Measuring Your Communication Impact

December 2015

Most of us understand the need to communicate about an issue, initiative, or project, but many of us are unsure of how to measure the effectiveness of that communication effort. In other words, what is different now as a result of doing the communication work?

In the age of measurement and science, measuring the impact of communication seems to be an enigma. How do you isolate the effects of your communication efforts to determine what works? Is your social media campaign creating the impact you need? Or should you create change through new and different messengers or champions? Measuring the impact of your communication efforts can help you understand what works or if you need to make a course correction.

Use the checklist below to create long-lasting change through strategic, effective, and measurable communication:

1. **Identify the purpose of your communication**—Be intentional and deliberate about what you hope to achieve with your communication efforts. Is it policy change? Be clear about your destination.

2. **Develop your communication roadmap**—Determine the best pathway to get to your destination. ACS has several tools to determine what communication strategies will help you reach your goals.

3. **Identify your impact**—Based on your purpose and roadmap, what impact do you expect to achieve through communication? Is it changing the perception or behavior of a target audience?

4. **Know what you track**—Review the indicators that you track already. Do you currently track your communication or program efforts? What do you track? Understand if you track process or outcomes.
   a. **Process indicators** track output of activities and may include number of activities, number of participants/enrolled in a program, or number of individuals reached.
   b. **Outcome indicators** measure progress toward intended results and illustrate how communication efforts have moved the needle on a particular issue or engaged an audience.

5. **Review how you track**—Review the approaches you already take to track success. Do you typically do a client survey to understand their perspectives? Do you track website visits? Use your current measurements as a starting point. For example, the chart below shows how social media may be tracked over time and how the story may be shared to measure intended results.
6. **Identify new ways to measure impact**—Whether it is a focus group, a survey, or long-term tracking of communication activities, find new ways to measure outcomes or the “so what” of your communication.

   a. **Use the action of your targets to identify impact**—Have you changed behavior or perspectives? What did the target do with the information they received? Is there a better way to reach the target audience? Follow up phone calls, surveys, interviews, case studies, and focus groups can indicate how the communication effort impacted public awareness, engagement, and support.

   b. **Pay attention to trends**—Trends tell us what direction we are going. What proves to be an effective approach or message can change over time, so it is important to stay on top of communication trends. This means keeping track of communication activities, how they were implemented, and how well they worked to accomplish their purpose.

   c. **Implement a community-wide survey**—Regular community-wide polling on opinions, perceptions, and awareness of an organization or issue can illustrate how an audience’s engagement and perception evolves as a result of a communication effort.

7. **Tell a transformational story**—To understand the impact of your communication, track measures over time and share the outcome. Now that an organization is able to see the growth of efforts over time, they will be able to speak to their impact on a much deeper level. The following table outlines this difference using the example of tracked social media indicators above.

   Turn **process indicators** into **transformational impact**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outlet</th>
<th># friends/follows</th>
<th>% growth</th>
<th># shares and retweets</th>
<th>% growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3,038 individuals were reached via social media.

There are more than 3,000 individuals in x region talking about this issue. They are pulling more and more of their friends into the conversation and are building awareness 2,000 times quicker than they were 3 years ago.

The message was shared 468 times through Facebook and 542 times through Twitter in 2015.

Since 2013, we have increased the number of individuals that are willing to become ambassadors for the cause and share the message by 743% on Facebook and 2,007% on Twitter.

8. **Learn and adapt**—Determine if your communication approach should stay the course or if you need to try something new.