Creating an Effective Communications Strategy:

A Guide for Global Compact Local Networks

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Part 1: Communication Strategy

Why do we need a strategy?

- To define and prioritize our objectives.
- To identify the right target audiences.
- To create appropriate messages.
- To choose the right communication channels.

A communication strategy is as much a strategic exercise as it is an effective planning instrument.

Defining the Objectives

- Objectives define what we are trying to achieve, <u>NOT</u> what we are trying to say.
- Objectives for Local Networks vary, but can include the following:
    - ❖ Recruitment of more companies
    - ❖ Raising awareness about CSR, the GC, the Network's work, etc.
    - ❖ Fundraising
    - ❖ Influencing public policy
    - ❖ Making the business case for CSR
- Try to prioritize objectives (primary, secondary, etc.)

Target Audiences: Who are we talking to?

Target audiences vary greatly, depending on the objectives. Contrary to conventional wisdom, journalists may not always be among the primary target audience, although they may be the vehicle to reach a specific primary audience.

- Primary target audiences follow directly from the communications objective.
- Identify primary and secondary audiences.
- More often than not, media are NOT a target audience, but just a vehicle.

🞣 Media research!!

The proper definition of target audiences is critical to the choice of platforms, channels, and media.

"Cut to the chase": Messaging

*Once you have defined objectives and identified target audiences, you should think about the proper messages? Ask yourself: **What is it precisely that we want to communicate?** These messages may be overarching or very specific to an event or project.*

> **Example**: In support of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP15) in Copenhagen in December, UNEP developed an outreach campaign to increase awareness and trigger a broader call to action:
> **The objective**: Send a message to policy-makers that a new climate framework MUST be reached.
> **The target audience**: Two-fold. The campaign (for now) targets the broader public, but ultimately tries to reach policy negotiators.
> **The message**: Seal the Deal!

🞣 Messages need to be simple and reflective of the communications objective.
🞣 Come up with messages that stick.

The message does not always have to be a slogan or call to action. In fact, it does not always have to be the same phrase (depending on target audience or channel used). It must, however, be consistent in its substance and ALWAYS remain true to the objective.

It's all about the Channels

- What is the most appropriate channel – or mix of channels - to guarantee the highest impact?
  - ❖ Print media – educated readership, possibly very targeted
  - ❖ Broadcast (TV/radio) – Broad reach, high recognition, short attention
  - ❖ Internet (web/social media) – grass roots impact, multiplier, younger audiences
- Within each channel there are a variety of available formats.
- Ideally, channels and formats are mixed to fit the right strategy.

Case in Point: Obama 2009

Obama/Biden US Presidential Campaign 2009	
Communications objective:	**Present the Republican candidate John McCain as a continuation of failed policies of the Bush administration.**
Target audience:	**Voters (mostly independent swing voters)**
Message:	**"More of the same."**
Channels:	**Across all media: editorials, remarks by surrogates, campaign speeches, press releases.**

Case in Point: Seal the Deal!

UN campaign in support of the COP15 process	
Communications objective:	Convince policy makers and negotiators that a comprehensive global climate agreement must be reached.
Target audience:	Policy makers (via the public, business, civil society organizations)
Message:	"Seal the Deal!"
Channels:	Internet platform (for now), later likely print/broadcast media

UN Climate Change Conference 2009

COPENHAGEN

SEAL THE DEAL!

Power Green Growth, Protect the Planet

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Tool: Communications Self-Assessment Checklist

This checklist will help you determine where the existing gaps in your communications strategy lie. If you can answer "yes" to all of these questions, then you probably have a successful communications strategy already!

Infrastructure:
- ☐ Does your network have a staff resource dedicated to communications?
    - If yes, how many people are involved? ___
- ☐ Do you have a communications budget?

What does the communications function in your network include?
- ☐ Drafting and editing press releases
- ☐ Drafting and/or editing publications (e.g. case study collections)
- ☐ Drafting and editings speeches, talking points, presentations
- ☐ Media relations/media outreach
- ☐ Web editing
- ☐ Public/educational outreach
- ☐ Acting as official network spokesperson

Does your network operate on the basis of a communications strategy outlining…
- ☐ communications objectives?
- ☐ target audiences?
- ☐ key messages?
- ☐ communications channels?
- ☐ a tactical communications plan?

Does your network collaborate with a communications provider, such as…
- ☐ a PR or communications agency?
- ☐ an interactive service provider (for web design, etc)?
- ☐ a participant's corporate communications department?

