'Pasos' beneficiaries at their organic agro-project in Bolivia.

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HANDBOOK 2

MODULE 5

Crowdfunding for Community Nonprofits

Building a communication strategy

Essential to the success of your campaign is ensuring that your planning process, crowdfunding page design and all of your marketing material is based upon a coordinated communication strategy. Even from this early stage of your planning and design process, it is essential that you are thinking about the communication strategy that will underpin the way you communicate with donors and supporters throughout your campaign. In this module, we will use a five-step framework to create a communication strategy that will help guide your crowdfunding campaign.

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What are Strategic Communications?

A series of focused and planned messages, crafted with specific goals or intentions that relate to a central strategy

In the following modules, you will be creating a crowdfunding home page (**Module 6**), as well as launching, promoting and closing your campaign (**Module 7, 8, 9 and 10**). Throughout all of these activities, you will be communicating your message directly to potential donors. You will describe your background and the work that you do. You will use images and video to bring your project to life. You will introduce the project that you are proposing, explain why your initiative is necessary, and what resources you need in order to do it. Every element of your promotion must be built from a central message that ties your marketing content together, creating a single, unifying voice that clearly articulates how important your work is. To get your message to donors you will need to use strategic communications.

Creating your communication strategy involves five key steps:

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5
Identify your goals	Consider your audience	Refine your message	Think about content	Create your calendar

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5

Identify your organisation`s communication goals

The first step to creating a communication strategy for your crowdfunding campaign is to sit down as a team and carefully consider exactly what you are trying to say. Whilst your organisation's broader communication strategy might be all encompassing, based upon a complex idea like relieving local poverty or helping educate local children, for crowdfunding, it is best to focus upon a clear and specific goal. Because crowdfunding focusses upon raising money for one specific project, your communication strategy should have a specific focus as well.

A. Look at the project you are trying to fund and try to find the simplest, easiest way to describe exactly what it is you are trying to achieve. This will be your objective. You should have a good idea about what this objective might be from the **Module 4**, setting realistic goals.

Example of a clear objective: We want to raise $20,000 to provide 20 bee-hives and bee-keeper training to vulnerable families in rural Ecuador to help them achieve a sustainable form of income.

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B. Next, you need to turn the clear objective of your project into a 'communication objective'. Look at your objective through a communication lens and consider, 'What do we need to communicate in order to achieve this objective'. Because crowdfunding is specifically a fundraising exercise, one aspect of this objective should involve raising money.

> **Example of a clear communication objective: We want to create awareness about the importance of supporting vulnerable regions of Ecuador, educating our audience why using bee-hives is a sustainable and efficient solution and inspiring them to make a donation.**

C. Finally, it's time to identify a series of clear and actionable goals for each and every piece of marketing you will publish throughout your campaign. To create goals, you need to break your objective down into the key steps that will help achieve it.

> **Example of a clear communication goals:**
>
> ● **We want to use positive and uplifting stories from our beneficiaries to create awareness about how they currently overcome poverty in their community.**
>
> ● **We want to use infographics, statistics and evidence from our previous bee-hive projects to help educate our audience about why bee-hives is a sustainable and efficient solution to economic vulnerability in the community.**
>
> ● **We want to use colourful and engaging photos and videos hosted on social media to inspire potential donors and convert them into donors.**

You should now have a series of clear goals which will underpin your entire campaign. These goals should guide the production of every single piece of marketing material your publish. If it's not relevant to these clear goals then it is unlikely it will help achieve your objective and you shouldn't publish it.

STEP 1 **STEP 2** **STEP 3** **STEP 4** **STEP 5**

Consider your audience

In Module 3, you explored and profiled your target audience in detail. You also identified the ways that your target audience interacts and engages with your organisation. Now it's time to transform that knowledge into a series of basic strategies that will help you engage with your target audience. Some important things to consider:

• the type of media they use and trust, be that social media or mainstream media

• the type of information they may want before they donate, with consideration for their attitudes and beliefs

• the types of content that might resonate with them most, considering the type of media they consume and the ease by which they expect to receive information

• the types of storytelling they are most likely to relate to and engage with, considering whether they want simple and human narratives or cold hard facts in order to donate

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Example: Considering Your Audience

A crowdfunding campaign for our Ecuadorian Beehive nonprofit decides to focus upon donors living in the wealthy capital city of Quito. They know, from their audience profile, that their target audience living in this region has a wide range of ages.

