

Toolkit: Communications for Conservation

First things first, what is Communications?

Communications is the exchange of information.

Strategic communications is the exchange of information for a purpose.

The goals of communications in conservation often fall into three categories:

1. **Sustainability** - fundraising, networking
2. **Behavior change** - getting people to change the way they think or act (program-related goals)
3. **Influencing** - advocacy and policy change (program-related)

Underpinning the above goals is a common need around 'organizational awareness,' which is essentially the need for organizations to be known and credible for what they do. Communications is essential to making this happen.

Ways communications can help your organization:

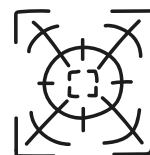
- **Funding** - Getting and retaining donors.
- **Partnerships** - Linking up with like-minded or complementary organizations.
- **Behavior change** - Getting people to start or stop doing something that will lead to an outcome your organization seeks (e.g. to stop cutting down trees or to adhere to a land use plan). Often, you'll hear this referred to as 'education' or 'awareness raising' but really it's ultimately about changing what people do.
- **Team engagement** - Helping teams better understand what their organization does, what it's achieving, why their work matters.
- **Policy change** - Influencing decision-makers in ways that can change policies.

IMPACT - Ultimately, successful communications means that an organization is getting others to do what it wants them to do - and this results in **greater impact and progress towards its mission.**

"As a leader, it is important to do work that has an impact. It is equally important to ensure that your impact is being communicated as you would like others to know. This requires investing time and resources in your communications efforts, as it is at the core of an organization's success."

-Dickson Kaelo, CEO, Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association

Follow these steps for greater impact:



1. What do you want to achieve? | **Goals & Objectives**

Begin with the big picture - what is your organization trying to achieve (what are your goals)? Now ask yourself, how can communications help?

TIP: Communications could play a role in every single thing your organization does. Communications can't do everything - you have limited resources - and so be selective and think about where communications will add the most value in helping your organization achieve its goals. Remember: fundraising, influencing, and behavior change are some common areas where communications can help.

2. Establish a target audience (don't try to reach everyone) | Target

Who matters to you? Who do you need to reach, engage with, and/or influence to achieve your communications goals and objectives? Use this simple set of questions to get to know each of your target audience:

Target Audience	Audience 1	Audience 2	Audience 2
Who are they?			
What do they care about?			
What do they need to know?			
How do they get their information?			
Who do they listen to?			



3. What messages will work? | Message

Your Message Matters.

- **Remember you need to convince people** why what you are saying matters.
- **Be compelling.** Use numbers and data. Use real people, tell their story. Use engaging and powerful images. Be emotive – don't think about telling people to do things, think about ways that will make them feel, that will make them want to do something.
- **Be clear.** Avoid jargon. Use plain language. Use common, everyday words.
- **"If you can't explain something simply, you don't understand it well enough."**
-Albert Einstein
- **Don't over explain.** This is a trap many of us all into. You want to be scientific, you don't want to generalize, etc. But save the details for later on and get people interested first. Always be accurate, but find ways to simplify and summarize.



4. How will you communicate? | Tools

There are so many ways to communicate these days, from websites and social media to podcasts and newsletters, videos and emails.

Some communications tools will reach very specific audiences, such as community radio or personalized emails, whereas others - such as websites - may have a much broader reach. The biggest mistake organizations make is trying to use too many tools and not thinking carefully about why or who you are trying to reach with each tool.

So before you choose your communications tools, make sure you are clear on questions 1 and 2 (your purpose and audience).