

DRAKE CREATIVE

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Communications Strategy & Creating an Effective Brand

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Seminar notes

presented in conjunction with the



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1. Does a nonprofit need a communications strategy?

People are bombarded with asks for the attention every day:

- 5,000 ad encounters daily
- 269 billion emails sent every day
- 121 billion pieces of mail were received in US households in 2017
- Half of all mobile calls in 2019 are projected to be spam robocalls

If you don't have clear, strategic communications, you could get lost in all of that clutter.

2. What are the differences between for profit and nonprofit corporations?

A for profit corporation strives to achieve a profit and answers to its shareholders, so, this is what its brand must be designed to achieve.

A nonprofit corporation strives to achieve its mission and answers to its stakeholders, so this is what its brand must be designed to achieve.

And yes, you are competing with corporations for dollars. Someone can go onto Amazon and spend \$50 on a new pair of Chucks. In seafoam green maybe. Or they can put that \$50 into helping you achieve a mission they believe in. You can feel as good helping a social cause as you do in those Chucks.

3. The importance of strategic planning

- Gets you to revisit your vision and mission to see if they have changed, to revisit or re-define your organizational values, and to set objectives for your organization, both in terms of its development and in achieving your mission. Understanding your audience is also critical.
- We like to see organizations do this work prior to developing their communications because your communications need to be aligned with your strategy and your mission, so they can advance them.
- Identity/Brand should be a critical aspect of your overall strategy.

4. So what is a communications strategy?

A. Personality

You can define the personality of your organization with a handful of adjectives. But we find that people don't always pick the ones they want. Sometimes, they pick the ones they think they're supposed to.

So this a game we like to play to help you escape that. I want you to think about your organization. Now, I want you to think of a song you think would be a good theme song or anthem for your organization.

What's your theme song? Why is this a good theme song for you, give me some adjectives to describe how it makes you feel. There's a start. Do this in a group, put your adjectives on the wall, and vote.



B. Positioning

It's difficult to figure out your positioning because it needs to be one thing. It needs to be the one thing that you want people to think of when they think of your organization that makes you different from everyone else. But if you can figure out your positioning, the other elements become so much easier.

Positioning Examples



Nike
Just do it

Positioning: One idea: we are the company of athletic bravado.



Medical aid where it's needed most

Doctors without Borders
Medical aid where it's needed most

Positioning: We will go anywhere to help people, even a war zone.

C. With these two things in place, now you look at the organizational elements of your brand.

Vision
Mission
Values
Objectives
Audience

Assuming you have at least the first four things on this list figured out, revisit them. Do they match your personality. Do they support your positioning? If not, it's a good time for a rewrite.

G. Audience

Audience personas for all of your constituent types can help bring specificity and warmth to your communications. Spend the time on these they deserve. They will help you:

- Meet people where they are
- Understand their perception and/or need for your organization
- Communicate with them through the channels they use
- Speak to their cares and concerns

Note: Create a spread sheet that your program directors can fill out. These are fictional people but based on the general characteristics of each demographic category. If you Google "how to create personas" you'll find many examples, pick the one that best suits your organization.

H. Key Messages

These are your talking points. You can have as few as three or as many as eight, but try not to do more than that.

What they should do is show how you live up to your positioning. Each one of them should be about accomplishing your mission.

These are the distilled ideas of what you do as an organization. You provide them to everyone who needs to explain what you do, so that everyone can explain what you do in the same language.

Clarity is key.

I. Elevator Pitch

If you've done all this work, your elevator pitch should be a piece of cake. It's informed by your positioning. It's about achieving your mission. And it's the summation of your key messages. Plus, it has your personality. And don't forget your values. All of that informs this.

Everyone in this room knows what an elevator pitch is. No one knows how to write one. But now you do. All you have to do is all this other work and then you'll think, why did I think this was so hard before?

J. Boilerplate

Think of this as the About Us page on your website or the text at the end of an email or press release. It answers the basic questions about your organization clearly and succinctly. Like the elevator pitch, if you've done the other work, this comes easy.

L. Lexicon

This does two things:

- Takes internal, at times obtuse, language and specifies what to say/write for improved clarity when communicating with the outside world.
- Addresses sensitive language and specifies organizational preferences.

5. Reading materials and references

Brandraising: How Nonprofits Raise Visibility and Money Through Smart Communications
by Sarah Durham

The Brand IDEA: Managing Nonprofit Brands with Integrity, Democracy, and Affinity
by Nathalie Laidler-Kylander, Julia Shepard Stenzel

Ideo Design Kit

Learn about mindsets, methods and case studies at: <http://www.designkit.org/>

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