



Santa Barbara County **Strategic Communications Plan**

May 12, 2015

Board of Supervisors

Introduction

- Board discussion during 2014-2015 budget deliberations
- Organization-wide need to address need for strategic communications
- Focus on internal and external audiences

Background

- SAE Communications Retained
 - Specialize in public agency communications
 - Offices in Bay Area, Santa Barbara
 - Retained to prepare plan, provide counsel
- Began Plan Preparation in Fall 2014

Plan Development Process

- Interviews with Board, staff, management of each department, community members, media
- Conducted online survey of employees
- Evaluation of County print and electronic tools, including social media, website, press releases, etc.
- Reviewed media coverage

Plan Elements

- Research results
- Situation Analysis
- Communications Goals
- Communications Objectives
- Audiences
- Key messages
- External Comm. Strategies & Tactics
- Internal Comm. Strategies & Tactics
- Program Evaluation
- Priority Implementation Chart

Research Findings: Opportunities

- Communications with those served and with employees is a high priority
- Social Media tools present huge opportunity
- Messaging and strategic communications are vitally needed
- Managers agree that a senior communications advisor is needed

Opportunities: *con't*

- Media want content: stories, ideas, events, issues
- A robust media landscape = numerous opportunities
- Local reporters and editors take a serious interest in County government
- Emergency communications a clear priority

Research Findings: Challenges

- Communicating internally to all employees is a high priority but few tools in place
- Managers need to own internal communications
- No dedicated communications professional driving strategies
- Social Media is decentralized

Challenges: *con't*

- No ownership of strategic communications
- County staff have full workloads and little ability to take on new communications assignments
- Limited funding means ability to create PIO function is challenging
- Decentralized county government = challenging environment

Challenges: *con't*

- County's diversity (all types) = challenging communications environment
- The website needs attention
- Field employees are hard to reach

Communications Goals

- Increase confidence and trust
- Help the public understand County programs, services, benefits
- Instill sense of partnership
- Direct flow of information
- Ensure employees are engaged
- Convey dedication of employees

Objectives

- Ways to measure the effectiveness of the Plan
- Re-conduct research
- Quantifiable numbers that allow for management to know if Plan is working, achieving goals

Audiences - Messages

- Communications planning can be quite simple:
 - Who are you trying to reach
 - What are you trying to say
 - Next: how do you reach audiences with your particular messages
- This Plan drives these answers

Eight External Strategies

- Department PIO Team: "PIT Crew"
- Strategic Counsel
- Media Relations
- Direct Channels
- Visual Tools
- "Electronic" Community Relations Program
- Spanish-language outreach
- Emergency communications

Extensive Array of Tactics

LOCAL NEWS ARTICLE:
Meg Beard of County Public Health Babies Their Best
The dietitian is recognized for her work including creation of an innovative two...

WEBSITE: LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA
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Home → Engaging Citizens & Partnering With Our Community → Citizen Engagement Services
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ENSURING LIVEABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY
CONTACT: Mike Powers, County Executive Officer
CONTACT: Bill Nash, Communications Manager
TEL: (805) 854-2640
FAX: (805) 658-4500

VIDEO CONTENT:
Ideal Working Conditions
Good Relationships
Information Flow
Healthy and Safe Surroundings

CONTACT CARD:
Outline. To be VC Safe file and devices: 24 hours

NEWS ARTICLE (bottom):
By Lara Cooper, Noodzavak Staff Writer | @laraancooper | Published on 11.21.2014 5:34
Sitting across from her college-age niece at lunch six years ago, Meg Beard was in a moment of inspiration.
Beard, who works as a registered dietitian and has been breastfeeding coordinator for the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Nutrition Services for 16 years, had been trying to figure out how to best reach some of the young moms her

FOOTNOTES:
(Background documents attached.)
...ing the County coastline, identifying where contact with the ocean water ...s from
(The most recent sample results posted within 48 hours of collection.)

Two Primary Internal Strategies

- Broad-based set of tools to educate all employees about County government
- Create an engaging Intranet site: central repository for all County information

Priority Implementation

Strategy	Tactic	One-Time	Ongoing
1) Dept. PIO Team	• Form County Staff Public Information Team (PIT Crew)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	• Maintain a Master Editorial Calendar		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2) Strategic Counsel/ Key Messages	• Conduct Key Message Development/Delivery Training		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	• Build Key Message development into every project/issue		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3) Media Relations	• Conduct a Media Fracture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	• Conduct group media briefings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	• Broadly share feature story pitch results		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	• Prepare op-ed stories	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	• Prepare easy-to-read summary of Board agenda items and actions		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4) Direct Communications	• Narrow and regularly update County Social Media tools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	• Use Social Media management tool	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	• Create a Social Media policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5) Visual Communications Tools	• Broadly use video programming to tell County service-related stories		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	• Focus video programming on highest-priority County issues and stories		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Organizational Structure Recommendations

- Establish public information office
- Create new senior position
- Unify communications functions
 - Website, graphic design, video
 - Lead emergency communications
- Evaluate role of video, cable tv as communications tools

The Need for a Senior Communications Advisor

- Vital role to link the County with its residents
- The organization strongly supports
- Best practices
- "Operate like a business"
- Magnitude and diversity of SB County = surprising position doesn't exist
- Emergency communications lead

Next Steps

- Staff will continue to address action items and implement plan recommendations
 - categorized by activities
 - short-term, medium-term and longer-term
 - existing staff and resources, with contracted services, or without any new resources

Those that can be accomplished will be integrated into work plans for the coming year

Recommendations

- Receive and file report summarizing findings and recommendations of the Countywide Strategic Communications Plan prepared by SAE Communications;
- Provide direction to staff, as appropriate; and
- Determine the above actions are exempt from environmental review per CEQA Guideline Section 15378(b)(5), since they are a government activity that does not involve a commitment to a specific project that may result in a potentially significant effect on the environment.