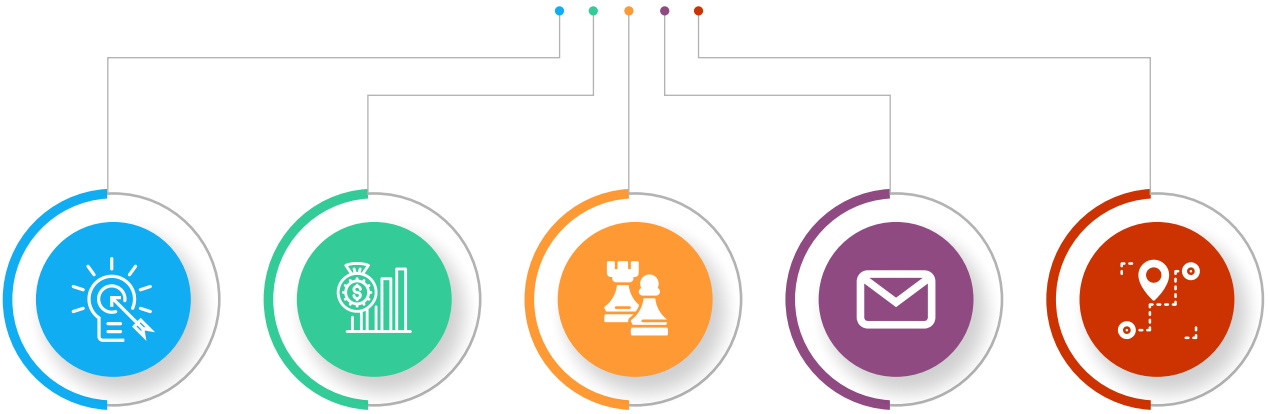
Table 12: Tactics Used By Development Organisations (Example)

Website (A must-have for every organisation)	**Blog** (Helpful for building thought leadership)	**Social Media** (Be visible on the platform(s) your audience and stakeholders use)	**Email Newsletters** (Helps you to stay connected with your audience)
Testimonial & Impact Storytelling (This helps to show the value and impact of the work your organisation does)	**Earned Media** (Newsworthy content and stories from your organisation which the media publishes)	**Guest Posting** (Another helpful tactic for building thought leadership)	**Content Aggregation** (Sharing third-party content and information that will be valuable to your audience)
Content Takeaways (These are how-to guides, case studies and other content that can be downloaded by your audience)	**In-person gatherings** (Includes thematic meetings, town halls and networking events for physical interaction with your organisation)	**Speaking Engagements** (Another tactic for building thought leadership within the industry)	**Paid Advertising** (This includes advertising on media platforms such as radio, TV, billboards, and social media to amplify the organisation's message)

Another important tactic that you should incorporate into your communications plan is linking your content and activities to the international UN Days and trending events/ campaigns, such as #GivingTuesday, that align with what your organisation does.

To increase the effectiveness of your tactics, always ensure that your choice is informed by an in-depth understanding of what your organisation wants to achieve and how the tactics you have chosen will help your organisation achieve its goals. Don't create a podcast because it is the trending thing to do. Think about how that podcast will help your organisation to achieve its overall goals. You should be able to defend why you have chosen a particular tactic.

Tips and Takeaways



Ensure there is alignment between your strategy and the tactics you choose.

Always have your budget in mind and your ability to execute when selecting your tactics.

Always choose the best tactics for your strategy and don't choose too many tactics. You'll stretch yourself too thin if you do so.

For effectiveness, use multiple channels to get your message across.

It's important to constantly track how well your tactics are doing so you can course-correct if required.

Building a Strong Brand for Your Organisation

Just like any organisation, a development organisation is a brand and in your communications role, you need to see your organisation as a brand. Not only will having a strong brand help you to stand out from other organisations within the sector, but it can also help you to build a solid reputation, increase awareness and build trust for your organisation.

To build a strong brand for your organisation, you have to create a cohesive brand identity that will be used consistently across multiple platforms. Your brand identity will include the following elements: your logo, colours, font, website design, brand guidelines and so on.

Your Brand Identity

Here are some steps to take to develop your brand identity:

1. **Describe what you want your organisation to be known for.** A brand helps you to shape perception and how people see your organisation. It is therefore necessary to articulate what you want your brand to be known for. You can do this by asking the following questions:

   - In simple terms, how do we want our organisation to be remembered?
   - How do we want to communicate this to our stakeholders?
   - What kind of language should we use to communicate?

Tip: You can gain input from your supporters and stakeholders on how they currently feel about your organisation.

2. **Develop your visual identity.** It is important that the visual elements that project your brand are professionally designed. Your logo and brand images should communicate what you want to be known for and your organisation's values.

3. **Create a branding guide.** Without consistency, you cannot build a strong brand. Creating a brand guide will help to ensure that all your brand elements are used consistently by your different stakeholders. Your branding guide needs to explain:

   - Acceptable ways your logo should be used. It is best practice to have several versions of your logo that can be used in different ways and on different platforms.
   - The type of font and colour(s) to be used.
   - The tone, language and visual attributes to be used when communicating.
   - Instructions regarding what is allowed and what isn't when using your brand elements online and offline.

A Note on Your Brand Tone of Voice

When deciding on the tone of voice to adopt for your organisation, pay attention to how your organisation can contribute towards shaping a more positive narrative for Africa. You can do this by adopting a vibrant and helpful tone of voice that fully showcases the impact of your work and puts your beneficiaries and the communities you work with in the best light.

Once you are clear about what your message is and who you are talking to, you need to work on how you will communicate your message. This requires adopting a strategic approach to your branding, storytelling and content development process.

Here's a sample of the American Red Cross' brand guidelines.

American Red Cross

Brand identity at a glance

Logo suite

Logo files are available at redcross.org/brand.

Required 2x clear space is indicated by blue lines. 1x=height and width of one arm of the cross.

Button logo family

American Red Cross

American Red Cross

American Red Cross

The button logo was inspired by a vintage pin as an engaging symbol of enthusiastic participation. It is a personal, grassroots and unique expression for the Red Cross. Use this logo in any of its three forms for most printed marketing and communications materials as well as television, Web and email.

Classic logo family

American Red Cross

American Red Cross

American Red Cross

The classic logo should be used in disaster situations, corporate materials, exterior building signage or when the marketing-oriented button logo is not appropriate.

Flat disc logo family

American Red Cross

American Red Cross

American Red Cross

Use the flat disc logo when you have a dark background or printing restrictions preclude using the button logo. (Note that the white circle behind the cross must be present, so this is not suitable for white backgrounds).

Print minimum sizes

.275 inches (~7 mm)

American Red Cross .06 inches (~1.5 mm)

Digital minimum sizes

26 pixels

American Red Cross 6 pixels

Clear space

Clear space minimums (shown above with blue lines) are built into the logo files.

