Communications 101
Getting your message out
How thinking like a marketer can lead to more effective early childhood communications

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Who We Are

firstfive NEBRASKA

We change public policy by changing the public conversation for Nebraska’s youngest children

Firespring

We leverage our people, products & profit to do more good
Today’s Goal:
Learn to think like a marketer and leave here with the beginnings of a communications plan

- Identify your issue(s)
- Know your role in the conversation
- Understand your audiences
- Put your strategy into action
- Measure your success
A show of hands:
Who’s in the room?

You don’t have to be a professional marketer to think like one.
Identify your issue(s)

- Be clear
- Be specific
- Know the problem or challenge you’re trying to address

Ummmm... ...you’ve got issues
Exercise

What are the top three issues or challenges in your community you want to address in your early childhood messaging?
2 Know your role in the conversation

- How are you perceived in your community?
- What is your authentic voice?
What’s your voice?

Creative | Fun | Witty
Thoughtful | Relatable
“The Common Touch”

Wise | Insightful
Sincere | Compassionate
“The Conscience”

Credible | Informed
Practical | Responsible
“The Decision-Maker”
3. Understand your audience

- Who are you trying to reach and why?
- What’s the specific outcome you want?
- What’s the right message frame for the audience?
Elements of an audience persona

- What are their social or political values?
- What are they anxious about?
- What is their educational background?
- Where are they in their lives and careers?
- What are their personal or professional goals?
- What role do they play in your community?
- Where do they get their information from?
- Where do they currently stand on your issue?
## Framing your message

### Sample Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use this frame when...</th>
<th>Remember to...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promoting academic success</strong></td>
<td>Your audience is interested in the conversation about school funding and getting the greatest value for investments in education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empowering parents/families</strong></td>
<td>Your audience embraces traditional cultural values and is concerned about preserving the central role of parenting in children’s lives</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Building workplace productivity</strong></td>
<td>Your audience includes employers who need to clearly understand how local EC infrastructure affects their own bottom line</td>
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Exercise

Build an audience profile and messaging frame to match your messaging needs
4 Develop a plan and put it into action

- Make your communications plan SMART
- Guide your audience from awareness to action
Make your comms plan SMART

**Specific**
- State what you’ll do
- Use action words

**Measurable**
- Provide a way to evaluate
- Use metrics or data targets

**Achievable**
- Within your scope
- Possible to accomplish, attainable

**Relevant**
- Makes sense within your job function
- Improves the business in some way

**Time-bound**
- State when you’ll get it done
- Be specific on date or timeframe
From awareness to action

Awareness
Circulate key ideas and concepts to create context or “buzz”

Engagement
Create a meaningful conversation with your target audience

Action
Show key audience members how to become actively involved
From awareness to action

**Awareness**
- Circulate key ideas and concepts to create context or “buzz”
  - Digital, print and broadcast campaigns and messaging
  - Earned media coverage
  - Op-eds and opinion pieces
  - Community events/resources
  - Special reports/publications

**Engagement**
- Create a meaningful conversation with your target audience
  - Group stakeholder presentations and roundtables
  - Special interest publications (selected blogs, newsletters)
  - Paid/targeted social media campaigns that invite response

**Action**
- Show key audience members how to become actively involved
  - Direct one-on-one contact with decision makers
  - Formalized appeals (e.g. direct mail fundraising)
SMART in action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We will do this</th>
<th>To engage this audience</th>
<th>Using these tools/channels</th>
<th>To achieve this result</th>
<th>By this time</th>
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</table>
We will use local media and direct contact to publicly invite three of our community’s largest employers to a special event hosted at a quality child care program used by their employees to secure their endorsement for a community development loan to expand available slots before the next city council meeting.

**Specific:** Identify the audience and engagement tactics

**Measurable:** Success measured by attendance of the invitees and the outcome of the city council meeting

**Achievable:** Limited guest list keeps the event manageable

**Relevant:** Tactic sets the stage for a substantial conversation about worker and employer needs

**Timely:** Must take place prior to the next city council meeting
Exercise

Group brainstorm strategies and tactics to engage a sample target audience
Measure Your Success

- Know where you succeeded, where you didn’t and why
- Use success metrics to fine-tune your approach
Before you rinse and repeat...

- News stories/letters to the editor placed?
- Social media impressions, shares, likes, engagements?
- Presentations delivered? Quality of attendance and discussion?
- Unsolicited examples of third parties spreading your message?
- Meetings with decision makers and conversation quality?
- Did you meet your specific outcome goals for target audiences?
- Where did you encounter pushback?
You’ve got this!

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- Measure your success
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