

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PACKAGE



Developed by International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
for the 'TEEB for Agriculture & Food Global Symposium 2019' (Nairobi, 25 February)

Contents

I. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS SUMMARY	2
II. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN TEMPLATE	8
III. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN TEMPLATE (reduced)	11
IV. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TACTICS	12
V. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS ADVICE	13
VI. PRESS/MEDIA RELEASE TEMPLATE	17
VII. PRESS/MEDIA RELEASE EXAMPLE	18

I. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS SUMMARY

WHAT DOES STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS ACHIEVE?

Communicating strategically delivers real benefits for researchers, civil servants, citizens – for everyone:

1. It will help you be more effective at getting decision makers to look at your research and act.
2. It will help you be more effective with your time, so you can spend fewer hours in the office.
3. It will help you be more effective with your requests for funding, securing resources for your work.

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

We're all generally familiar with what communications "is." You have a message, you want to get it out, you share it, done.

- Message goes in one direction, from originator to audience
- No listening for feedback or evaluation of how well the message was understood

A lot of organizations communicate this way. We know people in our lives who communicate this way. "I have something to tell you, I told you, we're done."

WHAT IS TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION?

But most people and more organizations accept communications works best when it goes both ways.

"I have something to tell you, I told you... what do you think? What do you have to say? Okay, here's my response with a new report... or answers over social media... or taking interviews."

As people, we want to be in conversations where others listen to us as well as speaks to us. There are clear advantages to two-way, symmetrical communication.

- Easier evaluation of how well messages were understood
- People pay more attention if they're being "spoken with" instead of "spoken to"
- Allows for relationship building and fosters trust, which is a key factor in persuading people to accept a report or take action

So two-way communication is almost always preferable. But sharing your message with everyone and hearing their responses takes more resources – time and money – than any of us have.

WHAT IS STRATEGIC TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION?

We must be strategic. We must to choose to communicate with the specific people or groups of people who can help us reach our goals. This allows us to concentrate our minimal resources to achieve the maximum possible results.

If our goal is “Get a country to embrace biodiversity and ecosystem services in their decision-making at all levels” we must ask:

- Who are the people (or narrow groups of people) we need to target with our messages?
- How do we turn our messages into something that will matter to these people?
- What can we do – for the least amount of money and time – that best gets our messages to these people?
- How will we measure success?

A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

There’s a template that professional communicators use to organize their thoughts and plan communications activities. Each step in the plan is sequential, building on information from

OBJECTIVE

Every communications plan has an overall objective. What are you trying to achieve overall? Ideally this should tie in to your organization’s mission, but it could be for your program, or an individual report.

It’s important to attach some sort of quantitative measure to our Objective so we know when we’ve done our job or missed the mark.

SITUATION ANALYSIS – STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OBJECTIVES, THREATS

When we share a message, we’re not speaking into an empty universe. We need to understand the situation you find yourself communicating in to choose our most effective plan.

We need to understand the *Strengths* our team has, which we can draw on. Things like

- We have someone on our team who is great at making videos
- We have a team leader who is well connected, politically
- My favourite: we have a lot of money. Our team is financially strong.

We need to understand the *Weaknesses* our team has, which we’ll have to work around, such as:

- We don’t have a good public speaker on our team
- We only have five days to get a week’s worth of work done
- Some members of our team don’t work well together

We need to understand the *Opportunities* in our communications environment that we can take advantage of, like:

- A partner organization who’s pushing the same messages
- The topic we’re speaking on is in the public mind
- There’s an upcoming conference where our target audiences will all be gathered

There are also *Threats* outside our team to account for, such as:

- An organization or lobby group or politician who opposes our messages
- A breaking news story that’s dominating attention

TARGET AUDIENCES

We understand what we're trying to achieve and we're aware of our situation.

Because we only have so much time and money, we're not going to try to reach everyone with our messages. We're going to choose the people or groups of people who will have the most impact in achieving our objective.

In communications we call this our Target Audiences. We must identify them and ask what they already know about us and what we want them to know.

For the sake of being strategic with our time and money AND to design the most effective messages, we try to keep target audiences as narrow as possible. We separate Target Audiences – and decide how we'll communicate to them – with information in three categories.