New media
- ☐ Do you manage a public network website?
- ☐ Do you run a blog?

Part 2: Press Releases

The Press Release: Basics

- A well-crafted press release is the bread and butter of effective communication.
- Media receive dozens, if not hundreds, of press releases per day – try to stand out!
- Most press releases give away the opportunity to make an impact.
- Successful press releases sell a story, not an organization!

Different languages, styles matter. But the basic principles remain the same.

Headlines: Make it Catchy

- Headlines exist to catch attention.

> **"Headless Body in Topless Bar" (NY Post)**
>
> **"Ice Cream Man Has Assets Frozen" (BBC News)**

- When drafting a headline, think about *impact*, not proceedings.
- Think about relevance of message in the national context.
- Keep it simple. Avoid systemic lingo and acronyms.

> **Wrong: "UNGC Participants Discuss MDGs at UNDP Forum"**
>
> **Right: "Business Sees Strong Role in Fighting Poverty"**

There is always an easier way of phrasing a term, in almost any language.
- Sub-headlines are a good way of providing further context.

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The Lead: Finding the Right Entry

- The lead (or "lede") is a brief, sharp opening paragraph containing a story's essential facts.
- Stick to the 5 Ws: **What? Who? When? Where? Why?**
- Think about the language the way you would want to read it in the news.
- Begin with the dateline, e.g. "Istanbul, 11 June 2008"
- Back up (provide further context) the lead in the next paragraph.
- Think about hard and soft ledes. Hard ledes are good for news stories, soft ledes may be more appropriate for feature-style narratives that want to say something about impact and tell a human interest story.
- Hard ledes are more common for press releases, because you want to get to the core information quickly:

> **Example: "A 10-year-old girl and her bed-ridden grandmother escaped death yesterday after a woodsman hacked open a cross-dressing wolf that swallowed them whole." (The Little Red Riding Hood by the Brothers Grimm)**

- Soft leads are less common for your purposes, unless you have a good narrative to pitch:

> **Example: "Helina Lam has reason to be optimistic. The program officer at the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) has just completed a two-year partnership project that is expected to improve the environmental performance of small and medium-size enterprises across Southeast Asia."**

Bear in mind: without additional measures (such as follow-up calls), headlines and ledes will be about as much time that a journalist will give you before he/she decides whether a story is worth covering.

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The Lede: Examples

- From the World Business Summit on Climate Change (WBSCC)

> **"Business leaders from around the world issued a manifesto Tuesday advocating an international climate change treaty that will offer certainty, jump start investment and help rev up the ailing global economy." (Reuters)**
>
> **"Efforts to secure a new United Nations deal on climate change got a boost Tuesday when around 500 business leaders issued a call for greenhouse-gas emissions to be halved by 2050." (Wall Street Journal)**

Keeping it Simple and Neutral

- Don't editorialize. Stick to the facts. There is no room for opinions or speculation.
- Use adjectives sparingly and wisely.

> **Wrong: "In another great example of public-private partnership, UNDP and XYZ Corporation have teamed up for a remarkable public health advocacy campaign."**
>
> **Right: "Tackling the threat of Malaria and Tuberculosis through advocacy and advertising, UNDP and XYZ Corporation have established a new public-private partnership."**

- If you want to convey a viewpoint, get a quote!

> **"This is another great example of partnership in the spirit of the Global Compact principles," said Georg Kell, Executive Director of the United Nations Global Compact. "I hope this remarkable campaign will help eradicate the scourge of Malaria and TBC."**

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What Else Is There to Know?

- Keep your press release to no more than 400 words, if possible.
- Don't go crazy with names and titles:
  - ❖ Avoid honorifics. You don't have to call someone H.E. or Excellency in a press release.
  - ❖ Unless absolutely necessary to distinguish males from females, prefixes such as Mr. or Ms. Are not needed.
- Include a "boilerplate": a standard paragraph about the issuing organization. Example:

> **About the United Nations Global Compact**
> The United Nations Global Compact is both a policy platform and a practical framework for companies that are committed to sustainability and responsible business practices. As a multi-stakeholder leadership initiative, it seeks to align business operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption and to catalyze actions in support of broader UN goals. With over 5,200 signatories in more than 130 countries, the Global Compact is the world's largest voluntary corporate citizenship initiative. For more information, visit
> www.unglobalcompact.org

- Include at least one media contact with email address and mobile number.
- Indicate whether the release is "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" or "UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL [date, time]"

Don't forget to PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD!

