



# DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION PLAN

LEVEL 3 PROJECT



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# INTRODUCTION



A communication plan is structured to share your central message with a target audience. When well-designed, a plan can provide you with a roadmap to keep your communication efficient, effective, and lasting. Making decisions about your communication choices in advance can save both time and effort.

In this project, you will learn how to formulate a central message and develop a communication plan. You will identify the target audience for your message and learn about tailoring the tone of the message to match audience and situational expectations.

# YOUR ASSIGNMENT

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to practice developing a communication plan.

**Overview:** Develop a communication plan for any event or situation. The plan may be for a real or hypothetical need. At a club meeting, present a 5- to 7-minute speech about your experience. You may choose to speak about the planning process, the benefits of developing a plan, or the impact of your plan if you implemented it. Show your vice president education your completed plan to receive credit for this project.



**For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist on page 13.**



Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



**Video:** Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



**Interactive Activity:** Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



**Resource:** Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.

# ASSESS YOUR SKILLS

Evaluate your current skill level by rating each statement.



Select the appropriate number based on your skills today:

**5**  
EXEMPLARY

**4**  
EXCEL

**3**  
ACCOMPLISHED

**2**  
EMERGING

**1**  
DEVELOPING

Pre-Project					Statement	Post-Project				
5	4	3	2	1	I understand the purpose of a communication plan and its central message.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I can break down a communication strategy into clear parts.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I can identify the target audience for my plan.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I know the most effective delivery method to reach the target audience.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I recognize how this project applies to my life outside of Toastmasters.	5	4	3	2	1

# COMPETENCIES

The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.

- Formulate a central message around which to develop your communication plan.
- Identify the target audience for your message.
- Develop a communication plan that would effectively deliver the central message to the intended audience.
- Define the steps of the communication plan for the intended audience.
- Tailor the tone of the message to match audience and situational expectations.

## CREATE A COMMUNICATION PLAN

### DEVELOP A PLAN

A strong communication plan ensures your message will have the desired impact. By clarifying your communication goals and targeting your message accurately, you or your organization can build a roadmap for reaching broader goals.

As with any type of plan, there are a number of factors to building an effective, usable document.

A plan can be developed in a variety of ways with many different tools. You may choose to use the Write a Communication Plan resource on page 18 to develop your plan. It may be helpful to refer to the resource as you move through the project.



### GOALS

#### Know Your Goals

Categorize your communication plan into concise and manageable goals. Be clear on the purpose of your plan. Whether you seek to educate, to persuade, or to inform your audience, concise goals will make clarifying your message and fulfilling your purpose easier.

#### Clear

Especially for a communication plan, it is important to define goals that have a clear and identifiable result. "Promote our Toastmasters club" is vague and hard to assess.

## **Measurable**

When the result of accomplishing a goal is taken into account and stated, it becomes clear and measurable. "Promote our Toastmasters club to build membership and achieve Distinguished Club status" gives a clear view of what you want to achieve.

## **Specific**

Your goal may be, "Communicate a change in leadership within our organization."

A more specific goal, one that gives a detailed view of your communication needs, is: "Communicate a change in leadership to all members of the organization with expediency and offer reassurance that the change is moving the team in a positive direction."

## **AUDIENCE**

### **Identify Your Audience**

After your goals are in place, identify the target audience for your communication. If you develop a communication plan for your Toastmasters club, consider the membership. Your Toastmasters club may be dedicated to young professional people. Your message needs to reflect issues that have meaning to that particular audience.

Knowing the demographics, or common characteristics, of your targeted audience can help define your message, your tone, and the most effective form for your communication. Some examples of demographics are age, gender, cultural background, political or religious affiliation, ethnicity, ability, economic status, and employment status.

A basic analysis of your audience will prepare you to consider a more in-depth review of who your message will reach.

### **Primary Audience**

Your primary audience is the audience you have identified as those people most affected by your message. In our Toastmasters example, that is the group of young professionals who are members of your club or have been identified as potential members.

### **Secondary Audience**

Your secondary audience will hear your message because of contact with a member of your primary audience, or because they inadvertently come across your communication. Consider how you or your organization can benefit from sharing information with this group. Though the members of this audience may not fit the demographics of your primary audience, young professionals, they may have a high interest in working with or learning from that group.

## Tertiary Audience

Your tertiary audience is generally defined as having little interest in, or access to, your message. In our Toastmasters example, this may be a group of people who are removed by age or location from your primary audience, but may have a small interest in your message.

## MESSAGE

Your message is the story you want to tell. You know the goal and purpose of your communication plan and you have identified your audience. Now you need to create the message that fulfills the goals and reaches the audience.

Your message can be about an organization, event, or individual. In our Toastmasters example, the story is that a great Toastmasters club, catering to the needs of young professionals, is open and recruiting members.

As you write your message, take into account the demographics of your target audience. Your message could be placed on fliers and displayed at a popular coffeehouse in a local urban area that is frequented by young professionals.

Communicate in a style that speaks to your demographic. You might choose to share your message on social media sites favored by young professionals in your community.

Address the reasons your message is relevant and beneficial to your identified audience. For young professionals, the advantages might be networking, mentoring, and access to social events designed to meet their professional goals.

