

## **Communication planning, the key to business success**

*If you are failing to plan, you are planning to fail ~ Proverb*

Failing to plan communication strategies is all too common for not only start-up businesses but also established ones. Lack of solid communication planning can steer a business off course eventually costing the business or organization money and time.

In order to avoid the what-if's, unwanted surprises and wasted money, it's important to invest in developing a solid communication plan before strategic implementation begins. The world of PR is an exciting one and once the creative juices start to flow, it's sometimes difficult to stop and give thought to putting those ideas into a plan.

What exactly is a communication plan? A communication plan is a management tool that acts as a set-by-step guide and provides the framework for a variety of public relations tactics and actions. Its aim is to keep communication initiatives focused and helps to prevent unwanted obstacles. The plan is comprised of basic information that most business owners are already familiar with such as a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), goals and objectives, target audience, strategic actions, timelines, implementation plans, budget and finally evaluation which completes the plan.

All components of a communication plan share equal amounts of importance and it's critical not to wait until your business is sliding and money is running out before you think about ways PR can help your business. Communication planning should be a part of all businesses yearly goals and projections. Once the external factors are looked at, the fun begins with developing creative concepts and ideas that will benefit your business the most.

By developing a timeline that works with your business objectives, you are able to plan accordingly and look at the big picture from all angles. Perhaps advertising isn't the most efficient way to promote your business or editorial deadlines continue to be missed due to press releases being thrown together at the last minute - these instances can be resurrected within a communication plan; the key being that everything is planned and accounted for. Your communication plan can run 2 weeks, 3 months, 6 months or even a year but having a plan will allow your business to reach its maximum potential.

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