



# Writing a Communications Plan

## Business-Facing Plan

### What is a Communications Plan

A communications plan is an outline intended to help you craft an effective information sharing objective. Think of a communications plan as a road map that will help you effectively share your messages with the appropriate target audience.

### Why write a Communications Plan?

A communications plan will help you clarify the purpose of launching your ESD practice and its accompanying initiatives. A communications plan will help you convey you and your business's intentions in a clear and effective manner and help you identify the messages you wish to promote, your messages' target audience, and which mediums you will use to disseminate your information.

### How to write a Communications Plan

1. Conduct an analysis of your company's current situation
  - a. This will help you assess your company's capabilities
2. Set goals for your plan
  - a. Think about what goals or outcomes you want to occur as a result of your communications plan.
  - b. Keep in mind the acronym SMART when thinking about goals:
    - i. S: Specific-make sure your goals are clear and concise. For example, "grow attendance" rather than "get bigger"
    - ii. M: Measurable-your goal should be tangible and not vague. For example, you may want to "grow attendance by 50%", not by "a lot"
    - iii. A: Attainable-It's always a good idea for small business owners to be ambitious but make sure your goal is achievable by your standards
    - iv. R: Relevant-does your goal make sense when thinking about your overall business plan?
    - v. T: Time-It is important to give your goal a proper deadline.
3. Identify your audience

- a. Who are you creating this communication plan for? Understanding your audience and their requirements and characteristics is key to creating an effective message and delivering it successfully.
4. Determine your channels
  - a. In a perfect world you would be able to reach all of your audience members in one message sent out on one social media platform, but ESD teachers know that above all their audience is a diverse crowd. As a result, the best method to reach one may not be the best method to reach another.
  - b. Think about the most popular media channels most frequented by your audience and make plans for an effective approach across multiple channels.
5. Estimate a timeline for each step of the process
  - a. You will need to consider when you want your audience to hear your message and decide how often they hear it. It would be a good idea to create a content calendar to track and visualize your message blasts.
  - b. Also keep in mind the constraints of your small business. You will most likely be relying on one or two people for creating content so make sure not to get overworked or set unreachable content goals for your creation team.

## Politics-Facing Plan

### What is a Communications Plan

Much like the above description given for a business-facing plan, a politics-facing communications plan organizes the campaign's target audiences. It will also help inform you about what messages you're using to communicate to your audience, and how you will communicate with these audiences en masse. If a potential client has read about you online, you and your staff may have a more engaging conversation with them if they decide to check out your ESD business.

A politics-facing plan adjusted to meet the needs of an ESD business has roughly four sections that will help you make your communications ideas into a reality.

### Media List

You will most likely be operating on a budget as the founder of a new or fairly new ESD business. Therefore, finding and using free or cheap media opportunities to amplify your voice spread your business message will be crucial. This can range from local newspapers to blogs and podcasts to which your audience subscribes. Your list should include the outlet title, the type of media, a contact name, and contact details.

## **Overview of Responsibilities and Material**

Your overview should include both the materials you need for your communications and designate who will be responsible for each communications task. For you small business owners you may be the one taking charge for all your communications tasks. Some important responsibilities can include writing content, proofreading and updating the business website and social media.

## **Media Calendar**

The overview will not be complete without your media calendar which should be at the heart of your communications plan. This calendar will help you visualize your communications timeline by showing upcoming communication endeavors and events. It will also outline when, where, and how you will communicate with your audience.

Media calendars are typically planned a few weeks to a month in advance because your communications plans are contingent on the current status of your business operations. Plan too far in advance and a sudden change could throw your plans into chaos.