• To target their older target audience, they decide to have an interview featured in the local Quito newspaper to create awareness about the project. In this interview, they consistently refer to statistics and data to outline why their project is important. They do this because they know that their older audience generally donate based upon quantitative evidence of efficacy and consume (and trust) traditional media sources.

• To target their younger audience, they post an inspiring and engaging video on Facebook that explores how the project is supporting a local beneficiary. They know that their younger audience donate based upon emotive narratives and engage heavily in social media.

In this way, the Beehive nonprofit has identified ways that they can phrase their communication goals that they identified in step one for their specific audience. They've also identified different mediums they can use to communicate these messages, specific to their target audience.

For now, it's only necessary to have a general idea of the types of marketing and messaging that is most appropriate for your audience by answering generalised questions like the ones above. We will explore this further in **Module 7**.
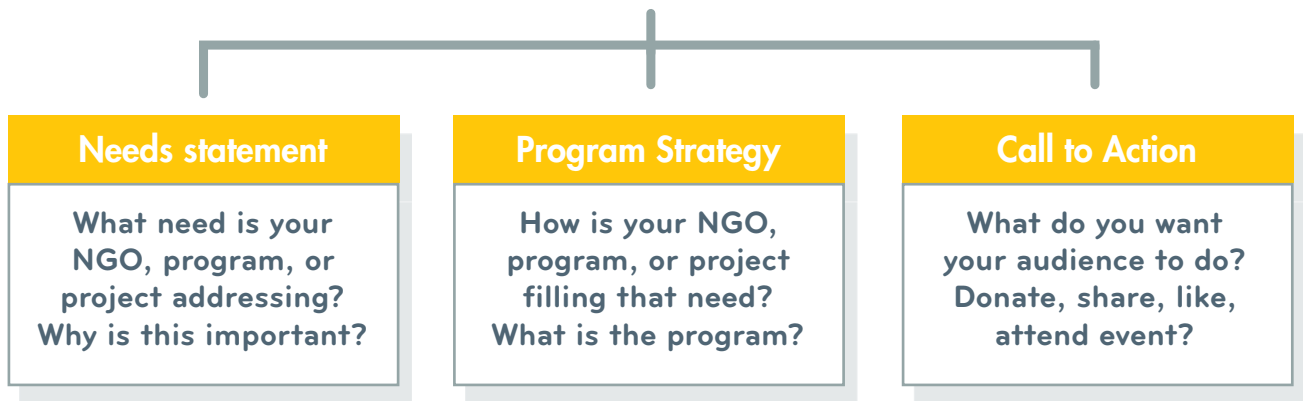
STEP 1 〉 STEP 2 〉 **STEP 3** 〉 STEP 4 〉 STEP 5

Refine your key messages

Once you have identified your communication goals and thought about ways you can phrase these to meet the expectations of your specific audiences, it is essential to look at how you present the information. Here, the aim is to create templates of the key messages you will use throughout all your communications. These will form the basis of your crowdfunding home page text, social media posts and interviews with newspapers. Try not to get too specific with crafting posts – you need to create posts dynamically throughout the campaign. We will explore this further in **Module 8**. Instead, your job here is to create a 'bank' of brief messages that you can drop in to your communications when your start promoting it. Make sure that all these messages are grounded in your goals that we identified in step 1.

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There are three key messages that you should be focussing on for any crowdfunding campaign:

Needs statement	Program Strategy	Call to Action
What need is your NGO, program, or project addressing? Why is this important?	How is your NGO, program, or project filling that need? What is the program?	What do you want your audience to do? Donate, share, like, attend event?

Example: Beehive project in Ecuador

Needs Statement: Our NGO is helping to provide sustainable forms of economic relief for vulnerable communities in rural Ecuador.

Program Strategy: We use the production of honey to help local community members access a new and environmentally friendly source of income. We provide the infrastructure, training and business know-how to help local community members become financially self-sufficient.

Call to Action: We want our audience to donate to our crowdfunding campaign directly. If they are unable to do so, we want them to share our marketing material on their social media accounts to help promote our cause through peer-to-peer marketing.

Some important things to consider when creating messages are:

- The information you present must be clear and **easy to understand**. If people do not understand your organisation or project, they will not support it.