- **Demographics** What's their age? What's their gender (if that's relevant to our work and how we communicate with them)? What's their language (super important)? What's their dialect? What's their education level? Where do they live? Where do they work? What do they know about us?
- **Psychographics** What do they value? What do they hold in high esteem? Who do they trust? Who they distrust – or hate? Are they very intellectually driven – or very emotional? How do they talk about themselves? What "identity" do they have? How do they value us?
- **Media consumption habits** How do they get messages? Do they open emails - or delete them? Do they attend conferences? Do they have time for long messages, or do they only consume information in short bursts? What newspapers do they read? Which radio shows do they listen to? Which of their peers do they listen to? Who do they have to listen to at work? Are they on social media?

SETTING GOALS FOR TARGET AUDIENCES

Because we do not want the same thing actions from different Target Audiences – and because their different characteristics mean we'll need to create different messages for them – we'll set different goals for each audience for us to reach our overall Objective.

For each Target Audience in your strategic communications plan, choose specific goals:

- Knowledge Goals – what do we want them to know?
- Feeling Goals – what do we want them to feel?
- Action Goals – what do we want them to do?

We'll shape our messages using these goals.

Cautionary note: For TEEB, we're going to have a lot of Knowledge Goals. We encourage you to choose as few as possible, picking the ones most relevant to each Target Audience; most decision makers have limited time for in-depth data.

Cautionary note: It's important to know the correct answers about a Target Audience's demographics, psychographics and media consumption habits. Relying on assumptions or stereotypes ("young people are all on social media" "government officials prefer email") can damage a communications plan.

KEY MESSAGES

We have our measurable Objective that we want to achieve. We have a Situation Analysis of the environment we'll be communicating in (factors we can capitalize on, other factors we need to work around or counteract). We've picked and understand our most important Target Audiences. We have goals for what we want them to know and feel and do.

Now we're at the most important step. We take all that information and distill it into Key Messages.

Usually Key Messages are a sentence long and contain information for our Knowledge Goals, emotional language for our Feelings Goals and a call to Action.

These Key Messages is what we want our Target Audiences to accept. We may communicate them simultaneously in several different ways – a brochure, an in-person meeting, social media, a poster – but Key Message is the same.

FRAMING KEY MESSAGES AROUND SELF INTEREST

People (or groups of people) are more likely to engage with a Key Message that has a benefit for them. They are more likely to act if their self interest is involved. Consider this a "What's In It For Me?" factor.

Note: Rather than thinking of this as a negative "selfish" human quality, consider that we are drawing a connection to our work and things that our Target Audiences already love. People value what they love and will act to protect it.

- Money - This story is about something new that will save or cost you money
- Safety – This story is about something the will improve or worsen your safety
- Health – This story is about something that will improve or harm your health
- Family – This story is about something that will strengthen or weaken your family
- Community – This story is about something that will strengthen or weaken your community
- Moral Outrage – This story will upset or enforce your sense of justice
- Environment – This story is about something that will harm or heal your environment
- Inspiration/Curiosity – This story is so weird or fascinating, it will grab you

If you have trouble taking all the considerations of Knowledge, Feeling and Action Goals... and all the considerations about demographics, psychographics and media consumption habits and turning them into Key Messages, then I want you to just think about this:

- How do I take my message and connect it to my target audience's self interest?
- How do I make them say, "I see what's in it for me."

TACTICS

We have our measurable Objective we want to achieve.

We have a Situation Analysis to understand our environment.

We've picked the most important Target Audiences and the goals we have for them.

We've chosen Key Messages that will resonate with these audiences AND help them see why it matters to them. ("What in it for me?")

Now we do the communicating by choosing the best Tactics.

Tactics are what most people rush to. We're releasing a report, let's do some social media, let's have a conference, let's do media interviews. "Let's make a viral video!" That's my favourite request.

I've been in that rush, I understand why we do it. But if you want to be strategic with your time, if you want to get the best use of your money, if you want to get results, you need to choose tactics that:

- Best match your situation
- Best reach your target audiences
- Best convey your key messages

This slide has many of the common Tactics communicators use. For TEEB, I suspect a lot of your tactics will involve in person meetings, trying to get decision makers to support your work or enact your findings.

PRINCIPLES OF PERSUASION

In choosing Tactics, consider the Three Principles of Persuasion to improve your effectiveness.

The first: Appeals to self interest work ("What's in it for me?")

The second: Experiences are more powerful than messaging

The third: We believe people we trust.

BUDGET AND TIMELINE

The remaining parts of a strategic communication plan are self explanatory but important. We can choose the models already used by our organizations

Budget. How much money and how much time can you spend on this?

Timeline. When does each step in your plan have to occur?

