

Social
Integrated Agency

Our eight step comms strategy

Define the problem

Is your challenge related to closures, temporary lay-offs or other significant changes? Do you need to stay front of customers' mind? Are you trading whilst furloughing staff? Focus on facts and use data to clarify your point. This will help to define the communications challenge at the outset. You can't provide the right answers without establishing the problem first.

Explain what you're trying to achieve

Explain what you're trying to achieve, *not what you're aiming to do*. Be focused on outcomes (the end result), rather than outputs (emails, newsletters, web updates).

These may include:

- › Making businesses aware of where to access support
- › Influencing and changing customer behaviour
- › Connecting people with your products or services

Who you need to reach

Although the reality is often more complex and nuanced, at this time our clients have three broad types of people they need to engage.

These include:

- › Staff, as an organisation's representatives and points of contact with the public
- › Clients and customers (for businesses and service providers)
- › Partners, stakeholders and decision makers

Think about what these people need now, and how they want to hear from you.

Get the data and evidence to support your thinking. CRM, analytics and publicly available data from government on social economics and media habits are all useful here. If you have time, social listening can also be useful in finding out what people are saying about a topic, subject or brand.

Aim to be helpful and useful. Remember what you're trying to achieve (see point #2).

Strategy in a sentence

What is the big idea that binds everything together? Think about what you're trying to achieve, and why, and what will catalyse the response you're looking for. If you can condense this into a sentence or paragraph, your plan will flow from here.

What you're going to say

Key messages and 'lines to take' are overused, but clear and memorable ones work well. In my experience, it's best to stick to no more than five messages (at most) and use them consistently. Keep them simple and jargon free. Focus on the areas which help you to make the key points: who, what, when, where, how and – crucially – why. Include a 'call to action' (what do you want people to do?). Support them with facts. Always. Think about how frustrating it is to hear politicians use messages without any facts to back up what they're saying. Avoid this approach. Messages without facts are slogans. Get the facts from your colleagues.

How you'll communicate

Shape your approach around the audiences you're trying to reach. Most approaches use a blend of creative, online content with a more personalised approach. But don't just go for this because you can. Social media will only work if the people you need to reach are following your channels already. If you're spending time creating a web page that no one reads, you're wasting your time. Think of your audience. Don't spend time reinventing the wheel; if good material already exists, use it. The role of colleagues in supporting this approach – managers and front-line staff – can be invaluable here, especially if they're active online.

How much will this cost?

What activity can your team deliver? Map what can be realistically done with your resources and identify gaps that you need support for. Separate the 'must haves' from the 'nice to haves'. If you're doing anything that's not a priority and can be put on hold, use that time in other areas. Use this to make a case for additional budget if you need it.

What does good look like?

Ultimately this needs to link back to your objectives (what you're trying to achieve). Set out some measurements by which your work can be measured. Make this a continuous process and iterate your approach as you go. Do more of what works well, and less of what's not working well over time.

Once you've set this out, you'll also need a timing planner to set out what's happening when.

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