Separating button graphic and wordmark

As long as minimum size requirements are followed, the button can be separated from the wordmark and scaled on its own. Remember to include the wordmark in the viewing area.

Color breakdowns

Primary

WHITE

PMS COOL GRAY 11

RED CROSS RED (PMS 485)

BLACK

Neutral

LIGHT GRAY (COOL GRAY 8)

MED. GRAY (COOL GRAY 8)

Secondary

KHAKI (PMS 4535)

SAND (PMS 7530)

GOLD (PMS 1505)

SAFETY GREEN (PMS 9401)

FOREST GREEN (PMS 9401)

LIGHT BLUE (PMS 3405)

SKY BLUE (PMS 5425)

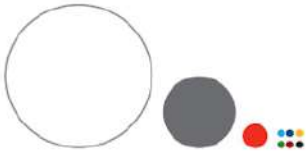
CLASSIC BLUE (PMS PROC BLUE)

MIDNIGHT BLUE (PMS 3945)

DEEP RED (PMS 7035)

Color proportion

Although individual pieces may vary, notice that the cumulative effect keeps the overall brand color balance.



Typography

	Information	Voice
Name and use	Akzidenz-Grotesk Standard family is used to clearly and objectively communicate information.	Georgia Regular family is used for storytelling, expressing opinions and calls to action.
Weights	Regular or **Bold** for heads and subheads. Regular for body copy. **Bold** or *Italic* for emphasis.	Regular for heads, subheads and body copy. **Bold** or *Italic* for emphasis.
Cases	Upper- and lowercase or ALL CAPS.	Upper- and lowercase.
	Sentence case, **NOT** title case.	Sentence case, **NOT** title case.
Colors	**Preferred:** Red Cross Gray	**Preferred:** Red Cross Gray
	When necessary: Red Cross Black	**When necessary:** Red Cross Black
	Use sparingly: Red Cross Red, White, Secondary colors	**Use sparingly:** Red Cross Red, White, Secondary colors
RESTRICTED DIGITAL USE	When Akzidenz is unavailable in digital situations, use Arial. In addition, use Arial in external *customizable* pieces. Akzidenz should be available on Red Cross computers. If not, email brandid@redcross.org.	Georgia is a system font and should be available on any Mac or PC.

Tone of voice

How we talk is as important as what we talk about.

Uplifting. The work we create will often be highly emotional, but never with a focus on the devastation, destruction or disaster. We want to leave people with a feeling of hope and possibility. We want them to feel that they can make a difference through the American Red Cross.

Empowering. We are a brand that relies on people–both the people we help and those who embody the Red Cross and deliver on our mission. We want everyone to feel empowered to be a part of this network, to help us make a difference in times of need.

Inviting. We are open and accessible to anyone and everyone who wants to assist us in our mission. We are not intimidating or directive.

Personal. Our care is selfless, not self-serving. We treat every person we help and everyone who helps us as an individual. We want them to feel care and compassion every time we interact with them. We are not yelling our message from the rooftops. We treat every individual with respect.

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Your Brand Personality and Tone

Your brand personality and tone are also an important part of your organisation's brand. With your brand personality, you can make your organisation more human which will create more room for connection with your audience. Your brand tone of voice, on the other hand, includes the tangible ways your brand personality will be expressed. This covers how your organisation speaks, writes and communicates.

Your Content Strategy

Your content is a key pillar of your communications work for your organisation. Through your content, you can keep your audience informed and engaged, share stories about the work you do and stay connected with your supporters and stakeholders. With a content strategy, you can stay on track and create purposeful content that provides value to your target audience and stakeholders. As a result, it is essential to develop a content strategy that will work best for your organisation.

Your content strategy should outline:

- **The goal(s) you want to achieve with your content.** Every content you create must have a purpose and must contribute towards your organisation's goals.
- **The kind of content you will create.** Determine the content type and format that will resonate most with your audience. Your content should also address their questions and needs.
- **Your content/ editorial calendar for planning.** This is your day-to-day work plan that will outline the content you will share, in what communication channels, when and who will be responsible for what.
- **How your content will be distributed.** Content distribution is about being at the right place at the right time. Your content strategy should have the channels you will use to distribute your content.
- **How you will measure the performance of your content.** Outline the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the success of your content. This can include a combination of reach and engagement metrics.
- **The budget and resources you will need to create your content.** This includes the budget, tools and skills required to implement your content strategy.

Types of Content You Can Create

The content you create will largely depend on your goals but here are examples of content you can leverage for awareness and engagement.

Content Pillars

To help you decide what content to create for a specific target audience or purpose, you can use a content pillar which allows you to segment your content into different topics and content types. The table below illustrates how you can build your content pillar.

Table 13: Content Pillar (Example)

CONTENT PILLAR				
Education	**Trust**	**Community**	**Inspiration**	**Promotion**
Content that educates your audience about the work your organisation does and the issue(s) your organisation focuses on.	Thought leadership content, content that shows what your organisation does with the funding it receives.	Newsletters, programme reports, stakeholder events	Impact stories and testimonials from those impacted by your organisation's work	Events, programmes and activities, donation drives

Impact Storytelling

Storytelling is at the heart of any effective content strategy. Stories help to put a human face to your work and impact. Numbers and facts matter, however, stories create better connections with your audience. When your audience can relate to what your organisation does and they can connect with the stories you share, they are more likely to become loyal supporters, donors and advocates for your organisation.