EVALUATION

Did our communication efforts work? Evaluation often gets skipped as we move on to the next project or the next report, but it's critical to check if our plans succeeded. That's how we learn for next time.

We shouldn't just check at the very end of our project. If we Evaluate *during* the roll out of our communications plan how well we're doing, it gives us a chance to pivot away from failures or capitalize on successes. Evaluation is the "two-way" portion of our communications plan, using feedback to inform our efforts.

Cautionary note: try to keep Evaluation close to your goals. Measuring output ("We sent this many email, we printed these many copies, we put on a symposium.") provides no indication if we succeeded in achieving our Objective. Measuring engagement ("We received this many positive responses to our email, we had X number of many requests for our report, X number of people attended our symposium.") is more useful, but still doesn't directly indicate if we achieved our Objective.

II. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN TEMPLATE

What is our overall objective? _____

Strengths (Int)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Weaknesses (Int)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Opportunities (Ext)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Threats (Ext)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Target Audience 1: _____

Relevant Demographics: _____

Relevant Psychographics: _____

Media Habits: _____

We want them to know: _____
We want them to feel: _____
We want them to do: _____

Target Audience 2: _____
Relevant Demographics: _____

Relevant Psychographics: _____

Media Habits: _____

We want them to know: _____
We want them to feel: _____
We want them to do: _____

Target Audience 3: _____
Relevant Demographics: _____

Relevant Psychographics: _____

Media Habits: _____

We want them to know: _____
We want them to feel: _____
We want them to do: _____

Key Messages for Audience 1: _____

Key Messages for Audience 2: _____

Key Messages for Audience 3:

Tactics:

Timeline: (Do as separate spreadsheet tracking tasks by due date)

Budget: (Do as separate spreadsheet tracking projected and actual costs)

What quantitative measures will we use
to **Evaluate** if we succeeded?

III. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN TEMPLATE (reduced)

What is our overall objective? _____

Target Audience 1: _____
Key Message for Audience 1: _____

Target Audience 2: _____
Key Message for Audience 2: _____

Target Audience 3: _____
Key Message for Audience 3: _____

What's the best way to reach them: _____

IV. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TACTICS

In person meetings

Webinars

Townhalls

All person calls

“Ask Me Anything” webinars

Panel discussions

Speaking opportunities

Conferences and seminars

Tradeshow booths

Guerilla demonstrations

- Marches
- Performance art
- Sit ins

Events

- Site tours
- Demonstrations and experiential learning
- Open houses
- Concerts
- Galas
- Pop-up shops

Direct email or mail

E-newsletters or newsletters

- Internal mailings
- External mailings
- Partner lists

Listserv distribution

Websites

Intranets

Guest blog posts

Interactive media and apps

Multimedia

- Podcasts

- Videos

- Infographics

Spokespeople

- Formal influencers (By virtue of their role: elected leaders, religious leaders, etc.)
- Informal influencers (By virtue of their stature: celebrities, community leaders, etc.)

Sponsorships of aligned events

Branded merchandise

Contests

News media

- News releases (proactive or reactive)
- Interviews
- News conferences
- Editorials, advertorials and Letters to the Editor

Print materials

- Reports
- Postcards
- Books
- Brochures and pamphlets

Outdoor displays

- Posters
- Billboards
- Bus treatments
- Wall treatments
- Public art

Traditional media ads

Online ads (Including tracked ads)

Social media

V. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS ADVICE

AUTHENTICITY

As communicators we cannot veer into dishonesty. It damages who we are as people and the wider world. If we are being untruthful and it gets found out, the all-important trust required to move people to action is gone.

Strategic communicating is not about warping the truth but presenting the aspects of our work most relevant for our audiences and inviting them to discover more.

AUTHENTIC LANGUAGE

We live in the most media saturated age. People see and hear more messages than any other point in human history. In this environment, people have gotten good at filtering out inauthentic messages: where the messenger doesn't sound sincere.

Before all other communications considerations aside, remember to be authentic. This includes choosing the words that feel natural to you. A carefully crafted Key Message isn't useful if it sounds awkward coming from your lips.

We're going to discuss using accessible language and choosing simplicity over complexity. I do think we can get better about being concise and clear without sacrificing accuracy. But don't say something that doesn't sound like you. You have to be you.

EMOTIONAL AUTHENTICITY

As part of that intellectual authenticity – saying what we truly think – we are more effective communicators when we show how we truly feel. A “drop of emotional vulnerability” lets people know we feel the urgency and importance of our work, as well as its merit.

