



Introduction: What is communication and why it is important?

The word communication comes from *communicare*, which is a word in Latin. It means to share information. Communication can be found everywhere at any time between all possible living beings and creatures. Internal communication refers to communication within the organisation. It can be for example communication between the advocacy officer and the director. It means that communication happens between the staff of the organisation. External communication narrows the field, as it focuses on the communication between the organisation to others. “Others” can be stakeholders, customers, or other organisations – meaning that the organisation communicates to the outside world.

Working with External Communications

This chapter focuses on the communication between your organisation and those outside of your organisation. That can be for example communication between deaf clubs and their members, stakeholders, and other interest actors. External communication is important, as it has a big role in showing the world, who is your organisation. It tells the outside world about the organisation and shares stories. It will help the world to understand the organisation and it guides for example the members. In other words, external communication helps the organisation to get some value. An organisation is dependent on its members, stakeholders, and other partners. For your organisation to effectively communicate with your members, community, and other partners, you will need to focus on strategies that will help get support for your organisation.

Working with communication is determined by sender’s understanding of the interaction between the receipt and communication product (for example a video on YouTube). It is also about that you and your organisation must understand the situation, where the communication happens. For example, is the country in the middle of corona crisis? So, it will not be relevant to talk about a big event that takes place during the next weekend. Or if a general assembly is to take place soon, it would be a good idea to communicate about it (Where it happens? When? What will happen – suggestions to change the statutes, vote for the president of the board?). And the last thing that is important to remember: The target group. A target group is a group, you wish to communicate to. It consists of people, so it is important to remember:

- People do not do what we say they should do – mostly.
- We must investigate, why they are not doing it – what is the problem?
- We, as the sender, must understand what we want to do with communication – it is important to have a goal.
- We must know the target group (their knowledge, their opinions, behaviour) so we can solve the problem.

To enable the organisation’s work with the target groups, it is necessary that your association is aware of the needs of the target groups and of how its activities contribute to meeting the needs of the target group. When you know your target group, your position becomes stronger. There are levels of how much you can know your target group. It can be very basic such as gender, age, interests, and geography.



Outreach

Reach out to individuals and groups as target audiences. It is important for your organisation to build relationships with your stakeholders to promote your organisation's program, advocacy, and goals. Positive relationships will also help build your organisation's reputation. You should develop communication tools to communicate with your target audiences. Using appropriate communication tools will help you share your message about your organisation programs and activities to your target audience. You also share your mission and vision with them, so they become familiar and understand your organisation's work and goals.

First, identify your stakeholders or those that you want to connect with. They can be a person, a group or an organisation that has interest or concern in your organisation. This does not include your board or staff, but those are for example your members and others who are outside of your organisation that receive benefits or are affected by your organisation's actions, objectives, and policies. By communicating frequently with your stakeholders, they will develop trust and a relationship with your organisation. Remember that each stakeholder is different. Make sure that that your communication efforts match each stakeholder. For example, your members will understand what you mean by "Deaf culture" and "Sign Language," but your town mayor who is hearing might not. Your organisation should list several stakeholders you think can support, benefit from, or become involved with your organisation. Your organisation's board may want to prioritise its focus on only a few stakeholders at a time, depending on your organisation's current needs and goals. Develop clear and consistent messages that align with your organisation values. Personalise talking points for discussions with different audiences (governments, schools, etc.) by thinking about what your audience knows or does not know; why they would be interested in supporting or becoming involved in your organisation, and what you would like to get from them.

How to start with external communication?

There exists an ocean of different models and methods of planning external communication. All methods have pros and cons. This module will present a model, that covers many different perspectives. It is always a good idea to map the problem first. When we use the word "problem", it should not be understood as a problem, but more as an issue. You should determine what do you wish to achieve and define what is the goal. To achieve a goal, it is a good idea to map the problem. SWOT is a simple and effective tool that is used to create an overview of the organisation and how it manages in a concurrence with others. It focuses both on internal and external relations, and when one understands SWOT, one knows organisation's position in the world.

S: Strengths

W: Weaknesses

O: Opportunities

T: Threats



How does SWOT relate to external communication?

When you understand the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, you can notice what you are doing well and what should be improved. For example, a weakness can be lack of economical capacity to focus on external communication (human resources and diverse tools such as computers or video editing software). Or lack of motivation from your employees. A strength can be that the organisation has volunteers, that are good to make videos and are creative with their mobile phones. An opportunity can be for example a grant where you can apply money for media development in the organisation, or a good story you would like to share (for example a sign language celebration). A threat can be another deaf organisation that works in similar field. Threats should be not viewed as negative, but as something that you can neutralise. Would a cooperation with the other deaf organisation be an opportunity or possibility? Those examples are simple, but it can hopefully show you that SWOT is a good tool, which gives an overview to you.

