

## Communications Strategy

A communications strategy is a document that outlines how and when your organisation will communicate with its target audience, to achieve specific and measurable goals.

A communications strategy can be long-term (e.g. covering the calendar year) or for special or one-off events such as a fundraiser or specifically around Advent or Easter.

**Romans 10:14-15** 'And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."'

### Why bother?

#### Benefits of having a communications strategy



- To keep your communications focused on your church's mission and goals.
- To ensure you don't miss good opportunities, like relevant awareness days or campaigns, to spread your message.
- To work out the resources you may need, e.g. digital content skills, copywriting, or media training.
- To work out what success looks like so you can measure if you've achieved your goals.

### Five steps of a communications plan

## Objectives



- Work out what you are trying to achieve or the problem you are trying to solve. Communications should support your missional objectives, e.g. you want to reach more young people or dispel misconceptions around the church.
- Do research ahead of setting communications objectives, to work out what the starting point is. For example, if you want your church to be better known in the area, you could convene a small focus group or carry out a straw poll of people on the high street to work out what is the current level of awareness of your church.
- Objectives can be broadly categorised as **1) Raising awareness** – what do you want your audience to know, **2) Attitudinal/opinion change** – what do you want your audience to feel, **3) Behavioural change** – what do you want your audience to do.
- Make your objectives **SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound)**. This will help you measure if you have achieved your goals at the end of the strategy.

## Audience



- Work out the specific groups you are trying to reach. Knowing who you are speaking to will determine how you reach them and what your message is.
- Don't forget your internal audience – your congregation and church volunteers.
- Your external audience is likely to be broad and could include young families living in the community, the elderly, local schools, refugees, etc.
- Look at the Census to understand the demographics of your community. Is there a group that is particularly under-represented in your church that you need to reach out to more?
- Think about your current relationship with these audiences. Do they know about your church already or will your communications require a more detailed explanation introducing your church and what you are all about?

## Message



- Work out what it is you want to say in your communications.
- All your communications should be informed by your overarching key message that will invariably be linked to your church's vision or mission statement. For example, you may want to send the message to the public that your church is welcoming, outward-looking and focused on supporting the community, or that you are a place for young people to come and ask life's big questions.
- Aim to include a call to action in your communications so it's clear to your audience what you want them to know and do, e.g. 'Come and join our coffee morning every Monday at 10am, and meet new friends in the community.'

## Communications channels



- Think about your existing touchpoints with your various audiences and the pre-existing communications channels you could use to get out your message.
- Channels will depend on the audience you are trying to reach. For example, if you want to attract more young people to an Alpha course, a video testimony from a young person shared on Instagram will be more targeted than an advert in your local newspaper or parish magazine.
- For promoting community-focused events, make use of local Facebook groups which will often be a go-to for many who are searching for what's on in their local community.
- Consider reaching out to local micro-influencers and inviting them along to relevant events (e.g. invite a 'Mummy blogger' to your Messy Church). They may end up writing a review and encouraging their local followers to join.
- If you have an existing relationship with your local school, ask to share relevant information in their newsletter as a way of reaching local parents.
- Think 'digital first'. That doesn't mean you need to abandon all print communications, but create digital communications (with links, images, booking info, etc) that can be printed where needed. Don't try and retrofit analog print communications (such as pew sheets) to upload online. They can look outdated and won't include the functionality that people expect when they visit a website or social media channels.

## Evaluation



- Try and build in a little time to regularly assess whether your communications are working, helping reach your intended audience and achieving your goals.
- Make use of digital metrics such as website page visits, social media likes and views, and newsletter open rates, in order to track any increased engagement with your communications output.
- If things are working, consider sharing the results within your deanery to help inspire and encourage others.

Access a template [high-level communications plan on our website](#).



For further advice, support and training on communications planning, please get in touch with the [Diocesan Communications Team](#)