People are drawn to emotional authenticity. Rather than appearing as a sign of weakness, it demonstrates a confidence of conviction, particularly in a world used to emotional suppression.

Some considerations:

- Emotional vulnerability can be practiced and stimulated with techniques. Consider closing your eyes and visualizing someone you love – a child, a grandparent – before giving your next speech or writing your next important email.
- Take five minutes of silence before an in-person communications activity (speeches, webinars, etc.) to let the body calm down. That encourages emotional availability.
- Don't do any important communication when you are tired. That can either shut your emotional availability off completely OR open the floodgates and we don't want that either.
- Listen to a meaningful song that stirs your emotions before giving a presentation or drafting the executive summary of a report.

- Repeat a mantra to yourself: People want me to be authentic.

It's true. People are hungry for authenticity and we can model it.

SIMPLE, ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE

We can invite more people into our work by using simple, accessible language. For those of us who are very intellectually oriented, this may seem to contradict the point on authenticity.

But we use simple language in our day-to-day life.

I want the nearest Uber	not	I want the most expeditious Uber
I like the freshest food	not	I like food at its peak decomposition resistance.

For TEEB there will be a lot of technical language you'll need to use to share your findings. That's appropriate when your audience is made of technical experts who won't find precise scientific terms to be a barrier.

But useless words like furthermore, nevertheless, heretofore... these words should disappear. And other uncommon, extremely nuanced terms can be used occasionally but consider using common language when possible.

Furthermore	Further
Nevertheless	Still
Heretofore	Before now
Utilize	Use
Outcomes	Results
Simultaneously	At the same time
Quid pro quo	<i>Never use Latin</i>

Clarity shows intelligence, as opposed to grand, inaccessible language.

AUDIENCE-SPECIFIC LANGUAGE

We are more effective communicators when we use the dialect and everyday language of our Target Audiences. This might require research if people from a certain country or region or city (or even neighbourhood) speak differently.

Avoid aphorisms. These are expressions or "wise old sayings" specific to a certain culture that have an understood meaning... but only to people in that culture.

QUICK EDITING TIPS

Along with accessible language, there are very simple changes we can make to become better writers

Active voice

In short, active voice means a Subjects performs Verbs on an Object

She turns the key.
I ate the orange.
We will pass the legislation.

Instead of passive voice, where Objects have Verbs acted on them.

The orange was eaten by me.
The key was turned.
The legislation will be passed.

Passive voice highlights the Object instead of the Subject. It is a language choice often used when someone doesn't want to take responsibility for their actions.

"Decisions were made."

Variations of this statement are frequently used when governments or businesses don't want to acknowledge -they- were the ones making decisions. For TEEB, we want to acknowledge people are taking actions and use the active voice.

Trim "that"

We should always trim unnecessary words from our writing. It makes for stronger reading, it takes less time to read, too. An easy word to trim is "that" because it's often unnecessary.

"I saw that he sat on the chair that his friend had given him." Becomes
"I saw he sat on the chair his friend had given him."

If cutting "that" doesn't change the meaning of your sentence, cut it. Most word processors have a simple word search function so it's very easy to track them down.

Avoid conjunction verbs

To eliminate more excess words, avoid conjunctive verbs: using two verbs when one will do.

"I am hearing anger in your voice." Becomes
"I hear anger in your voice."

"He is doing the best he can." Becomes
"He does the best he can."

Conjunctive verbs often appear as a form of the verb "To Be" followed by another verb ending in -ing.

Break sentences up

"Complex, compound sentences are great when they're beautifully written, but when they're not well built – a problem untrained communicators face – with multiple thoughts fighting for attention, retention goes down."

This long sentence is relatively easy to understand, but by breaking it up into smaller pieces, we make it easier for readers to follow along.

“Complex, compound sentences are great. Sometimes they’re beautifully written, but they can also be poorly built. Untrained communicators struggle with this. Multiple thoughts fight for attention. Retention goes down.”

This is a vital exercise for speeches, when we need pauses to take breaths of air.

VISUALS

We live in a multimedia age. Visuals can be a huge support to your communications effort. While they don’t have the precise articulation of words, they make an instant, emotional impact.

Some notes on visuals:

- The human face has been proven to be the most arresting shape for people. The alignment of eyes, a nose, a mouth – grabs attention the fastest. We see it in rockfaces, in burnt toast. Because it’s relevant to our work, use the human face. Consider using it in your work.
- Use images that evoke emotion. Because it is an instant impression, you can get an emotional response from people. Even in our infographics – which tend to be more informative – we can evoke emotion.
- Use close ups if your Target Audiences use smartphones or other tiny screens.
- Have the image tell a story. Just because a photo is a still image doesn’t mean it doesn’t suggest movement, that the relationship of bodies in space don’t have a narrative of power dynamics.

