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Best Practices in Church & Christian School Communication

**HOW CAN WE USE OUR COMMUNICATION
TOOLKIT TO HAVE A FAR-REACHING
ETERNAL IMPACT?**

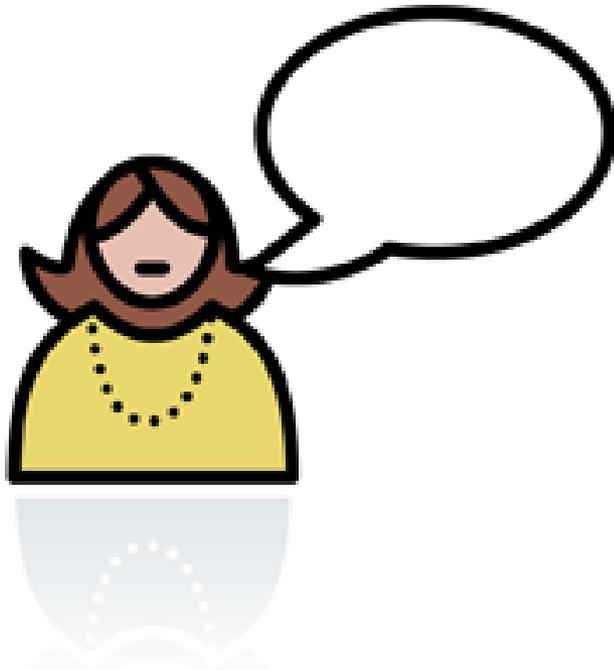
Fight Information Obesity



- Yahoo homepage has 500 words; Google is a classic example of success through focus
- Audiences are tuning out in the chaos and noise of communication overload and saying to churches, “Please don’t make me work so hard.”
- Be selective about what you communicate and how so you can use limited resources for maximized effectiveness. When everything has the same ‘weight’ it gets noisy for the audience.



Consider your message



- Facilitate connections and experiences. (It's not what you say, but what they HEAR that matters. Engage and inspire emotionally for greatest impact.) **Show me (stories) rather than tell me.**
- Messages need to pass the SO WHAT test by telling them what is in it for them, why they would want to give up their time. Can they clearly understand what you want them to do?
- This is a mobile culture that listens in "sound bites." **Say in 140 characters.**
- People make decisions from their emotions....demonstrate transformation

Communicate: **CLEARLY**



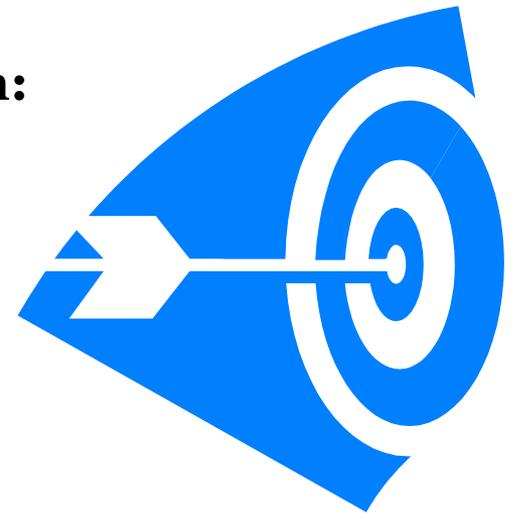
- Brand yourself – or BE BRANDED....Define who you are; why you are special. Where is your church/school going and why would others want to be a part of it?
- What do you want to be known for? You have to be intentional about this, and then communicate everywhere - with this in mind. Can you simplify it to 3 key words?
- What does your church or school look like to the public? What is most important to members/prospects? How can you emphasize and reinforce that?
- Do you have easy ways for your audiences to connect with you? (Facebook links, contact forms etc.)



Communicate: **STRATEGICALLY**



- **Define what matters:** do a written plan (even a simple one will keep you focused, impress your supervisors/donors and clients, and build unity and credibility if shared w/staff)
- **Define your target audiences:** you can't tell everyone everything all the time. Schools and churches have INTERNAL audiences and EXTERNAL audiences that want different things.
- **Keep the main thing the main thing:** prioritize your important messages—what human need are you addressing?
- **Survey your members/families on occasion:** this provides valuable input for decisions and builds “buy in”
- **Keep visitors in mind:** no ‘insider’ jargon or acronymphobia
- **Capture email addresses at every chance**



Communicate: **CONSISTENTLY**



- Try to establish **standard** fonts, colors, language, proofing processes
- If you **communicate “willy nilly,”** that’s how you will come across
- Do you have a **strategic plan?** This can keep you focused on a consistent direction, consistent language and goals. (ex: Rosehill Christian School has a 5-year plan and a 1-year School Improvement Plan with 7 priorities...request sample?)
- Do you have your **tagline/ key links and messages** everywhere—even in your email footer and on invoices?



Communicate: **CREATIVELY**



- Think about what **YOU** would pay attention to
- **Visual** communication wins over heavy text
- Does it pass the “**so what**” test?
- Use displays/signs and a variety of communication forums
- Mobile and impatient generation – is your information working on small screens?
- The goal is **ENGAGEMENT** rather than top down message plugging. How can you foster 2-way conversations?
- Consider offering expertise via blog or as a radio program guest/ most popular topic would be tied to current event or topical issue



A Checklist of Ideas



Newsletters

- Teaser questions
- Guess Who – contest
- Annual highlights
- Spotlight ministries/volunteers/donors
- Did you know factoids
- Testimonial anecdotes/stories
- Photo spreads
- Articles that highlight the unique vision and “specialness” of your church or school

Miscellaneous

- Business card type mini-messages
- Posters
- Social media contests
- Unusual shapes/design approaches
- Mini videos
- Special events/causes your organization could become known for



Communicate: **AFFORDABLY**



- **Your best PR will come from individuals who are “raving fans”**
- **Rally existing champions** (alumni as photographer; social media buffs to post your messages to their big circle of influence)
- **Use the edges of paper from print jobs**
(you can squeeze biz cards or bookmarks on the waste edge of the print job sometimes)
- **Free publicity** — media relations ideas from Emmy award winning reporter Jeff Crilley; make the media’s job easy
- **Point people to the web**
- **Publicize your ‘wish list’**
- **E-communication, social media phone tree and text**

(offer computer and social media training if needed)



Communicate: JOINTLY



- **You do not have to do it alone. Volunteer management tips:**
 - spell out the expectations and authority/chain of command
 - provide volunteers with templates and other guidelines to retain consistency
 - recruit helpers with specific skills/expertise
 - let volunteers be your “focus group”
 - encourage volunteers to get training (Co-op conf, Lay Leadership, internet reading homework report on a topic, benchmark other schools/churches etc)
- **Pursue partnerships**
 - network and sponsor events at local chamber
 - realtor relationships (info in newcomer packets; recommendations)
 - leverage Co-op connections
 - have pastors help school with chapels

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as UNTO THE LORD, not for men.” Col 3:23

If a bit overwhelmed...



Remember John Wesley's words:

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as you can.

Sharpen your pencils



Group Discussion...

1) Share best practices that you have seen or examples of what is working for your organization. (ie how use social media effectively)

2) What are your favorite communication resources? (books, websites etc)