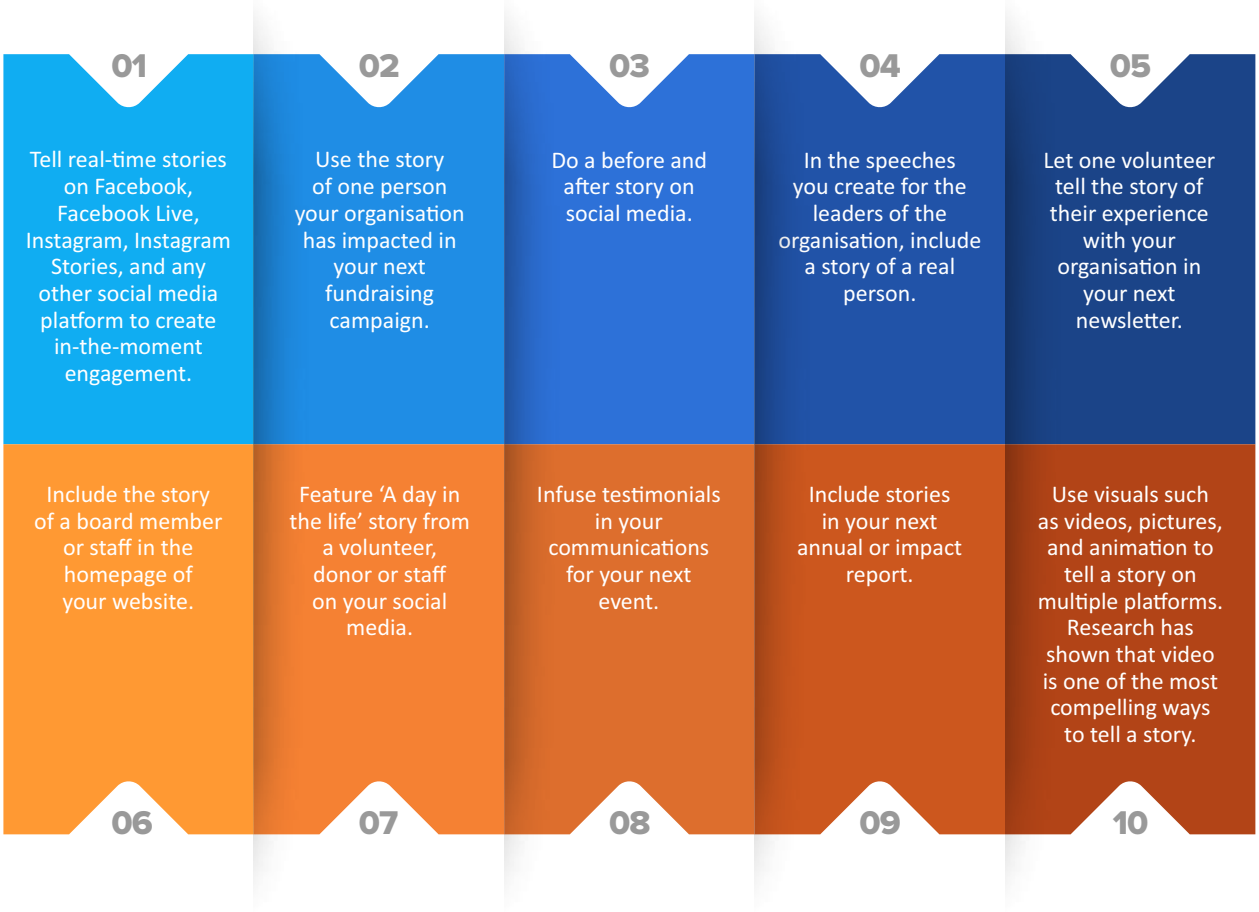
Stories are also easier for people to remember and people are more likely to share stories than data and statistics. The best part is that stories are not difficult to create.

Qualities of a good story

- **It is short.** To engage your audience effectively through your story, it needs to be short. Aim for between 500 to 600 words if your story will be text-based. For audio or video, aim for less than three minutes if it's not a documentary or podcast series.
- **It is straightforward.** Your story needs to be succinct otherwise you'll lose the attention of your audience. Focus on the message you want to pass across with the story and avoid going off tangent.
- **It has a beginning, a middle and an end.** At the most basic structural level, every good story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. At the very least, your story needs to have these three key components.
- **It is personal.** Your story should be about specific people. Telling a compelling story about one person can powerfully showcase impact and why the work your organisation does is important.
- **It engages all the human senses.** When you engage the human senses - sight, sound, smell, taste, touch - in your story, it will help your audience to connect and engage better.

It is authentic. You need to share stories in a way that is authentic to your organisation. Don't try to project a story that is a 'sales pitch' in disguise. People can tell the difference.

Incorporating stories into your communications



Documenting Your Impact

Documentaries. This is a long-form video format that allows you to showcase the impact of the work your organisation does in the lives of those you serve and create programmes for. Documentaries are also a great way to show people the faces behind your organisation and what drives your why.

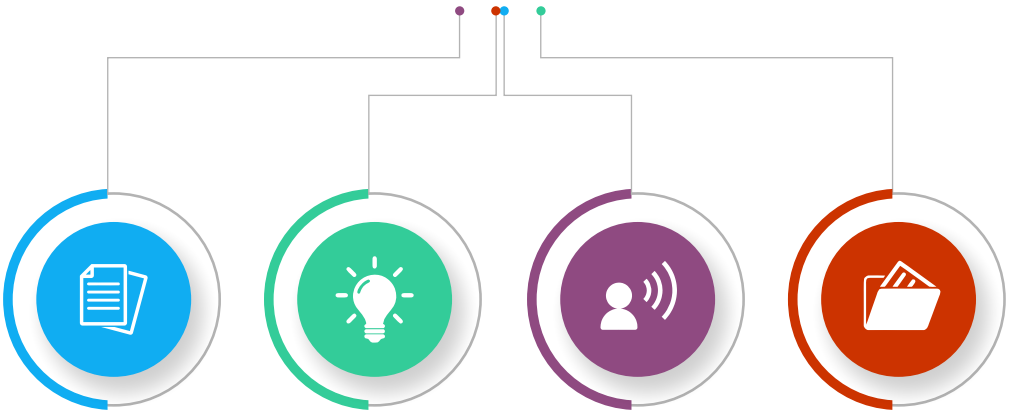
Interview Series. This is another way to capture testimonials and impact stories from your stakeholders. It could either be done in text, video or audio format. Having others talk about how important the work your organisation does also brings a level of credibility.

e-Magazines. You can create quarterly or yearly e-magazines that showcase internal and external stories that capture the extent of the work you do. You can also make your e-magazines thematic and leverage them as a tool for thought leadership.

Annual Reports. Annual reports are usually used to document the work done by an organisation within a calendar year. Instead of filling your report with only text and figures, think about making your annual report more visual and engaging.

Infographics. Infographics are also a great way to visually communicate your impact. It can be used to break down complex information about your cause or issue. For example, you can use infographics to communicate the scale of the problem you are trying to solve.

Tips and Takeaways



Review your current print and digital content. If your branding is not cohesive, plan to make adjustments.

Be creative when creating content and think about what type of content will best capture the information you want to pass across.

Ensure your content captures your brand personality and tone of voice.

Always document the impact of the work your organisation does and tell stories that bring that impact to life.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY AROUND YOUR CAUSE

06

To achieve the outcomes you desire for your organisation's communications, you need to build a community around what your organisation does. Whether you want to get people to change their behaviour or you want to raise awareness for a particular issue, you need a community of supporters who feel connected to the work that you do and are willing to spread the word about what your organisation does.

Not only can a community amplify your message but it also acts as a powerful force that drives your cause forward. To establish a community that extends beyond a campaign cycle, you need to be intentional about your visibility and engagement.

Improving Your Visibility and Engagement

To build a community around your cause and your organisation, you need to make it easy for people to find you and engage with your organisation. You can improve your visibility and engagement by doing the following:

1. **Be visible when people search for your cause.** People rarely decide to support an organisation or cause out of the blue. Usually, they decide to support based on recommendations from a trusted source or through personal research. Either way, you need to make sure that it is easy to find your organisation when a person is searching for information that relates to the work your organisation does. This means you need to pay attention to Search Engine Optimisation and you need to be intentional about turning your community into ambassadors who can recommend your organisation.