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United Nations Global Compact

Tool: A Sample Press Release Structure

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE!

Optional Media Contact

HEADLINE

Optional Sub-Headline (Abstract)

Dateline

LEAD

Backup Info 1

Backup Info 2

Quote(s)

Boilerplate(s): About XYZ

Media Contacts

Part 3: Developing Narratives

What Grabs Attention?

- Stars: George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Bono, etc.
- ***Stories***

What Does This Mean for Networks?

- There are not many stars. So start telling stories.
- Work with participants to translate good practices into compelling narratives.
- Media are interested in *good stories* – narratives of <u>change</u> and <u>impact</u>, that illustrate how a particular project or initiative has impacted people's lives or transformed an organization. Look for examples of organizational change and/or positive impact on the ground.
- At the same time, media care about the messenger. If you can use a prominent voice to speak on your behalf, it will help you carry the message. The problem: In most cases, a UN resident coordinator or an agency head may not have sufficient star power.
- Find a human-interest angle. "Put a face to the Global Compact principle."
- Seek third-party verification of your narrative.

Don't just reproduce corporate PR. If the story is strong, the PR value will follow.

Validate your narrative. If possible, present credible third-party perspectives.

Develop a good summary that you can pitch to the media.

Two Examples of Narratives

Siemens/Osram Off-grid project in Kenya:
http://w1.siemens.com/responsibility/en/sustainable/off_grid.htm

Rwanda's Baskets: Macy's
http://www.macys.com/campaign/rwanda/index.jsp

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Part 4: Effective Media Outreach

Why Media Outreach?

- Building relationships now will make future outreach easier.
- Fierce competition for the media's attention.
- Journalists often appreciate focused outreach.
- Outreach helps establish your Local Network as a competent source for CSR information.

Media Outreach – A Few Simple Steps

- Follow the (local and international) news on a regular basis. Collect clips of relevant media coverage and identify journalists working on these issues.
- Maintain a database (or static file) of relevant media contacts that regularly cover issues related to the work of your network.
- Media contact information changes frequently – often too frequently to keep up with changes. If resources exist, get an account with a commercial media contact database (www.cision.com, or www.vocus.com).
- Know who represents your national media at the UN in New York and establish relationships. Foreign correspondents at UN Headquarters are primarily interested in issues relevant to their home countries or regions. Share stories and news widely.
- Press kits: Build a comprehensive press kit, to be available for journalists at all times. Create a digital press kit for download from your website. Include:
    - ❖ One-page network//GC fact sheet
    - ❖ GC brochure (in translation)
    - ❖ Media Contact(s)
    - ❖ Activity plan (if open to the press)
    - ❖ Up-to-date list of national participants
- Narratives: Mine your participants for good stories or implementation (see narratives).

- Develop a list of participant contacts who can competently speak about their participation in the Global Compact and their involvement in the Local Network.

Media Outreach: Easy Action

- Regular Briefings: Hold information briefings for journalists on a regular basis, perhaps once every quarter. Help journalists develop a basic understanding of:
  - ❖ the meaning of corporate responsibility
  - ❖ the role and evolution of the Global Compact
  - ❖ the importance of CSR for your country
- Strengthen your networks branding. When you speak, speak for the network and not as a company representative.
- Create a bulletin for key media contacts.
- Open events, workshops, seminars to media (on the record/off the record).
- Share media advisories ahead of key events. Make a good pitch.
- Consider exclusives.

Making the Pitch

- Make a pitch to journalists to sell a project, event, initiative:
  - ❖ Send an email or make a call.
  - ❖ Be concise. Why is this worth covering?
  - ❖ Offer background. Have a one-pager.
  - ❖ *Follow up*.

Media Outreach: Additional Considerations

- Create a media section on your website.
- Encourage editorial contributions by opinion leaders in the network.
- Quick win for multiplication: target wire services (AP, Reuters, national news agencies)
- Use the network logo frequently.
- Partner with local PR agencies.