## TONE

### Find the Appropriate Tone

Once you have determined your message, define your tone. Tone is a particular quality, modulation, or intonation that expresses a specific meaning or feeling.

### Keep your tone appropriate for the situation.

- In external communications such as announcing an event, releasing information about a positive change in your organization, or promoting a new business, an upbeat tone is appropriate and effective.
- When communications are internal to your organization, choose your tone to reflect the information you are communicating. If the message will please some and make others unhappy, keep your tone neutral.
- Internal or external communications that share news of a loss of some kind can be written in a tone that reflects empathy for the loss.



Use plain, straightforward language. Select a formal or informal tone based on the environment and the nature of your message.

- Informal language is used in conversation or other casual circumstances.
- A formal tone is language used in situations where colloquial language is unacceptable.

## TIMING

### Timelines

There are two different timelines you need to consider when writing your communication plan. The first is for your message. The second is determined by how often you want to be in touch with your target audience.

Each of the timelines needs to be considered in order to develop a comprehensive and successful communication plan.

### Milestones

If your message has to do with an event or project, your timeline needs to reflect the milestones, or important steps, you need to accomplish to ensure success. In our Toastmasters example, you may plan an open house at your club. You will need to identify dates for each step of your communication plan, ending with the open house.

This may include:

- Send invitations
- Distribute a press release
- Place posters in the local area around your club's meeting place
- Distribute fliers to local businesses where young professionals are employed, study, or otherwise spend their time

### Communication

By attaching a date to each of these steps in your plan, you will be more successful in completing each task. When deciding how often to be in touch with your audience, take into account your needs, and the needs of the group. In our Toastmasters example, use your plan to list the steps in your communication.

This may include:

- A "Save the Date" mailing to all the members in your club and the members of your primary audience
- Invitations
- A reminder email, phone call, or mailing
- A request for feedback once the open house has taken place

# SELECT COMMUNICATION CHANNELS



## IDENTIFY THE FORM OF COMMUNICATION

Determine the most effective form of communication to accomplish your goals. Each of the types of communication has benefits and drawbacks. Consider each carefully before you choose. With all written forms of communication, be thoughtful and concise when you create your material. Once the content is released, either in print or online, it is there to stay.

### IN PERSON

In-person communication can be casual conversation or a more formal setting for disseminating information.

#### Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is informal oral communication. This form of communication can be beneficial in that it provides information from a trusted source, such as a friend, colleague, or relative. The major drawback to this form is that you cannot control the message once it is shared.

#### Meetings

Meetings are a group of people assembled for a discussion. Meetings serve as a more formal way to present your plan.

## ONLINE

Sharing information online can be a quick and convenient way to communicate with many people at one time.

### Email

Email is electronic mail. Using email to communicate has a wide range of benefits, including cost savings, efficiency, and speed.

### Video

Video includes any type of video production that can be shared online. It is an ideal method for presenting your message visually.

### Social Media

Social media is a collection of websites and applications that enable users to create and share content. It is an excellent tool for sharing information quickly. Communicating this way allows you to reach your target audience locally and around the world.

## OTHER METHODS

You may want to consider the following methods to reach a large audience.

### Marketing Materials

Marketing materials include posters, fliers, brochures, and other forms of printed documentation. The cost of developing and distributing this type of material can be prohibitive. For small organizations intent on distributing the materials by hand, time considerations can impact the effectiveness of the material.

### Mailings

Direct mail is printed material delivered through a postal service. It traditionally has a higher response rate than email. This method is typically more expensive than other forms of communication.

### Press Releases

Press releases are written announcements sent to the media to gain attention for a person, organization, or brand. They contain a concise, compelling summary of the news you want to communicate. Journalists can use press releases to help them write a story about your event or organization.

Press releases are free to produce. The only drawback to distributing a press release is that it may not be used by a newspaper or other periodical.

### News Stories

News stories are reports presented without any editorial comment. They are most effective when you want to reach a large group of people quickly. This method of communication can be helpful when presenting statistics or facts. You can invite the press to an event, or send a release, but there is no guarantee a news agency will report your story.

# EVALUATE YOUR PLAN

## EVALUATE YOUR EFFORTS

The last step in your communication plan needs to be a method of evaluation. Define a clear set of criteria for assessing the effectiveness of your plan. The following questions can help you refine your criteria:

- Did your communication reach your identified audience?
- Were you able to follow your timeline?
- Did you get the desired response to your message?

## REVIEW AND APPLY

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- How will you clarify the goals you need to address with your communication plan?
- What methods will you use to identify your target audience?
- List the information you need to formulate your central message. Where will you locate the information?
- How will you define the steps of your communication plan to reach your intended audience?
- How can you tailor the tone of your message to match your intended audience?
- What strategies will you use to identify the best forms for your communication to take?

## COMPLETE YOUR ASSIGNMENT



Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report.

**Review:** Return to page 3 to review your assignment.



**Organize:** Use the Project Checklist on page 13 to review the steps and add your own. This will help you organize and prepare your assignment.