2. **Make it easy to connect.** If people can find you but they find it difficult to connect with you, this will hinder your community-building efforts. When people discover your organisation or your cause, you need to make it easy for them to connect with you. Use a contact number, website and email address that is accessible and responsive. This information should be on every publication you create.

3. **Always be responsive.** Engaging with your community goes beyond sharing information only; it involves creating a two-way conversation with them. Respond promptly to comments, messages, and inquiries. Conduct live sessions, webinars, or Q&As to encourage interaction. By engaging with your community, you will strengthen their loyalty to your cause and also gain valuable insights into their concerns and expectations which will help you to improve your engagement with them.

Quick Tips: Improving Your Website & Search Engine Ranking

Website

- Have a responsive and mobile-friendly website.
- Ensure that your domain name is easy to remember.
- Make sure your website is well branded according to your branding guidelines.
- Make the pages of your website visual by including attractive images.
- Your homepage should answer the key questions visitors will have.
- Feature people and their stories on your website.
- Make it easy for people to donate, volunteer or connect.
- Delete out-of-date content.

Search Engine Ranking

- Optimise your website for the keywords that your target audience is most likely to use while searching.
- Include your keywords in page titles and throughout the page text.
- Add keywords to your page URLs and permalinks

Creating Meaningful Engagement Opportunities for Your Community

Having meaningful engagement with your community starts by understanding the types of activities they will be most interested in. Here are some engagement tactics to consider:

Campaigns

Leverage advocacy campaigns to give room for your community to engage by:

- Involving them in the campaign conceptualisation and implementation.
- Putting together a walk or rally they can be part of.
- Getting them to participate in an online advocacy campaign.

Content

Create opportunities for your community to feature in your content by;

- Contributing blog posts.
- Featuring their story about why they support your cause and organisation.
- Getting them to contribute their insights in research and for thematic reports.
- Empowering them to share information about your organisation.

Event

Create a memorable experience where your community can engage with your organisation and with one another by:

- Hosting formal events such as dinners, community awards, etc.
- Putting together fun participatory events such as sports, painting, cooking, etc.
- Host intimate community events/ activities based on shared interests.

Volunteering

Be creative about making volunteering opportunities available to your community by:

- Creating volunteering opportunities that align with their skill set.
- Creating flexible ways to volunteer that align with their schedule.
- Providing merchandise that builds a sense of association with the organisation.
- Making them feel appreciated for volunteering their time and skills.

Turning Your Followers into Ambassadors

While it's great to have thousands of followers in your community, what you really want to build is a community of ambassadors who are super fans that believe in what you do and will be willing to spread the word about your work and your cause. Turning your followers into ambassadors takes time, but you can start by:

Connecting with them as individuals. Don't be that organisation that is self-centred. Place the needs and interests of your followers at the centre of your work. To be as welcoming as possible, speak to them as individuals. Communicate with them in a way that will appeal to their needs and style of communication. Learn to speak to their heart and speak their language to help them build a genuine connection with your organisation which is essential for them to become ambassadors.

- **Making them feel involved.** Nurture the passion of your followers by giving them an opportunity to get involved. While you shouldn't force this on them, you should make them aware of the different ways they can get involved - whether it is by volunteering or spreading awareness through word-of-mouth recommendations.

- **Educating and empowering them.** It is important to provide content about the work your organisation is doing regularly. This includes explaining its significance, addressing challenges and sharing progress updates. By equipping your followers with knowledge, they can confidently talk about and show support for your organisation.

- **Recognising and appreciating them.** Acknowledge the contributions of your followers regardless of how big or small they may be. Showing gratitude and appreciation can help you to effectively win the hearts of your followers. Send personalised and meaningful thank you notes or emails that show them the difference they are making to your organisation. Get your leaders or board members to write personalised letters to recognise your followers. You can also highlight their efforts through your communication channels to make them feel valued and inspire others to participate.

- **Providing resources.** You need to make it easy for your followers to share information about the work your organisation does. Make it easy for them to access resources such as infographics, videos, and blog content that they can share. These resources will help your followers to communicate the impact of your cause accurately.

Using Feedback Effectively

It will be difficult to build a strong community if you do not receive and implement feedback from your audience, supporters and stakeholders. Feedback is important because people want to feel heard. It's also important because you don't see the blind spots of your organisation and honest feedback will give you the insights you need to improve. Here are steps you can take to use feedback effectively:

- **Create a feedback loop.** Establish a mechanism that allows members of your community to share suggestions and express their opinions and concerns. Regularly seek feedback by using surveys, polls, and creating room for open discussions. Use the insights you get to refine your strategies and adapt to the evolving needs of your community.

- **Adopt a transparent approach.** Share how you are incorporating the feedback received from the community. Demonstrating transparency shows that you value their opinions.

- **Make improvement a continuous process.** Getting feedback is one thing; implementing it is another. To show your commitment to your organisation, you need to find ways to implement the feedback they give you to make improvements. This should not be a one-off thing but a continuous process that shows your community that you are serious about making changes based on the feedback received. Always communicate the steps your organisation is taking to improve and incorporate suggestions and feedback from your community.

Nurturing Partnerships and Collaborations

Partnerships and collaborations are crucial for development organisations. You need to be intentional and strategic about creating mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborations. You can do this by:

- **Identifying Your Allies:** Seek out organisations, influencers and individuals who share an interest in your cause. Partner with those who can expand your reach and offer perspectives that can improve the work your organisation does.

Creating Collaborative Content: Collaborate with your partners to develop mutually beneficial content. Doing this allows you to amplify awareness about your cause to their audience and it also presents an opportunity to have a unified front for driving change. With collaborative content, you could potentially have more impact and reach a wider audience.

Focusing on Shared Goals: Align with partners on long-term goals for sustained impact. Having a shared vision will enhance the outcomes of the partnership and it will also nurture a sense of solidarity among your community.

Tips and Takeaways

Don't just throw information at your audience. Create room for two-way communication and give room for your community to respond on multiple channels.

Educate your followers, provide them with resources that make spreading your message seamless, and recognise their contributions towards spreading your message.

Regularly seek feedback from your audience and show how you have incorporated the feedback that you received.

Look for partners who share your interests, collaborate with them to develop content and create a sense of solidarity by joining forces to execute long-term goals.

To make an impact in your communications role, you must measure and evaluate the impact of your communications work. When you measure and evaluate, you'll be able to quickly discover what's working, what isn't and how to improve. Considering its significance, it's crucial to keep it in mind from the start.

Measurement + Evaluation: Key Differences to Note

Measurement

- The big picture of what you want to achieve.
- Starts with knowing what your organisational and communication objectives are.
- Requires a baseline to serve as a benchmark to track improvement or success.

Evaluation

- Conducted at a specific moment in time. E.g. mid-way or at the end.
- Useful to assess how well you are doing in light of the objectives set.
- Helps you to know what is working and what may need to be tweaked.
- Important because it shows you if you are reaching your goals and have used your resources effectively.

