



Bursting the Bubble: Mastering Messaging as the Pandemic Shifts

Wednesday, Sept. 8, 2021

Webinar produced in partnership with Culture Days Manitoba and Culture Days National with support from the Manitoba Arts Council

Key Takeaways

Internal & External: Communication Strategies During a Pandemic and Always

Katie Inverarity

Director of Marketing & Communications

Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba

Break down departmental siloes

- Get on the same page with communication strategies
- Your patrons don't care that you have multiple departments, but you should
- Integrated schedule
 - Date/time, segment, team, form, message
 - Collaborate so that there is no conflicting information between departments
- Stay on message
- Be aware
- Break down siloes with leadership

Communication should be at the centre of decision making

- Example: I built a calculator to calculate best important dates and deadlines all based on the best date for a season announcement
- Create a scenario where you can be successful

Bespoke communications

- Optimize your database! Segment your lists into smaller categorized lists so you know your patrons better
- It is not uncommon to have 10 different segments for one email going out with different wording for each group
- The goal is to give patrons the info that they need, it is bound to increase your success. It leads to less follow-up, less clean-up work, and improves the long-term relationships with patrons, especially during a pandemic

Digital strategy

- Why? Donor / Patron Engagement, Gratitude, Create Art!
- Who? Donors, Volunteers, MTC Community, General Public, Educators
- What? Zoom donor events, Digital Magazine, Educator Videos, Messages of Gratitude, Digital Marquee, Full-Length Productions

External strategies

- Consider your community - the definition of community might change with each communication
- Your communications can hurt or help other people. We had to think about how and when to announce our cancellation so as not to make life more difficult for other festivals and their announcements

Communication Strategies in Uncertain Times

Cody Chomiak

Destination Marketing Specialist

The goal of the presentation: Tangible takeaways that you can apply to your team. Not just about the pandemic, but any kind of major change.

Strategy for partners and members

- Email is your main channel here, you own that first-party data
- Video updates are great too
- Use social media (Facebook groups)
- Create a toolkit on your website to make it as easy as possible for your partners to act as megaphones for you. Accessible resources in bite-size bits.
- Make it easy for your members and partners incorporate updates into their own respective areas

Strategies for your team/volunteers

- Have a comprehensive crisis communications and business continuity plan with protocols
- Make sure all staff are trained on exactly where to find the right information and a list of common questions they may receive
- Set up social listening and track sentiment
- Keep contact lists

Strategies for your audiences / public

- Become the source of truth
- You need to be transparent and trustworthy
- Make sure every page of your website is up to date
- Create a special section to house the newest information if appropriate
- Good service to provide: Comb through announcements and distill them to understandable shorter info for your public
- Go where the people are: use social media, your website is not everything
- Plug into your partners and local influencers

Be a digital dandelion

- Work smarter not harder!
- 1x8 rule: for every piece of content try to distribute it in 8 different ways
- Example: A weekly post about the state of the economy can be communicated as a video update, a blog post, on social media, through email, through large media, turned into a toolkit, ads and incorporated in Google MyBusiness
- Make sure that your team is well versed in how the media tells stories, you need to understand how they will be communicating

Leveraging technology

- Push notifications
- Pop-ups on websites
- Integrate with other platforms
- Use social listening and sentiment tracking tools

Good Communication

Best Practices to communicate effectively during the pandemic - and beyond

Mercedes Blackwood

Founder, Principal Strategist, Writer

Black Coffee Communications Inc.

How can we fill in the colour on the tips we've heard? How do we create messages that land?

- It is more complicated than ever right now and so it is useful to go back to simplicity. You want people to feel confident that they know what they need to know to be able to participate in your event
- If people are comfortable with you (trust + credibility) they can be comfortable that your information is good and trustworthy
- Key pillars = Be Consistent / Factual / Truthful / Transparent

- Send the message that you care and that your message is trustworthy: create empathy
- Anticipate questions about details: what do I need? Where can I get more info? What happens if things change?
- Only use published research and trusted medical and scientific bodies as reference
- We are all referring to info, not deferring it

Consider accuracy, speed, and the audience

- Speed is secondary to accuracy
- Communicate at regular intervals and say things when you say you will. If we are told a timeframe we can wait without frustration
- Consistency across different communications. Example: If the entrance has changed, communicate it in advance but also have a printed sign on-site
- Acknowledge that information changes and commit to keeping people informed
- Tailor the message to each of your audiences. Consider how you say what you say connects with each person

Empower and give autonomy

- Allow people to make their own decisions: give people some power back by giving them autonomy
- Give them the information they need but let them know they can decide how it affects them
- People come from different contexts, different levels of comfort. Have options available
- Make it easy to follow, consider that not everyone's first language is English or French
- Avoid being authoritarian or demanding. You did not make the rules

Incorporate values, emotions, and stories

- This is where you add colour, add some heart
- Words are very powerful, especially when they come from the heart
- Give depths to what it is you are saying
- Focus on messages of kindness and solidarity
- Focus on adopting behaviour everyone can enjoy
- Respect diversity of cultural beliefs and values so everyone can feel like you crafted these messages with them in mind