

## Start Now

### The RACE Formula

The RACE formula is Research, Analyze, Communicate, Evaluate.

There are generally two types of communication plans. Both types of plans follow the RACE formula. The two types of plans are:

**District:** Plans that outline the activities for the entire school district for a specific period of time, for example one year.

**Specific:** Specific plans for specific purposes, such as referendum campaigns, major changes or initiatives, etc.

### Get Started

1. Use available data. What does it tell you? Involve a team to gather other perspectives.
2. What do you know and what questions remain? Use this analysis to begin planning further research.
3. Establish a short-term communication goal(s).
4. Develop key messages - the most important two or three messages to tell your district story.
5. Select the two or three tactics (activities) to achieve the short-term goal and do them well, including two-way communication.
6. Establish a written plan with timelines, responsibilities, and how these efforts will be evaluated.
7. Share the plan.
8. Evaluate and monitor the progress and adjust as necessary.

## Stay In It For The Long Haul

Excitement will grow as communication efforts grow. Like any other initiative, communication is more manageable and effective when it is carefully thought through and planned into budgets, schedules, etc.

### Key considerations for a long-term plan

- Research.
- Support the district's overall mission.
- Plan activities that create relationships, and involve and engage people.
- Consider the various audiences of your plan.

To sustain communication for the long-term, plan for the resources needed to help achieve sustainable communication over time such as:

- Dedicated time, financial and human resources.
- Research strategies to inform the plan.
- Technology to support the plan such as computers, video cameras, software, etc.
- A Board policy addressing communication.
- Establishing communication as a system-wide priority.



## Tell Your Story



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Make a plan.  
Work the plan.  
Evaluate the plan.

## What are the Functions and Components of a Strategic Communication Plan?

A strategic communication plan considers: Why – the goal; What – the message; Who – the audience; How – the methods; and How much – when, where and what cost. It also considers "so what?" What will be different after the communication plan is implemented and how will the outcome be evaluated? In the chart below, the critical functions of a communication plan are in the top row. Sample components for each function are listed.

Critical Functions	Research and Analysis	Internal Communication	External Communication	Meetings and Special Events for Communication	Marketing Communication	Reputation Management
<b>Critical components</b>	<p>Communication Audit: Rigorous, objective review of existing communication efforts identifies audiences, issues, barriers, how to communicate, what to communicate.</p> <p>Other ways to collect perceptual data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Polling</li> </ul> <p>Use available data from other sources, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Free and reduced</li> <li>- Student achievement</li> <li>- Census data</li> <li>- Dept of Labor Statistics</li> <li>- Changes in marketplace</li> <li>- Open enrollment surveys</li> <li>- Financial information</li> </ul> <p>Is there evidence of a market focus? How does organization conduct a "scan"?</p> <p>Media matrix: Analysis of media coverage: positive, negative, neutral, accuracy</p> <p>Analyze: What is effective now? What needs improvement? What goals are suggested by the research? What are the gaps?</p>	<p>Possible Audiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff</li> <li>• Board of Ed</li> <li>• Volunteers</li> </ul> <p>What is the goal of communication with staff: Inform, gather input, involve, or empower?</p> <p>Possible channels of sending communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Newsletters</li> <li>• Social media</li> <li>• Face-to-face</li> <li>• Committees</li> <li>• Web site</li> <li>• Press releases</li> <li>• Video</li> <li>• Blogs</li> <li>• E-mail</li> <li>• E-letters</li> <li>• Phone calls/texts</li> <li>• Robo-calls</li> </ul> <p>Possible channels to receive information (listen)</p> <p>*Contact Us* – protocol to respond</p> <p>Face-to-face Surveys Focus groups Communication protocols for meetings</p> <p>Crisis Communication Plan</p>	<p>Possible Audiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Students and Parents</li> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Business</li> <li>• Other government/ agencies</li> </ul> <p>What is the goal of external communication: Inform, gather input, involve, or empower?</p> <p>Possible channels of sending communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media, press releases</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Face-to-face</li> <li>• Newsletters</li> <li>• Social media</li> <li>• Key communicator networks</li> <li>• Web site</li> <li>• E-letters</li> <li>• E-mails/texts</li> <li>• Robo-calls/texts</li> </ul> <p>When are community engagement strategies appropriate to involve the public in authentic problem solving?</p> <p>Possible channels to receive information (listen)</p> <p>*Contact Us* – What is the protocol to respond</p> <p>Face-to-face Surveys Focus groups Communication protocols for meetings Analyze complaints compliments</p> <p>Crisis Communication Plan</p>	<p>Who is being reached? Audience is determined by event.</p> <p>Location: Is this a physical location or virtual?</p> <p>Is it easily accessible? Welcoming? Directions are clear?</p> <p>Is it an open invitation or closed invitation? Why?</p> <p>When planning, consider the purpose of the special event or meeting.</p> <p>Then consider: Format, advertising and publicity, logistics, training and human resources, required, feedback and recaps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special events, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kindergarten welcomes;</li> <li>- Middle school/high school transition events, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Involvement in community events</li> <li>• Publicity</li> <li>• Advertising</li> <li>• Recording events for other uses.</li> <li>• Marketing collateral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Calendar</li> <li>- Brochures</li> <li>- Web site</li> <li>- Videos</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The components of reputation are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Best products and services;</li> <li>- Customer focus;</li> <li>- Social responsibility;</li> <li>- Well run and managed;</li> <li>- Financially stable;</li> <li>- Employee relations.</li> </ul> <p>Is there a customer service focus?</p> <p>How are customers treated?</p> <p>How do you know?</p> <p>What stories demonstrate the quality and experience within the schools?</p> <p>How does the district generate and respond to word-of-mouth?</p> <p>How does the district control rumors?</p> <p>What are the communication protocols during crisis/emergencies?</p> <p>Is there adequate signage?</p> <p>Are buildings and grounds maintained for positive first impressions?</p>

## Steps to Develop a Communication Plan

### Research

- Identify various audiences.
- Identify issues/messages that resonate with audiences.
- Identify issues that may impede or block understanding.
- Identify communication methods that are most effective with various audiences.

### Strategic Goal or Purpose Statement

- Determine what needs to be accomplished and then develop intentional goals to get there.

### Key Messages

- State the top three things you want your audiences to know this year.
- Incorporate these into all communication activities.
- Frame your key messages for different audiences: "What's in it for me?"

### Tactics, Timelines and Accountabilities

- Develop operational details and activities that achieve the goal.
- Vary your methods based on audiences.
- Include opportunities to listen and engage, as well as send information.
- Establish timelines; monitor for completion; and adjust for circumstances.

### Evaluation

- Establish methods to evaluate tactics as well as the achievement of the strategic goals.



Write it Down.