In all your communications activities, it is important to evaluate periodically and understand that measurement enables evaluation, which in turn gives insights that can shape future communications activities.

Table 15: Key Questions And Indicators To Measure The Reach Of Your Outputs

Key question: Are we reaching our intended audience(s)?			
Key follow-up questions	**Example indicators you could use**	**What those indicators tell you**	**What those indicators don't tell you**
What was the reach of the output(s)? Is your audience growing?	Publications or blogs: • Number of pageviews in a time period • Number of downloads in a time period • Clicks to download from the page • Compare with another time period to look at audience growth	The most popular outputs An estimate of how many people have accessed an Output. If downloads, then this increases the chance that the audience read the output and didn't just look at the web page (a problem with just page views or clicks). Tracking clicks to download indicates the success of the landing page	Who exactly you reached Whether the audience interacted with the output
	Social media: • Number of shares or clicks to the output		
	Events: • Number of attendees • Number of online viewers • Compare with another time period to look at audience growth • Type of attendee, including job type or sector • Drop-out rate	Popularity of the event Whether you reached your target audience	What the audience thought of the event Whether they really engaged with your event or will have forgotten about it soon after

Source: https://onthinktanks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/odi_rapid_mel_toolkit_201801.pdf

Steps for Effective Measurement

To decide what to measure, you need to do the following:

- **Set clear and measurable objectives.** As explained in Section Two of this Toolkit, your objectives should be SMART, should align with your overarching goals and should reflect the outcomes you intend to achieve.

- **Choose KPIs and metrics that directly relate to your objectives.** To do this effectively, you need to be able to define what success looks like. Get the input of your team and leaders to create a picture of what success will look like. This will help you to select quantifiable metrics that you can use to measure progress and success. For example, if your objective is to increase engagement, your KPIs might include reach, response to your call to action, shares, comments, and click-through rates.

- **Establish a baseline measurement.** You cannot measure progress if you don't know where you are starting from. This is your baseline figure. If you want to measure an increase in engagement, you need to know the engagement level prior to the implementation of your communications strategy. Your baseline figures will serve as a reference point for evaluating whether or not you are making progress.

- **Combine both qualitative and quantitative data sources.** Qualitative data sources, such as sentiment analysis and focus groups, provide a deeper understanding of audience perceptions, while quantitative data sources, such as website analytics and survey responses, offer numerical insights into reach and engagement. Combined, they provide a full picture of the impact you have made through your communications activity.

Your Measurement Framework

A measurement framework allows you to show how your communications work is driving change within the organisation and among its key stakeholders. It helps you to articulate communications performance, monitor progress, better allocate your resources, demonstrate impact and gain insights to do better the next time.
There is no one-size-fits-all measurement framework. The framework you adopt will depend on your goals, objectives and when you need to show impact. Here are two frameworks you can adopt for effective measurement:

1. The AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework

Created by the International Association of the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication, this framework breaks down the process of measuring and evaluating communications activities into seven elements: Objectives, Inputs, Activities, Outputs, Outcomes, Outtakes, and Impact.

Source: https://amecorg.com/amecframework/

Objectives. Include both your organisational and communication objectives.

Inputs. This is divided into the target audience and your strategy. You need to include information from your situation analysis, the resources required and your available budget.

Activities. Outline the tactics and activities to be carried out. This includes testing or research, content production and PESO (Paid, Earned, Shared and Owned Media) related activities.

Output. Review the immediate results of your communication activities. These are typically quantitative and observable in nature. For example, how many people visited your website, how many people attended your event, how many social media posts were published, etc.

Outtakes. Assess the response of your target audience to your communication activity and messages. This includes reviewing metrics such as message comprehension, recall and understanding and the manner of engagement with your content.

Outcomes. Focus on the changes in intent, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of your target audience as a result of your communications efforts. You can measure outcomes through surveys, focus groups, and other qualitative and quantitative methods.

Impact. Evaluate the broader impact of your communications activities on your organisational objectives. This covers improvement in reputation, increase in donations, change in behaviour or policy and any other tangible results.

Table 16: Key Indicators (Metrics) by Channel

Example channel	Example basic indicators you could use	Example more in-depth indicators you could use
Publications	• Number of downloads and unique pageviews in a time period • Time spent on page • Bounce rate • Number of soft or hard copies distributed to existing lists • Number of times an output is cited or referred to • Twitter, Facebook or other social media impressions/likes/shares	• Country of downloads or unique pageviews • Demographics of downloads or unique pageviews • Returning vs new users • Referrals • Metrics compared to another output or time period • Number of social media comments/shares with targeted individuals • Qualitative feedback from audiences on quality and use of output
Websites	• Total Number of users in a time period • Unique pageviews in a time period • Average time spent on website	• Country of users and pageviews • Demographic of users and pageviews • Metrics compared to another time period • Number of social media comments/shares with targeted individuals • Qualitative feedback from audiences on quality and use of output
Multimedia	• Number and type of multimedia outputs produced • Number of views • Percentage of full video watched • Twitter, Facebook or other social media impressions/likes/shares	• Country of viewers • Demographic of viewers • Metrics compared to another output or time period • Number of social media comments/shares with targeted individuals • Qualitative feedback from audiences on quality and use of output
Media and blogs	• Number of media hits • Number of blogs published • Twitter, Facebook or other social media impressions/likes/shares	• Number of blog comments received • Number of media hits in target country/media outlet • Number of social media comments/shares with targeted individuals • Qualitative feedback from audiences on quality and use of output

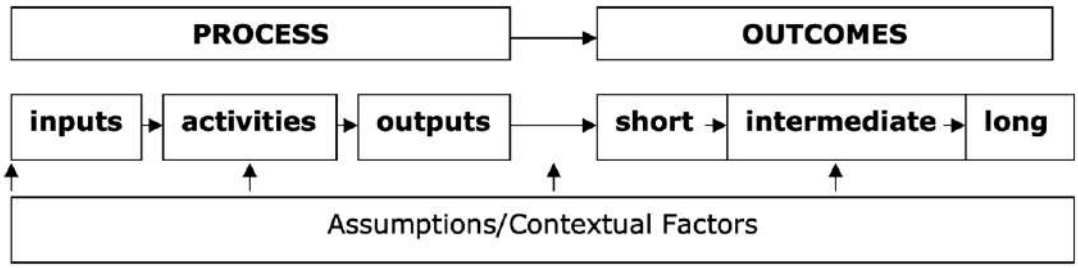
Source: https://onthinktanks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/odi_rapid_mel_toolkit_201801.pdf

2. The Logic Model

Within the Logic Model, there are two categories of metrics to measure:

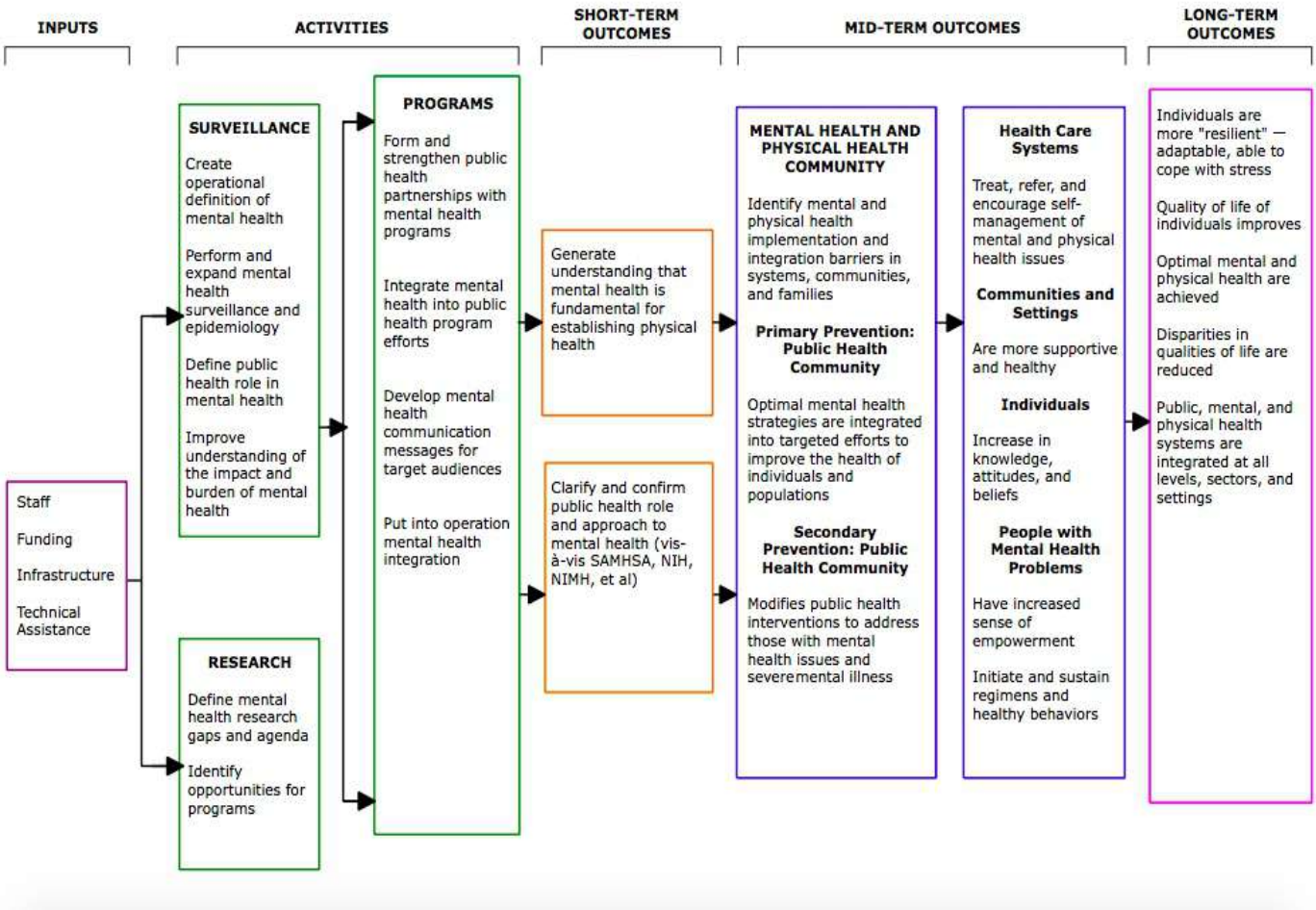
- The Process which includes Inputs, Activities and Outputs.
- The Outcomes which are measured across Short-Term, Immediate, and Long-Term periods.

Table 17: The Logic Model



Source: State Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program Evaluation Guide: Developing and Using a Logic Model Evaluation Guide (cdc.gov)

Table 18: Logic Model Application (Example)



Source: https://ctb.ku.edu/fa/node/55

Tools for Measurement and Evaluation

There are different tools that can be used to measure and evaluate the results of your communications campaigns and activities. The tools to use will largely depend on your goals, objectives and the available budget for paid tools. Here are some free and paid tools you can use to measure and evaluate your work:

Surveys and Feedback Forms

Design surveys to collect feedback from your audience. You can leverage free tools such as Google Forms or paid tools such as SurveyMonkey and Typeform to create, distribute and track the results of your survey.

Website and Social Media Analytics

Use social media analytics to track your reach – the potential audience size that has seen or heard your message, and engagement – the number of likes, comments, shares, clicks, or other actions that your activity generated. A good starting point is the analytics on platforms such as Google, Facebook, and Instagram. You can also consider using the following tools:

1. Keyhole. A social media reporting & analytics tool that helps you to track #hashtags, keywords, @accounts and URLs on X, Instagram, Youtube and Facebook. It measures real-time and historical social media data, illustrating information in easy-to-read graphs and layouts that simplify reporting and strategizing.

2. Brandwatch. An insights and data tool that can help you track mentions of your brand across social media platforms, forums, blogs, and news sites in real-time. Offers advanced analytics capabilities to quickly uncover trends and gain a deeper understanding of what people are saying about your brand.

Media Monitoring Services and Social Listening

Use media monitoring and social listening tools to track mentions of your cause, hashtags or keywords across various media channels.

1. Mentionlytics. A social listening tool that provides users with real-time insights into what people are saying about their brand on various platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and more.

2. SocialMention. Offers a real-time social media search across over 100 different social networking sites, allowing you to track and monitor social mentions of you, your brand, your industry, or anything else you want to monitor.

3. Brand24. Media monitoring tool that allows you to track and analyse conversations across the Internet, and monitor public opinion, brand sentiment, and competitor activity by searching for the keywords that you provide.

Reporting

As you measure and evaluate your metrics, you need to think about how you will report the impact of the work you have done to your stakeholders. These tools will help:

1. CoverageBook. Combines all of your results and condenses them to visually stunning reports within minutes. The tool automatically calculates metrics and displays easy-to-understand figures.

