

# The Foolproof Guide To Planning, Creating And Executing A Communication Strategy That Works



Helping People with Purpose be Impactful.

VIM + ZEST



Almost every day we speak to people who aren't sure that the time and money they invest in marketing is making an impact. When someone speaks to us about their dissatisfaction with the impact their marketing efforts are making, we usually respond by asking them this.

“Do you have a Communication Strategy?”

The common answer is, “No.”

Which is usually followed by, “I don't have time.”

You cannot expect to get ROI on your marketing without investing time in creating your Communication Strategy. It's something that will end up saving you money and frustration in the long run. You will learn things about your business that you didn't know before, that will immediately start to provide structure around how to achieve your goals.

If you have clarity about who you are, where you sit in an industry full of competitors, and exactly who your target market is, what motivates them and how they engage with you, then you already have all the tools you need to make every word of your marketing material work to build your tribe, generate leads and convert to sales.

**Creating a Communication Strategy doesn't need to be a lengthy, tedious process. We're going to show you how easy it is to plan, create and execute one.**

**Ready to start?**

# Planning Your Communication Strategy

To get started on planning your Communication Strategy, you first need to know what your vision and objectives are.

Think you already know what your vision is? Be honest. When was the last time you really looked at your vision?

Don't let this be a hollow statement that you print out, stick to the wall and never pay attention to again. Your vision should be a real, working statement. You should be open to letting it evolve. Be specific about exactly what success looks like to you by asking yourself the following questions:

- What does my ideal business look like?
- Who will my ideal clients be?
- What will my ideal team look like?
- What will my ideal life outside of work look like?

Next, you'll need to come up with your objectives.

Objectives break your vision down into more specific, timely and measurable goals.

Try to make your objectives as detailed as you can. They will provide a benchmark to measure your success and can be a strong source of motivation for you and your team. Don't be afraid to mention numbers and percentages and give yourself concrete due dates.

In the process of writing your objectives, you'll most likely find yourself starting to think about how you are going to achieve them. That is the power of clarity at play. The act of understanding exactly what you want to achieve and by when, allows you to start to see how you will reach your goals.

# Creating Your Communication Strategy

Now that you know how the process of simply starting your Communication Strategy empowers you by giving you total clarity on what you want to achieve, it's time to start planning. In this step you will come to learn how research and metrics is king...

## Start with a Situation Analysis

Your first step towards creating your Communication Strategy is all about analysing the state of play. This can be hard to do because it's impossible to see your own business objectively. We strongly recommend getting a pair of professional eyes to take a good look, or if you're not at that stage, calling on a friend you trust. If you want to start on your own, you can always rely on the tried and tested SWOT analysis:

- Strengths – these are the things you do well, operational efficiencies you have - the things that WORK.
- Weaknesses – these are the things you would like to change, the things that don't work.
- Opportunities – these are external factors that if you capitalise on could grow your business.
- Threats – these are the external factors that threaten your business success.

## Next, get to know your market inside and out

Understanding who your competitors are is pivotal to deciphering what your communication message is. Sometimes you discover that those you thought were your competitors are actually playing in a different field. This can be a detailed and sometimes time-consuming task, but the benefits are immeasurable. It helps to embark on a Competitor Analysis.

Start with an internet search for your type of business in your area. This will give you a list of people offering the same products and or services as you, who are also at the top of the search results. This is most likely because they are good at both what they do and marketing what they do through the internet. Look at the top ten search results and review their websites. Try to get an understanding of their business and complete a list of strengths and weaknesses for each website. This will not only help you understand your competitors better, but also help you train your eye for what works or doesn't about their website.

### **Now ask yourself - WHY would a customer choose YOU over your competitors?**

This is possibly the most important question you could ever ask yourself to ensure business success. Take the information you now know about your competitors and combine it with the key findings about your own business.

Now ask yourself these questions:

1. Why would a customer choose you over your competitors?
2. What do you offer than no one else does?
3. What do you differently from everyone else?

### **How well do you know your Target Market?**

It is surprising how many of our clients make assumptions about their Target Market that turn out to be incorrect. You may have already built measurement mechanisms into your communication and sales process that allow you to identify certain aspects about your buyers such as gender, age and geographic location. But what about what makes them tick? What keeps them awake at night?

If you're unsure of these things, choose a few trusted customers that you love working with and ask them if you can interview them. All of this information is key to identifying what language you use and what key messages will make your target market act.

Once you have this information, you're ready to move onto the third and final stage - where you finally get to execute your Communication Strategy!

# Executing Your Communication Strategy

Executing your Communication Strategy is all about taking the knowledge you've gained and turning it into results, by delivering utterly compelling reasons for customers to choose your business in a tone, language, and voice that speaks exactly to their motivations.

## Defining Your Key Messages

Your key message is a statement or statements that express your strengths in a way that entices your target market and which should appear in marketing and communication materials: Websites, blogs, advertisements, brochures, social media, posters etc. If you have more than one target market and objectives that are specific to each target market, you may wish to write a key message directly for each market.

The most common mistake people make at this stage is writing key messages from your own point of view, rather than your Target Market's. When we write key messages from our point of view they generally read as a statement or a feature of our business. For example:

“Look At Me Signage uses the most advanced technology in the country to ensure premium quality printing and longevity of outdoor signage and posters.”

When we write for our target market, a key message statement reads like a benefit to the customer. For example:

“Ensure you receive the most impact for your investment with outdoor signage that outshines and outlasts the competition. Premium quality. Maximum durability.”

Here the key message remains the same but the second version is written for the target market, making it much more compelling and far more likely to capture the attention of your audience.



## Tactics – Time to Get It Done

Now comes time to plan exactly how you will use your newly-found knowledge to achieve your business goals. Here is a list of tactics that can commonly appear in a Communication Strategy. Which tactics you use depends entirely on what objectives you are trying to achieve, and what communication mediums your target market most readily use.

### Digital Tactics Include:

- Websites
- Blog writing
- E-newsletters
- Lead generation initiatives such as landing pages and lead forms
- Auto-responders
- Electronic advertising
- Social media
- Social media advertising
- E-books
- Webinars

### PR and Publicity Tactics Include:

- PR campaigns (print or electronic)
- Guest speaking engagements
- Industry and community body involvement
- Sponsorship management

### Print Tactics Include:

- Brochures
- Newsletters
- Flyers
- Posters
- Outdoor signage
- Window displays
- Books
- Instructional manuals

## Things to remember when executing your Tactical Implementation

1. **No tactic should stand alone - integration is king:** Each of your tactics should speak to the others. For example, when you publish a blog article on your website, it should be broadcast across your e-newsletter or print newsletter and all social media platforms.
2. **Consistency means audience cut through and brand recognition:** Be consistent in your key messages and language throughout all of your tactics. Repetition is a powerful communication tool. It ensures your messages are heard and helps your audience start to recognise exactly what your brand is all about.
3. **Simply keep it simple:** No matter what the audience, if you keep your communication simple and direct you will have a higher impact. Your audience is more likely to read the information in its entirety and understand your key messages.





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