

# **Project Communication Camp**

## **Copenhagen, 2-4 July 2019**

## **Report**

The Interreg project communication camp was a hands-on training to help programme staff support project partners in their communication. The aim was to empower programme officers in helping project staff use communication as a means to success. Communication was presented as a horizontal function, designed to contribute to project objectives.

This report contains the main points made at the project communication camp. They are arranged per project stage, following the structure of the camp.

### **Project idea generation**

At the start of the project life-cycle there must be a real need for the project addressing a challenge or an opportunity in the area. The need must be the same or similar in neighbouring regions because cooperation with partners from other countries is required. The project idea must be relevant for the programme; it must contribute to the programme's results. And finally, the project must achieve a change, not just produce outputs.

Communication is required at this stage already. To start developing the idea, the project initiator needs to convince potential partners to join. As a project initiator you will also have to think of every organisation, decision maker or individual that might have an effect on your project – positive or negative. You will also think about anybody that could directly benefit from the project. These organisations and individuals are your stakeholders. When you have listed them you will need to decide on which of them to focus and what you to do to involve them. All of them will be interested in what is in it for them.

## **Project development**

Strategic communication planning must happen during the project development phase so that your communication is designed to achieve the project results. For that you can follow these steps:

### Step 1: Define the background, purpose and focus of your project communication strategy

As project communication manager, your job is to identify the issue the project intends to fix with the help of communication. This is best done in close cooperation with the project manager. Here are the elements you need at this stage:

- A problem statement, which may include scientific, or other research data related to a public health crisis, a safety concern, an environmental threat, or need for community involvement (e.g. air quality).
- A purpose statement that clarifies the benefit of a successful communication strategy (e.g. improved air quality).
- Then, for the vast number of factors that might contribute to this purpose, select one focus (e.g. reducing the use of pesticides).

### Step 2: Conduct a situation analysis

Relative to the purpose and focus of your communication strategy, conduct a quick audit of factors and forces in the internal and external environments that are anticipated to have some impact on subsequent planning decisions.

Often referred to as SWOT analysis, this audit recognises organisational Strengths to maximize and Weaknesses to minimize, including factors such as available resources, expertise, management support, current alliances and partners, reputation and priority of issues. Then make a similar list of external forces that represent either Opportunities your plan should take advantage of or Threats it should prepare for.

### Step 3: Select target audience(s)

In this critical step, select the bull's eye for your communication efforts.

Provide a rich description of your target audience using characteristics such as stage of change (readiness to buy-in), demographics, geographics, related behaviours, psychographics, social networks, community assets...

### Step 4: Set measurable objectives

Often, project communication strategies include a behaviour objective –something we want to influence the target audience to do. It may be something we want our target audience to accept (e.g. start composting food waste), reject (e.g. start smoking), modify (e.g. water deeply and less frequently), abandon (e.g. using fertilizers with harmful herbicides), switch

(e.g. to cooking oils lower in saturated fat), or continue (e.g. donating blood yearly). Often there are also things the audience needs to know or believe in order to be motivated to act. Knowledge objectives include information or facts we want them to be aware of (e.g. motor oil poured down the street drain goes directly to the lake) including information that might make them more willing to perform the desired behaviour (e.g. where they can properly dispose of motor oil).

Belief objectives relate more to feelings and attitudes. Home gardeners may know the pesticide they are using is harmful, and even that it works its way into rivers, but they may believe that using it once or twice a year won't make that much difference. This is also the point where we establish quantifiable measures relative to our objectives. Those measures should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound (SMART) in order to quantify desired behaviour outcomes as well as changes in knowledge and beliefs.

#### Step 5: Identify your target audience's barriers, benefits, motivators and your competition

At this point, you know who you want to influence and what you want them to do. You (theoretically) even know how many, or what percentage, of your target audience you are hoping to persuade.

Before rushing to develop a positioning and marketing mix for this audience, take the time, effort and resources to understand what your target audience is currently doing or prefers to do (the competition) and what real and/or perceived barriers they have to this proposed behaviour, what benefits they want in exchange, and what would motivate them to "buy" it. In other words, what do they think of your idea? What are some of the reasons they are not currently doing this or don't want to (barriers)? What do they come up with when asked "What can you imagine would be in it for you to do this behaviour?" (benefits)? Do they think any of your potential strategies would work for them, or do they have better ideas (motivators)?

Their answers should be treated like gold and considered a gift.

#### Step 6: Develop a positioning statement

It describes how you want your target audience to see the behaviour you want them to adopt relative to competing behaviours. It is inspired by your description of your target audience and its list of competitors, barriers, benefits and motivators to action. The positioning statement will also guide the development of a strategic marketing mix.

#### Step 7: Develop a strategic marketing mix (the 4 Ps)

The marketing mix is the blend of intervention tools you use to influence your target audience to adopt the desired behaviours.

##### Product

We borrow the term from marketing and in our context it refers to the benefit the target audience wants in exchange for performing the behaviour and any tangible goods and services the project provides to support the desired behaviour.