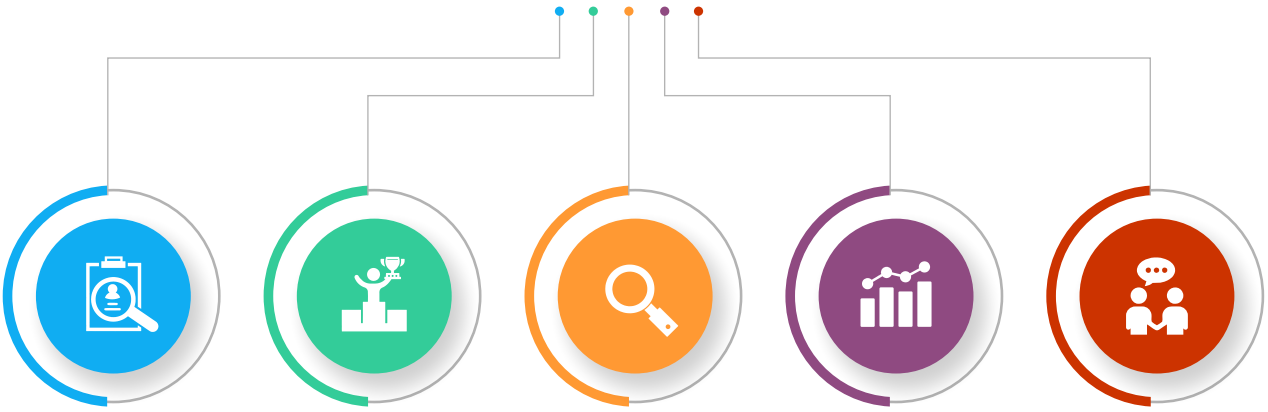
2. Data Visualization Software. Tools such as Tableau and Microsoft Power BI will transform your data into visually appealing dashboards for better comprehension and more powerful reporting.

Demonstrating Impact

- **Compare and Contrast:** One way you can demonstrate the value and impact of your communications activity and plan is to compare your results with other relevant data or benchmarks such as your baseline data. You can also contrast your results with other similar campaigns or activities over a specific timeframe in the past.

- **Communicate and Disseminate:** Another way to demonstrate value and impact is to communicate and disseminate your findings to your audience, stakeholders, funders, or partners using some of the channels as discussed in Section Three of this Toolkit.

Tips and Takeaways



Effective evaluation starts at the beginning of the communications planning process. It should never be an afterthought.

Always define what success looks like with your team and the leaders of the organisation.

Be clear on the metrics you need to track and use Google to find free tools that can help you to collate this data.

Leverage the built-in analytics on social media and Google for your measurement and evaluation.

Always communicate the impact of your communications work in ways that will resonate with the stakeholders you are reporting to.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER - A CASE STUDY OF THE MOVE FOR PARKINSON'S DISEASE AWARENESS WALK

08

The Adewunmi Desalu Parkinson's Foundation (ADPF) is a not-for-profit organisation that supports people living with Parkinson's Disease, their care partners and their families to achieve a wholesome life.

The vision of ADPF is to provide support for people impacted by Parkinson's in Nigeria and all over Africa. This is achieved through a variety of programmes and awareness efforts which are targeted at consistently promoting education about Parkinson's, its symptoms and management, and also eradicating the stigma attached to the disease.

As part of its awareness efforts, ADPF organises an annual interactive awareness and fundraising walk that brings together multiple stakeholders to build support and raise overall public understanding of Parkinson's. For the 2023 edition of the walk, the ADPF communications team applied a strategic approach to achieve improved outcomes for the Foundation.

- **Event -** Move for Parkinson's Disease (#MOVE4PD) Awareness Walk
- **Theme -** "Parkinson's doesn't stop; so I won't stop moving."
- **Overall Organisational Goals for the Event -** ADPF outlined four key goals for the 2023 #MOVE4PD Walk:

  1. To increase public understanding of Parkinson's and ADPF's intervention.
  2. To provide a platform for individuals and families affected by Parkinson's to connect and share their experiences.
  3. To raise funds to support ADPF's programmes and services for individuals and families affected by Parkinson's in Nigeria.
  4. To foster community engagement with ADPF's stakeholders.

- **Communications Objectives:** Building on the overall goals for the event, the ADPF communications team set the following objectives:

  1. Increase the understanding of Parkinson's and ADPF's intervention among three audience segments by 80% within three months.
  2. Increase funding support and pledges by 100% from new and existing donors by the end of the event.
  3. Improve engagement with ADPF's community of members and stakeholders by 50% during the event period.

- **Target Audience:** Various audience segments were identified as the primary and secondary audiences, including individuals with Parkinson's, caregivers, family members and healthcare professionals.
  In addition, potential donors, sponsors and partners were segmented into three categories:

  1. Families impacted by Parkinson's who are willing to identify with the cause and give back.
  2. Corporate organisations who have an interest in providing a Parkinson's disease-related solution.
  3. Corporate organisations with a track record of health-related CSR initiatives.

- **Key Messages**

  1. Early diagnosis makes a difference. If you know the symptoms, you can point someone towards help.
  2. PD is a disease, not a curse. Stop the stigma, stop the shame.
  3. Exercising effectively slows down the progression of PD.

Strategy - Deploy a mix of a cohesive content strategy, strategic partnerships and stakeholder engagement as key drivers to amplify visibility and reach of the 2023 #MOVE4PD Walk.

Breakdown of Tactics and Activities
Pre-Event Communications

Branding and Content.

- Developed Event Branding: A distinct visual identity for the event was created, featuring a theme, logo, colour scheme, and slogan to ensure consistency across all communications materials.
- Designed Event Flyers and Posters: Eye-catching flyers and posters were designed with key event details included. These materials were distributed strategically via email, social media and in direct communications.
- Built Event Landing Page: A dedicated landing page was set up on ADPF's website with comprehensive information about the event, registration process and donation channels included.
- Created Social Media Graphics: Engaging graphics were crafted for social media platforms, effectively promoting the event to reach a broader audience.
- Launched Social Media Campaign: A coordinated social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram was initiated, featuring regular posts and updates to drive awareness and engagement leading up to the event.
- Provided Regular Updates: Registered participants received updates about the event and additional details through informative emails.

Partnerships and Sponsorships.

- Collaborated with Families Impacted by Parkinson's Disease: Partnerships were created with families who had a lived experience with Parkinson's to garner support for the cause, help erase the stigma and honour their loved ones living with the disease and those who have passed on.
- Secured Corporate Sponsorships: Local businesses and corporate organisations were approached for sponsorships, financial support, promotional materials, and volunteer participation. Five corporate organisations sent teams of 10 employees per team to participate in the event. This amplified the reach of ADPF's message and equipped more people to recognise Parkinson's and point people towards the right places for support.

Media Outreach.

- Crafted Press Releases: Well-crafted press releases about the event were written and pitched to the local press. This resulted in coverage on prime time television and top-tier newspapers (digital and print).
- Arranged Media Interviews: Interviews were organised with ADPF management and specific team members to promote the messaging for the event. Individuals from the ADPF community affected by Parkinson's also shared their personal stories and further raised awareness about Parkinson's.

Day-of-Event Communications

1. **Installed Event Signage:** Clear and informative signage was strategically placed throughout the route of the walk to guide participants and provide essential information.
2. **Distributed Educational and Awareness Material:** Printed materials were distributed to participants upon arrival which contained the event details and ADPF's key messages.