Social media

The chapter takes a point of departure in external communication on social media. Social media refers to a platform on internet, where users meet and interact. Those are for example Facebook, WhatsApp, websites, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. On social media, you can produce some content, for example text, pictures, and videos, that can be shared with other users. Other users can react on the post you have shared. For example, on Facebook, one can like the video, and the video can be further shared on the user's own profile page. On WhatsApp, others can respond to your message with a thumb or a question. There are many ways how to react – and the reactions from the users create an interaction. This interaction is very important, as it contributes to giving value to the organisation. For example, if your post on Facebook about how your organisation is working towards e.g. the recognition of sign language, it might be liked and shared so many times, that it will bring new members in – and for example new stakeholders – which, at the end, can be factors that helps the recognition of sign language to be a topic to be discussed at the parliament of your country.

How to get my members to like my video?

Anyone who works with social media, knows that it is appreciative if one gets many likes or reactions at your post. But what is it, that has gone wrong, when there are negative reactions (shitstorm) or no reactions at all? We will investigate how we can plan communication, so it becomes efficient, sharable and gets many likes. When you produce contents on social media, for example a video on WhatsApp, a picture on Facebook or a tweet on Twitter, it is a good idea that you have those basic news-principles as a rule of thumb.

Importance – Identification – Sensational – Actuality – Conflict

Importance means that news should be significant for the recipient. You should not just post about everything only because you can, because it will be scrolled down. Quality over quantity.



Identification covers the meaning in which the recipient should be able to identify with the news. The recipient should see themselves in the situation, it is being conveyed.

Sensational means exciting news. For example, a topic, that will create relations and therefore an interaction. A news that attracts attention.

Actuality means that the news is preferred to be relevant theme. You should not post news about an event, which have happened one month ago.

Conflict means exciting and entertaining. It does not mean gossip, but it takes its point of departure in a good story, in which conflict can lead to a change.

In addition, you should also consider the style of the content. Where and how should the text look? Should there be emojis and smileys included? Should it be a text or a video? Should the language be academic or language that young people use? Everything depends on the target group, which you have identified!

Recipient features on your content

- Life situation (where is x in life?)
- Perception of relevance (what annoys x?)
- Need of information (what does x need?)
- Value of information (what value does x get?)

Those features are based on the idea that the recipient is a human being. More we know the recipient; more we can get it right. It is always a good idea to know the target group.

Communication plan

Here is a template that you can use to your work with external communication on social media.

	Platform: (e.g. Website/Facebook/Whatsapp)
Target group – who is the target group? Write down a short description of the target group.	
Style How should the style be? Please keep your target group in mind. Remember on which platform you are communicating at.	
Strategy/the plan Specify what you are doing. Where it will be posted? When? What will be posted? And why? Where? How?	



What? Why? Remember the rule of thumb!	
Success What is your goal? Set a goal! What would you like to aim? 100 likes on the post? Make the President of your country to share your video?	

Now the theoretical part has been elaborated, and there will be practical examples of how you can use theory in practice.

Reframing messages

When you look at the information that your members and community have about your organisation, you may find that some information or message are wrong or negative. Your organisation will then need to reframe the messages; this is a way to change what people say about your organisation and make your messages clear to the different stakeholders depending on your objectives. Reframing messages is the process of changing your organisation's image that other people or organisations see. For example, when you do not post information about programs or activities on your website or Facebook page, people might say that your organisation is inactive and doing nothing. You can reframe this situation so that people will begin saying that your organisation is active. To reframe your message, do the following:

- Consider what other people think about your organisation – you can do a survey or interview some people.
- If the image of your organisation is negative, solve the issue. If the image of your organisation is positive, reinforce or improve the image.
- The result of what you have done to solve the issue or enforce improve the image is your reframed message.

Internal communication

Not only communicating outside of your organisation is important for you to keep the association running, but good internal communication is also essential for engaging employees and board members of your association and keeping everyone focused on what matters at your organisation. What is effective internal communication and how can you communicate effectively in your organisation? This requires two-way information sharing where the messages are clear and easily understood. Not only is the information exchanged but also understanding the emotions and actively listening, so you gain the full meaning of what is being said. You can practice a few things to improve your effective communication such as listening actively and engaging, being aware of nonverbal communication and managing your emotions. Internal communication is all about promoting effective communication inside an organisation. That includes the employees, the management and board members of the association. It involves producing and delivering messages on behalf of the leadership as well as facilitating a dialogue with the people who are a part of the



association. This can mean anything from announcing a new policy to informing your employees of an upcoming event.

1. It keeps your employees and board members informed

Keeping your people informed of upcoming events, policy changes and updates within the organisation helps to create a sense of transparency and openness. Good internal communication is all about getting the message out to everyone, preferably in a way that gets them involved and committed.

2. It helps to build your association's culture

Each announcement, message, news update plays a role in how your employees and board members interpret the cultural landscape of your association: What it stands for, who it appreciates, and why your mission matters.

3. It increases engagement

Creating a two-way conversation should be one of your main goals of your internal communication strategy. You should share what your team is working on to the rest of the organisation. Employees who feel that their voice matters, that their ideas are worth listening to, are more likely to go above and beyond when your association needs them.

4. It creates a channel for feedback, dialogue, and discusión

To promote open communication at your association, your communication strategy needs to create room for feedback, dialogue, pushback and public discussion of issues and ideas.