

Communication Strategy Template

We created this template based on the [SMART CHART™](#) model from Spitfire Strategies. The SMART CHART will help you assess your strategic decisions and create a high-impact communications strategy.

STEP ONE: PROGRAM DECISIONS

<p>What are you trying to do? What is the big ambitious change you want to make? [This is where you list your goals.]</p>
<p>What concrete steps will you take to achieve these goals?</p>
<p>Who makes your objectives a reality?</p>

STEP TWO: CONTEXT

Understanding your assets and challenges on the front end will help you streamline communications once you define your audiences and tactics. Think about access to resources, staff time, etc. Think of this as a quick version of a SWOT analysis.

Internal Scan	<i>Assess your organization's assets and challenges from a capacity perspective. Consider all the things you control that may impact your communications efforts.</i>
External Scan	<i>Take stock of what's happening around you that will affect your communications strategy.</i>

STEP THREE: STRATEGIC CHOICES

STEP FOUR: COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

Your communications strategy starts coming together as you identify tactics, plot them on a timeline, and assign key tasks to the people who will help implement your strategy.

Audience				
Tactics				
Timing				
Assignments				
Budget				

STEP FIVE: MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS

The measures of success should be a mixture of outputs and outcomes. Think of outputs as measures of your efforts—the things you are doing to move your strategy forward. Outputs can include generating a specific number of email or text messages to parents, creating a video message from your superintendent for your website, or writing a student handbook. Outcomes are the changes that occur because of these outputs. If you generate a specific number of emails and text messages to parents, it is more likely they will attend the event. The purpose of your communications strategy is to ensure that your messages are getting to the right audiences and that those audiences are doing what you want.

Audience				
Outputs				

Outcomes				
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STEP SIX: FINAL REALITY CHECK

Is the strategy doable?

Are your choices consistent? Does the logic flow from one box to the next? (Tip: Try testing your decisions backward—i.e., by accomplishing these tactics using these messengers, we will deliver these messages, supporting this theme, tapping into these values, moving this target audience, and so forth. Does the logic work as well in reverse as it did when you worked through Smart Chart 3.0? By going backward, you are more likely to recognize faulty logic or disconnect between decisions and steps. If the logic doesn't work in reverse, go back and address the trouble spots.)

Are you motivating the right people to take the right action at the right time?

Are there any assumptions or guesses built into the strategy that require further research to confirm or correct? Will the tactics move you toward your objective? Will they reach the appropriate audience(s)?

Are you using the best persuasion practices, such as respecting the audience's lifestyle, sharing hope, making them the hero, positioning the issue within the social norm, and so forth?

Are there other objectives you need to add to the Smart Chart? Be sure you're taking a comprehensive approach to meeting your overall goals.

Is there buy-in from your organization to implement the strategy?

Can you measure progress?

If you answered YES to all these questions, you are ready to get to work! If you answered NO, go back and find your weaknesses in your strategy and update.