Post-Event Follow-Up

- **Sent Thank-You Notes:** Expressive thank-you emails and letters were sent to participants, sponsors, volunteers, and donors, conveying ADPF's heartfelt gratitude for their invaluable support.
- **Shared Post-Event Coverage:** The success of the event was highlighted through event recaps, photographs, and success stories shared on social media, newsletters, and local media platforms, effectively maintaining post-event engagement and showcasing the impact of the event.

Stakeholder and Community Engagement

1. **Stakeholder Mapping:** Stakeholders were identified across ADPF's target segments. Names and appropriate designations of the stakeholders to engage were established.

2. **Communication with Stakeholders:**
   - Formal letters were written to private and public sector stakeholders to introduce ADPF, the event and its objectives. Each letter was tailored to the receiver and included a corresponding call to action to attend, support, speak, or provide a service or in-kind donation.
   - The ADPF Board was engaged to connect with specific stakeholder groups and provide support by also informing their network about the event.
   - Some stakeholders were contacted via LinkedIn while family members of people identified as living with or having passed after living with Parkinson's were directly contacted. These family members were invited to the ADPF centre to have a first-hand experience of the work being done by the Foundation.
   - In-person visits were combined with phone calls and emails for the private sector and families.

3. **Stakeholder Participation:**
   - Families were encouraged to participate by attending the Walk as a Family Team.
   - Corporate organisations were also encouraged to bring teams of at least ten staff to attend and participate in the Walk.
   - For increased buy-in, some merchandise was customised for respective teams and potential teams were notified to increase enthusiasm and excitement.

Budget - The budget for the event was determined alongside the Programmes Team and it covered expenses such as permits, promotional materials, venue rental, amongst other essential items.

Results Achieved and How It Was Measured

The following results were achieved and measured by the ADPF communications team:

Results	Description	Measurement Metrics
Heightened Awareness	The event successfully elevated awareness of Parkinson's within the target community, reaching about 75% of participants and onlookers present during the Walk.	Participant and volunteer feedback collected through surveys. Number of walk-ins and recommendations segmented across different age groups.
Increased Understanding of the Issues	The interactive session during the event helped to drive meaningful conversations and connections among attendees which fostered a sense of shared purpose.	Number of issue-specific donations, referrals and walk-ins to the ADPF centre post-event.
Expanded Support Network	The event expanded the support network for individuals with Parkinson's and their caregivers, encouraging them to come together for mutual support.	Immediate change in the number of donations and referrals to the ADPF centre.
Partnership Growth	Collaboration with corporate teams underscored the private sector's commitment to social causes, enhancing the potential for future collaboration.	% of new partnership opportunities with corporate organisations.
Increased Funding	ADPF recorded an increase in participant donations, family bequeathals and pledges following the Walk. In addition, the fundraising target for the Walk was surpassed by 500%.	Total amount of money pledged and donated to the cause as a result of the Walk
Earned Media Coverage	The Walk received coverage from local newspapers and a prime time feature on national television with full adoption and amplification of ADPF's key messages.	Number and reach of press features. Number of key messages accurately adopted. Quality of feedback from viewers/ readers.

Increased Social Media Engagement	Effective use of social media amplified the event's reach and ensured its impact extended beyond the venue of the event.	Social media posts and tags by participants. Social media insights indicating increase in followers and engagement.
Heightened Courage in People with Living With Parkinson's	There was an increase in the willingness of ADPF members to talk about living with Parkinson's without fear or embarrassment, which helped to shatter the silence and tackle misinformation. It also inspired others to listen, learn, and connect.	The number of ADPF members who indicated an interest to speak and share their story during and after the event.

RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

09

Communications Planning

Comms Planning Guide
Communications Planning Template
How to Create Well-Defined Comms Objectives

Audience Segmentation

Audience Segmentation Template
Audience Persona Template
Audience Persona Sample

Creating Effective Messages

Laying the Foundation for a Rock-Solid Marketing Program with Core Messages
Message Development
Key Message Development Template

Content & Branding

20 Features Every Nonprofit Website Should Include
10 Examples to Inspire Your Next Annual Report
The 5 Ingredients of a Great Fundraising Announcement
Free Tools to Maximize the Success of Your Paid Media Campaigns (nonprofitpro.com)
Branding Ebook Template
Make to Stick Book Summary

Writing/ Editing

Grammarly: Free Writing AI Assistance
Grammar Girl - Quick and Dirty Tips

Communities

The Communication Initiative Network | convening the communication and media development, social and behaviour change community (comminit.com)
DevCom - OECD Development Communication Network - OECD

Measurement and Evaluation

ODI Communications, Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning Toolkit
AMEC's Integrated Evaluation Framework
State Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program Evaluation Guide: Developing and Using a Logic Model Evaluation Guide (cdc.gov)
Campaign Monitoring and Evaluation: Measuring What Matters
Evaluation and Measurement in Strategic Communication
How to Measure the Results of a PR Campaign

Knowledge Building

Navigating Development Communications Guide
Nonprofit Marketing Guide | Training, Resources & More for Nonprofit Marketers
First 100 Days of Your New Nonprofit Marketing Job - Nonprofit Marketing Guide
Devex International Development | Devex
Summary of Communication for Development (C4D) - Online Course (unicef.org)

AI Tools

Scite AI - For writing and research.
Descript - For creating and editing videos and an audio/ video transcription tool.
Midjourney - For AI image generation.
Audiense - For audience segmentation and creating tailored information.
Content Gems - For sourcing out relevant and high-quality content from the web.
Edraw - For creating diagrams such as flowcharts, presentation graphics and other complex diagrams.
Prowritingaid - A writing assistant to improve your writing.
ChatGPT - For creating engaging content more efficiently.
Synthesia - An AI-powered video creation software.
Jasper - An AI writing tool to generate and personalise content for your campaigns.
Determ - For social listening and monitoring conversations about your brand.
Sprinklr - For managing all aspects of your digital presence, including content creation and distribution, social media management and monitoring, and so on.
Salesforce - For comprehensive customer insights based on current behaviour patterns.
TyrElli - An AI email assistant tool.

About The Comms Avenue

The Comms Avenue is a capacity-building and networking platform for communications professionals across Africa and beyond.

We currently have over 1200 communications professionals from 20 African countries in our mission-driven community.

Our Vision

To raise and uphold the standard for Comms talent in Africa and build a strong community of communicators who are empowered to contribute to positive change in various industries, across Africa and globally.

Our Mission

To equip communications professionals across the African continent with the skills, knowledge and opportunities to achieve measurable results in their role as communicators.

We put together programmes, webinars, knowledge exchange and networking events that allow our community members to Learn, Collaborate and Connect with senior communications professionals and peers across the African continent and beyond.

We also produce practical resources and learning materials to help communications professionals to perform better on the job.

To learn more about The Comms Avenue, please click here.

This Toolkit was designed by
Dinovate for The Comms Avenue.