

# Importance of Proactive Planning in Public Awareness on LMOs

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# Introduction

- Definitions
- Importance of proactive planning in public awareness on LMOs
- Basic Elements of a Communication Plan
- Developing and Packaging clear and Compelling Messages
- Considerations in choosing appropriate channels of communication

# Definitions

- The usage of the term proactive planning depends on the **context** in which it is used and the **environment** in which it is applied.
- Proactive (planning) simply means **readiness** to deal with unexpected problems;
- By planning **AHEAD** of events, you avoid being over-run by events and have plans and procedures to cope with them.

# In practice

- In mechanics, it means replacing major parts before they completely wear out.
- In public relations, it refers to planned method (s) and pattern (s) which enable an organisation notify its target audience about its activities (services) to improve user response and acceptance. It must have the key messages or benefits that the target audience (s) will receive from the new arrangement.

# In practice

- Emergency organisations like police have plans to deal with riots, floods, earthquakes e.t.c.
- Buildings have lightening conductors.
- In countries where load shading is common, homes and industries have generators to ensure constant power supply.
- Public awareness: the important role that community enthusiasm and knowledge has in building sustainable societies.

# In practice

- Organisation dealing in promoting LMOs both proactive planning and public awareness to clarify the perception about their products. “...the science behind LMOs is highly technical but it is not necessary for members of the public to have in-depth knowledge about the science to form opinions on the social and ethical implications. ” (Hails and Kinderlerer, 2003)

# In practice

- By allowing your affected audience to know how the changes will affect them in a planned manner, you will be able to improve overall **acceptance, understanding and decrease the resistance** always encountered when a new technology is implemented.

# In practice

- An **emergency response plan** lists all potential crisis situations and addresses the critical steps a company takes in response.
- A **crisis communications plan** a guide on how to handle the communications aspects of any crises, as well as crises specifically related to reputation (such health and environmental effects that may be associated with LMOs).



# Importance of proactive planning in public awareness

- Planning increases the **efficiency** of an organization.
- It helps clarify the **intensions** the technology
- It reduces the **risks** involved in modern business activities/ technological transfer
- It facilitates proper **coordination** within an organization/ scientific innovations
- It aids in organising all available **resources**.
- It gives right **direction** to the organization (governments, scientists, academia, public)

# Importance cont...

- To maintain a **good control** of your internal and external audiences (scientists and the public)
- It helps to **achieve objectives** of the technology
- It **motivates** the personnel of an organization (scientists) and builds public confidence
- It encourages scientific **creativity and innovation**
- It also helps in **decision making**.

# Basic Elements of an outreach strategy or communication plan

## Research

- Do you know what you need before you set out? Get information on the company's history and current culture, the state of the marketplace or industry, the economic and political situation surrounding the company at the moment, a crisis or emergency that is threatening or some other change approaching, a new product about to be launched, etc.

# Basic elements Cont...

## Goals and Objectives

- Goals are broad ideas (no more than three) of what you see as an outcome.
- Develop at least one measurable objective per audience. e.g If your goal is to eradicate hunger in Africa, one of your objectives will be “To increase the production of corn in 2013 by 20% over 2012.

# Basics elements cont...

## 3. Target Audiences (publics)

- Consider both primary and secondary audiences, especially if the budget is tight, in whatever you're trying to do (scientists, government, academics, health experts, environmentalists, general public)

## 4. Tactics

- Spell out the **details of what you will do** under different situations. It is your to-do list. e.g an email to employees, a press release, for the community an op-ed in a local paper or a village/town meeting etc

# Basic Elements cont..

## 5. Timeline

- How long will it take to carry out your ideas? You can choose to enter the total amount of time and **split the time into phases**. Assign tasks (tactics) to specific volunteers and give each task a deadline.

# Basic elements cont...

## 6. Evaluation

- Your objectives should be restated here as a question to **determine whether or not you met your goals**. Collect feedback from various audiences, whether informally through e-mails, calls from the public or a review of media coverage of the issue, or formally with a scientific survey done at the beginning of the campaign and repeated at the end.
- The six steps above are sometimes organized in the acronym “**RACE**,” or Research, Analyze, Communicate, Evaluate.

# Basic techniques for identifying and analysing the target audiences

- **Knowing** who you are trying to reach helps solidify your audience. It's not enough to generalize who the audience is/are; you want to be **specific**. These are some of the characteristics you will want to know about your audience



# Basic techniques cont...

- Age range
- Gender
- Education level
- Position at work
- Beliefs
- Level of sophistication with your product
- General areas of interest (personal and professional)

# Basic techniques

- Communication **methods** (email, blogs, phone, etc.)
- A good **understanding** of your target audience will help you to tailor the content and format of your message to specifically appeal to your target audience/ market.

# Developing and packaging clear and compelling messages for different audiences

- It is important to understand the economic and social differences among your audiences. It is important to get acquainted with your audience –where they live, what they value most, their media habits, and their buying and consumption behaviour to get clues to the topics they would be interested in and how to build relationships over time. The challenge of communicationists is “to get inside the head of the listener/ audience” to know their needs and address them for their customer to take action.

# Packaging clear messages

- **Be clear** (be simple but informative and persuasive, never confusing)
- **Be Consistent** (Pay close attention to details like colour scheme, imagery, writing tone, paper stock and interactive functionality)
- **Be compelling** (Every element is crafted to get the end result you want)
- **Use of graphics** (Graphics can tell a story, create mood and feelings for a product while getting and retaining attention. Design includes layout, photographs, illustrations, paper, colour, ink and type styles.

# Analysing Target Audiences

- Plot the **characteristics, tendencies, resources and contexts** of target audience without making assumptions.
- Ask the following questions:

# Questions

- Which communication **channels** reach your target audience?
- Which channels do they **prefer**, and which one do they **access**?
- What are the **defining features** (real or virtual meeting places, common information or activity habits) of your target audience?
- Does your target group have any **culturally unique communication channels**?

# Considerations

- Be creative in the way you think about channels. You may need to consider channels that have a **multiplier effect** like websites and newsletters
- Think of channels where your audience will **find the information** that you are producing.
- Outside your own box, you may think of **scientific channels** such as peer-reviewed scientific articles, specialist research websites and scientific congresses)
- **Mass media** may not be an appropriate channel for reaching practitioners, because the channel is not targeted enough but local radio stations or newspapers might be an option. Video documentaries may be an option.

# Considerations

- Consider using the channels offered by the **sponsor** of your research.
- Channels that can be **merged with a tool** e.g flyers, car stickers, newsletters, booklets can be distributed at
- Identify opportunities for direct, **face-to-face contact**, during events where experience can be shared. A significant number of scientists agree that this is still the most effective channel of communication and of knowledge transfer with practitioners.
- Must consider any **barriers that exist to accessing** a channel under consideration. For instance, find out whether you need to pay a subscription/ membership fee.



# Specialized channels

- Identify ways to **access less obvious key channels** that your target group use, e.g. specialised networks or mailing lists. Access to these channels poses serious challenges. Most communication experts rely on good relationships with the target group.
- Establish whether it is feasible to **empower members** of the target group to cause a multiplier effect. In most cases, this will require direct contact on your part, including face-to-face contact.

# End

- Thank you!