#### Price

Costs (money, time, psychological, etc.) the target audience associates with adopting the behaviour.

#### Place: Convenient access

This is primarily where and when the target audience will perform the desired behaviour and/or acquire any campaign-related tangible goods or receive any services associated with the campaign.

#### Promotion

In this section describe persuasive communication strategies covering decisions related to key messages (what you want to communicate), messengers (any spokespersons, partners, or influential others you will use to deliver messages), communication channels (where promotional messages will appear), and creative elements (any logos, taglines, graphics). Information and decisions to this point will guide your development of the promotional plan – one that will ensure that your target audiences know about the offer (product, price, place), believe they will experience the benefits you promise, and are inspired to act.

#### Step 8: Develop a plan for monitoring and evaluation

Your evaluation plan outlines what measures will be used to evaluate the success of your effort and how and when these measurements will be taken. It is derived after first clarifying the purpose and audience for the evaluation and referring back to goals that have been established for the campaign –the desired levels of change in behaviour, knowledge and beliefs.

This plan is developed before devising a budget plan, ensuring that funds for this activity are included.

Monitoring and evaluation are tools for ensuring the project's best possible outcome. They are done at least as much for the project itself as they are for the financier(s) (the Interreg programme).

Evaluation is about answering this question: are we meeting our objectives? It is used throughout the project life cycle and not only at the end. During the implementation, activities or approaches can potentially still be adjusted if something is not going as planned. Elements of a good evaluation plan include:

- relevant indicators with realistic target values
- source of data for each indicator
- division of responsibility in collecting and reporting monitoring data
- schedule for monitoring activities
- resources (time, money) needed for the monitoring and evaluation activities

Projects and programmes are together aiming at the best possible project and programme results. Monitoring and evaluation are tools to get there - together.

#### Step 9: Establish a budget for your project communication

On the basis of a draft list of distribution channels, proposed promotions, and the evaluation plan, summarize funding requirements. At the end of this step you may have to revise strategies, the audience targeted, and goals in order to make them financially viable.

#### Step 10: Outline an implementation plan for your project communication

The strategy is wrapped up with a document (the implementation plan) that specifies who will do what, when, and for how much. It transforms the communication strategies into specific actions.

Some consider this section "the real project communication strategy", as it provides a clear picture of communication activities (outputs), responsibilities, time frames, and budgets. That is fine, as long as you do not miss the steps that have led you to this point.

It is at the end of this step that you can start filling in the Application Form!

#### **Sources:**

- Book: *Social Marketing: Changing Behaviors for Good*. Fifth Edition by Nancy R. Lee and Philip Kotler.
- The National Social Marketing Centre: <https://www.thensmc.com/>

#### **Project contracting**

Once the project is approved, partners start thinking about how to start, when to organise the first kick off meeting and how they will do a detailed plan.

It is important for partners to address internal communication from the start of the project. They need to agree on communication flows and stick with them. The Lead partner will take the responsibility for internal communication and will monitor its effectiveness. This is even more important when partners work together for the first time. More time will be needed for getting to know each other and building the team.

#### **Project implementation (and closure)**

With good planning behind, an approved Interreg project is well equipped for the implementation phase. As long as things go according to the plan, all is well. But no plan is

perfect and the reality will require adjustments. For this, monitoring the project in action and taking time to analyse the performance are essential project implementation activities for any project.

Project partners should analyse monitoring results to notice and address the most crucial points when and where the project is not going as planned. Sometimes alterations from the plan are positive and require no action. But sometimes there are factors which come as a surprise. It can be things that could have been avoided with a more thorough planning of activities (e.g. wrong targeting or guidance materials), but it can also be external factors (e.g. a very dry year for an agricultural project). What is essential is that the shortcomings are noticed and acted upon.

Partners should also monitor and evaluate the internal functionality of the partnership. Only a well-functioning project will be able to deliver the expected results.

The implementation stage is where the results are not only created but also disseminated to the relevant target audiences for their use. The aim is that, after the project ends, its results live on and are used or even further developed by others.

When a project has been built based on a true need to improve something, partners or other stakeholders are interested to keep an eye on the impact of the project results as they becoming visible, even if the actual project was closed years before. The impact of project results in e.g. environment or society will most often be measurable only quite some time after project has ended.

### **Plain Language**

- Practice the 5 Bs of Plain Language: Be short, be consistent, be active, be straight forward, be personal.
- Write with their reader in mind always – not yourself
- Make an effort to find out as much as possible about your reader before you begin to write
- Keep going with Plain Language until it becomes a habit
- Do your best as an ambassador for Plain Language, encouraging others to use it

#### **Additional resources about Plain Language**

- European Commission's tips for translators:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/clear-english-tips-translators\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/clear-english-tips-translators_en.pdf)
- Interact's online course: Making your writing work:  
<https://learning.interact-eu.net/course/making-your-writing-work/>