STORYTELLING

Humans are storytelling creatures. We’re drawn to stories. We’re curious to find out how they end.

If you can find and share stories that illustrate your Key Messages, you have a vehicle that can carry your communication efforts to people in the form they were built for. Stories can be chosen with Target Audiences in mind, recognizing narratives speak directly to identity and values.

Storytelling can happen across any of the Tactics. Visuals, like we just discussed, can tell stories. Videos, podcasts and speeches are great mediums for storytelling. But any piece of writing, email or poster can have a story; even the driest technical paper can feature an anecdote that shares why our work matters.

VI. PRESS/MEDIA RELASE TEMPLATE

LOGO

MEDIA RELEASE

HEADLINE THAT SHARES WHY YOUR NEWS MATTERS TO PEOPLE

SUBHEAD WITH MORE DETAILS IF NECESSARY

CITY, DATE OF RELEASE – A catchy line that gives the who, what, where, when and sometimes how of your report or event, but also touches on why your report matters to news outlets’ audiences.

The second paragraph sharpens the pitch, either further explaining why your report matters to people (perhaps touching one of the eight motivators) or introduces a second aspect of why it matters. These paragraphs are clear and concise. If you haven’t explained why your report or event matters to the news outlets’ audiences by this point, you’ve lost them.

The third paragraph often has a quote that sums up the pitch above, phrasing it in conversational language from the most well-known person involved in the project. Often there will not be a famous or notable person involved, in which case choose the lead researcher or senior bureaucrat. The quote should have emotion and prompt an emotional response in the reader. If the quote is truly exceptional – the kind of quote that makes people stop what they’re doing – consider moving it to an earlier paragraph.

If you have an event, such as a report launch, clearly set out the details so journalists can read them at a glance:

- Event title
- Event date and time (if necessary, share a full agenda)
- Your event location
- Contact for further information

Consider listing what you can supply to a news outlet, either immediately or at your report launch or conference. Remember: different mediums require different types of visuals and audio.

- What photos, music, video, interactive graphics and other media can you provide?
- Who is available to do interviews (and on what subject matter)?

A boilerplate explains your organization’s history and mandate. It’s concise, about three lines long at most. It’s your claim to fame or how you want everyone to describe your organization.

-30-

- For interviews and more information, contact
- Your name and title
- A phone number you can be reached at around the clock
- An email address you check regularly

VII. PRESS/MEDIA RELEASE EXAMPLE



MEDIA RELEASE

Report calls on Canada to require businesses to disclose climate change risks held by investors, pension plans

OTTAWA, JANUARY 16, 2019: A new report from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) sets out a three-year policy roadmap for Canada to adjust its financial ecosystem to support meaningful climate change action. Central to this policy map is mandatory transparency around climate change risks held by business.

“Disclosure on energy transition plans is what global investors are looking for,” says Céline Bak, author of *Leveraging Sustainable Finance Leadership in Canada* and Senior Associate at IISD. “Otherwise investors will assume targets are just that and capital is not being allocated to meet those targets. This is a risk to Canada’s financial sector – particularly given how much capital is invested in Canada’s energy sector.”

The report’s release comes as Colorado communities pursue legal action against Suncor and both New York and Massachusetts sue ExxonMobil, claiming the companies failed to disclose to investors their exposure to climate change risks and legislation.

The report sets out recommended steps to encourage private sector investment in climate action, noting the kind of changes necessary for Canada to meet its Paris Agreement targets require an infusion of capital beyond what governments and taxpayers can cover.

“Governments can ban products or fund environmental projects – and that matters,” says Bak, who was recently made a Knight of France’s National Order of Merit for her work on sustainable finance. “But greening the financial ecosystem will deliver exponential returns. That’s the kind of action needed for Canada to actually move the needle on productivity and clean growth.”

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is an independent think tank that delivers the knowledge to act. Our mission is to promote human development and environmental sustainability. With offices in Winnipeg, Geneva, Ottawa, Toronto and Beijing, our work impacts lives in nearly 100 countries.

-30-

For interviews and more information, contact
Matthew TenBruggencate, Communications Officer, IISD
+1-204-297-9779 or mtenbruggencate@iisd.ca