**Schedule:** Work with the vice president education to schedule your speech.



**Prepare:** Prepare for your evaluation. Review the evaluation resources on pages 15–17 and share all resources with your evaluator before your speech. You may choose to share your evaluation resources online.

# PROJECT CHECKLIST

## Develop a Communication Plan

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to practice developing a communication plan.

**Overview:** Develop a communication plan for any event or situation. The plan may be for a real or hypothetical need. At a club meeting, present a 5- to 7-minute speech about your experience. You may choose to speak about the planning process, the benefits of developing a plan, or the impact of your plan if you implemented it. Show your vice president education your completed plan to receive credit for this project.

**This project includes:**

- Developing a communication plan
- The Write a Communication Plan resource
- A 5- to 7-minute speech

Below are tasks you will need to complete for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You may alter the following list to incorporate any other tasks necessary for your project.

Develop and write a communication plan.

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Schedule your speech with the vice president education. If your plan was put to use, be sure to wait until after it is complete to schedule your speech.

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Write the speech to describe your communication plan.

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Rehearse your speech.

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# EVALUATION FORM

Develop a Communication Plan

Member Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ **Speech Length:** 5 – 7 minutes

**Speech Title** \_\_\_\_\_

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is for the member to practice developing a communication plan.

## Notes for the Evaluator

The member completing this project has spent time developing a communication plan.

**Listen for:** A well-organized speech about the member's experience with some aspect of plan development. He or she may choose to share any part of the process, including the results of implementing the plan, if the plan was implemented. This speech should not be a report about the content of the "Develop a Communication Plan" project.

## General Comments

You excelled at:

You may want to work on:

To challenge yourself:



## EVALUATION FORM – Develop a Communication Plan

For the evaluator: In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this form.

5 EXEMPLARY	4 EXCELS	3 ACCOMPLISHED	2 EMERGING	1 DEVELOPING	
<b>Clarity:</b> Spoken language is clear and is easily understood					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Vocal Variety:</b> Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Eye Contact:</b> Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Gestures:</b> Uses physical gestures effectively					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Audience Awareness:</b> Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Comfort Level:</b> Appears comfortable with the audience					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Interest:</b> Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Plan:</b> Communicates all or part of a communication plan					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Engagement:</b> Speaks about the plan in an engaging way					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	

# EVALUATION CRITERIA

## Develop a Communication Plan

This criteria lists the specific goals and expectations for the speech. Please review each level to help you complete the evaluation.

### Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
- 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
- 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
- 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
- 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

### Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

### Eye Contact

- 5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response
- 4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response
- 3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience
- 2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement
- 1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

### Gestures

- 5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech
- 4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech
- 3 – Uses physical gestures effectively
- 2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures
- 1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

### Audience Awareness

- 5 – Engages audience completely and anticipates audience needs
- 4 – Is fully aware of audience engagement/needs and responds effectively
- 3 – Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs
- 2 – Audience engagement or awareness of audience requires further practice

- 1 – Makes little or no attempt to engage audience or meet audience needs

### Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the audience
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the audience
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the audience
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the audience
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the audience

### Interest

- 5 – Fully engages audience with exemplary, well-constructed content
- 4 – Engages audience with highly compelling, well-constructed content
- 3 – Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content
- 2 – Content is interesting but not well-constructed or is well-constructed but not interesting
- 1 – Content is neither interesting nor well-constructed

### Plan

- 5 – Gives an exemplary speech using the communication plan as a guide and resource
- 4 – Effectively shares information from a well-organized communication plan
- 3 – Communicates all or part of a communication plan
- 2 – Communication plan appears incomplete or limited
- 1 – Does not communicate any part of a communication plan

### Engagement

- 5 – Gives an exemplary informative speech about the planning process, including information about some aspect of the plan
- 4 – Fully engages audience while addressing the plan
- 3 – Speaks about the plan in an engaging way
- 2 – Addresses plan in a somewhat engaging way
- 1 – Has limited success addressing the plan in an engaging way

# WRITE A COMMUNICATION PLAN

In the table below, answer the questions about the components of your communication plan. Be as specific as possible. Each column represents a different target audience, if you have more than one.

	How will your plan affect each target audience?		
	PRIMARY Is most affected by your message	SECONDARY Message heard through primary audience member or other unintentional source	TERTIARY Has little interest in, or access to, your message
<b>Goals</b>			
What are your goals? (Make sure your goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely.)			
<b>Message</b>			
What message do you need to communicate?			
Why are you communicating this message?			
What actions/attitudes do you hope others will adopt?			
How will each audience be affected by your message?			

How will your plan affect each target audience?			
	PRIMARY Is most affected by your message	SECONDARY Message heard through primary audience member or other unintentional source	TERTIARY Has little interest in, or access to, your message
<b>Communication Channels</b>			
Which communication channels do you intend to use? (Possible channels include in-person, online, marketing material, etc.)			
What communication mediums do you intend to utilize? (e.g., If you chose online communication, you might connect through email.)			
<b>Timeline</b>			
What are the milestones of your message and when should you reach them?			
How frequently do you expect to be in contact with your audience?			
<b>Evaluation</b>			
How will you evaluate your efforts?			



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