- Whatever you say, you need to **say it concisely**. Attention spans are short these days and brevity is appreciated. Try to identify the quickest and clearest way to get your message across using the fewest words possible. Consider substituting words for photos or videos wherever appropriate.

- Use **appropriate language**. Successful crowdfunding campaigns tell stories that feel personal. They use language that is motivational and accessible to donors. To get ideas about terminology that works well, browse the campaigns on Classy or Crowdrise.

- Ensure **political correctness**. You must think about any potential ways that a statement, photo, video, etc. could be misunderstood or misconstrued by your audience. When in doubt, always err on the side of caution. Failure to do so could jeopardise your relationship with donors, partners, and beneficiary communities.

STEP 1 > STEP 2 > STEP 3 > **STEP 4** > STEP 5

Exploring the type of content you will produce and where you will distribute it

It is important that you have a rough understanding of the types of content that your organisation is capable of producing and the methods of distribution that you have at your disposal.

Types of content you should consider:

Photos – Every social media post, blog or news article should include a photo. Dependent upon the capacity of your organisation, these might be carefully edited hi-res images or personable, behind-the-scenes images captured on a mobile phone. You do NOT have to have an expensive camera or be an experienced photographer to take photos that can connect with donors.

Text – Brief written stories are great ways to help donors empathise with and understand your work. The length and detail will depend upon where the text is located, but it is important to have an idea of the stories and key statistics you will use to educate your audience and inspire donations.

Video – This is a valuable part of any crowdfunding campaign, however, if you don't have the tools or experience, creating a video can be an extremely time-consuming and frustrating endeavour. Think about ways you might involve friends or local businesses who could donate their time and skills to helping create a short video about your amazing project.

At this stage, you don't need to have a bank of photos, text and videos ready to go, but you should have an idea of what you can reasonably produce and the types of messages they will communicate.

You also need to consider where you are going to distribute this content. It's great to use both online and off-line forms of distribution, combining mainstream and social media forms. We will explore ways to promote your campaign in detail in **Module 7**. For now, it is best to simply have an idea of the different forms of distribution you have in order to create your communication calendar in the next step.

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STEP 1 STEP 2 STEP 3 STEP 4 **STEP 5**

Create your Communication Calendar

Now that you have a thorough understanding of your goals, audience, key messages and types of content you can use, it is time to turn that strategy into an organised and actionable plan. Whilst driving a communication strategy is a day-to-day activity that often needs to be handled in real-time, it is essential that you have a rough plan or guide that will help focus your work, build momentum and keep you on track. This is why it's important to create a communication calendar.

A communication calendar is a day-by-day timeline of all the communication activities you will undertake throughout the campaign. It doesn't have to have specific photos, text or videos included yet, but it should have a detailed explanation of the type of communication you will use each day. If there are gaps in your calendar or you don't know the specific media sources you might approach, that's ok. We will cover promoting your campaign in more detail in **Module 7.**

What is a Communication Calendar?

This is a living document that helps you plan the content which your organisation will post on your crowdfunding platform, social media and through mainstream media.

You can make an editorial calendar using an actual calendar, an excel spreadsheet, or any number of apps.

For each day, the calendar should include information about:

- The goal of each communication

- The audience it is targeted at

- The key message it is promoting

- The type of content (photo, video, text, blog) and the location that it will be posted or distributed to

- Who in your team is responsible for organising this communication

Helpful Hint

Hootsuite can be a great place to build your communication calendar. This online app allows you to schedule various posts across social media platforms and help you collaborate with team members remotely. You will still need to have a hardcopy or excel version of your communication calendar though to coordinate off-line marketing.

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Finishing up

By following the above guide to strategic communications (and with some practice), you will be able to deliver a strong and consistent message which will attract more funding and support for your crowdfunding campaign. Now that we have completed the campaign planning phase, we will start putting these plans into action, beginning by creating your campaigns crowdfunding home page in the next module.

This resource was produced by Grassroots Collective.

This is module 5 of our 10-part handbook for nonprofit crowdfunding. Find the full handbook at: www.thegrassrootscollective.org/grassroots-hub

Have a question about crowdfunding for social causes or want to learn about how we can support your organisation on its mission? Contact us at: info@thegrassrootscollective.org

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