Part 5: Responding to Criticism

✚ We typically encounter three types of *criticism*:

❖ Misrepresentations of the Global Compact
❖ Response: Setting the Record Straight

❖ Perceived institutional shortcomings
❖ Response: Transparency – Accountability – Clarification

❖ Allegations of "blue-washing" by business
❖ Response: Fact checking – Accountability – Prevention

What to Do:

✚ Weigh the reach and potential negative impact of the misrepresentation.
✚ Discuss whether or not a response is worth your time.
✚ Respond vigorously to misrepresentations. Do not hesitate to send letters to the editors, set the record straight.
  ❖ When featuring/highlighting good practices, be mindful of negative practices that could undermine the story.
  ❖ Don't simply copy corporate PR into press releases. Make sure information is accurate and free of assessments or value judgements presented as facts.
  ❖ Increase credibility: If possible, seek third-party perspectives and assessments (as quotes).
✚ Share the response with participants and stakeholders.
✚ Send letters and publish responses on your website (or blog), if necessary.
✚ Work preventively with companies to show that transparency and honesty work best.
✚ Have an open-door policy. Don't try to hide. Accept challenges.

Talking to Journalists

- If possible, check with the GCO for clarification or for appropriate language.
- Request more time to seek clarification.
- Get all the facts.
- Keep responses simple, and maintain control.
- Don't feel pressured to respond here and now (on the phone, or in an interview). It is <u>ok</u> to say "I don't know. I have to get back to you."
- Agree to disagree.

Part 6: Harnessing New Media

For a few years now, an ever-increasing number of social media have been offering a variety of ways to support media outreach and public affairs, drive awareness and spread key messages to a wider audience.

However, social media require a time commitment. They must be updated on a regular basis, so that users have an incentive to follow and return frequently.

New Media Primer

- New Media typically refers to any of the following:
    - ❖ Websites
    - ❖ Blogs
    - ❖ Social networking sites
    - ❖ Social bookmarking sites
- New media offer a variety of easy ways to support media relations and public affairs.
- Social media, in particular, can offer timely support in multiplying messages.
- Caveat: for new media to remain effective, they require frequent attention.

Blogging:

- Blogs represent a timely, cost-effective and often more informal communication channel.
- Most blogs run on existing (developer-hosted) blogging platforms, such as www.blogger.com, www.wordpress.com, www.typepad.com. They are easy to set up (in most cases in just a few minutes)
- While blogging is essentially free, additional features (such as domain name redirects, customized design templates) will incur additional costs.

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- Blogs require dedication and commitment. Blogging only makes sense if the blog is frequently updated. Otherwise, the blog will disappear in obscurity.
- From a branding and positioning perspective, blogs can help Local Networks to become a distinct and recognized voice on corporate responsibility issues in their country and region. Examples:
  - ❖ CSR Asia: www.csr-asia.com
  - ❖ AfroSpear: afrospear.wordpress.com (African issues)
- Very often, blogs also allow collection of feedback

Micro-blogging:

- Also known as "the text messaging of the Internet". Most widely known: example www.twitter.com
- Very effective way of reaching out to community of multipliers ("followers" on Twitter)
- Good way of linking different platforms. Used by Global Compact to draw attention to new content on the website and the blog.
- Very useful for effective messaging. Example: Live tweeting of SG Ban ki-moon's speech in Copenhagen.
- Downside: Your message may be only one among many, especially among many dull and boring ones.

Social Bookmarking:

- The term "social bookmarking" describes a simple way of sharing interesting content with others. Example of social bookmarking sites: www.digg.com, www.delicious.com, www.reddit.com
- Social bookmarking links can easily be integrated into websites to facilitate bookmarking by site visitors. Example: news releases on www.unglobalcompact.org

Blogging: Benefits and Challenges

- Timely and cost-effective information and response channel.
- Most blogs run on hosted platforms (Blogger, Wordpress) and are easy to set up.
- Blogs are essentially free (although most platforms charge for customization)

- From a branding perspective, blogs can be of use in establishing Local Networks as a visible and competent voice on corporate responsibility issues.
- Blogs often function as an important feedback channel to gauge public opinions, trends and sentiments.
- Challenge 1: Daily Maintenance
- Challenge 2: Feedback is subject to abuse. Monitoring is needed.

Social Media: Benefits and Challenges

- Powerful tools to support advocacy and awareness-raising
- Easy to establish and maintain.
- Facebook: Groups
- Twitter: "the text messaging of the Internet": getting the word out
- Youtube: adds audio-visual channel
- Challenge 1: Regular Maintenance
- Challenge 2: Of little value if not integrated into strategy

Social Bookmarking: Benefits and Challenges

- Great to spread communication to a broader audience.
- Easy to integrate into existing websites.
- Challenge: Success depends on quality of material presented.

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