




Strategic Communications



What is a strategy?

- A plan of action designed to achieve a vision.
- All about gaining a position of advantage over adversaries or best exploiting emerging possibilities.
- A detailed plan for achieving success in situations such as war, politics, business, industry or sport.



Strategic Communications.

What is it? Why bother?

- Strategising about how to communicate with identified audiences to get a desired outcome:
 - needs of / impacts on your community
 - Your centre gives voice to your community when their voice is shut out by power structures of our society
 - good work of your centre – your reputation
 - Reputation impacts on – funding, member/staff/volunteer recruitment, partnerships, influence with decision makers



Benefit of planning / being strategic

- Focus your activities to greatest effect
- Ensure good use of limited resources
- Integrate into your day to day work
- “singing off the same song sheet”
- Creative thinking to old challenges
- Achieve results for your community



Hurdles to strategic communications

- Leadership
 - “Buy in”
 - Time
 - Resources
-
- Solution? Build your strategic communications planning into your planning cycle




A comprehensive communications strategy

- Research
- Mission
- Vision
- Aims
- Objectives
- Audiences
- Messages
- Channels
- Timing
- Resources
- Risks
- Evaluation



Background research

- What are your objectives?
- Your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats?
- Learn lessons from previous projects
- Learn lessons from peers' and competitors' experiences
- Look at past media coverage, event attendance, web visits
- Speak to colleagues – experienced and fresh-faced
- Focus groups and surveys among your key audiences



6 easy steps – do these in order!

1. Your centre's objectives – from workplan
2. Target audiences – mapping & analysis
3. Messages
4. Strategies/actions
5. Implement
6. Evaluation/reflection



Step 1:


Your CLC's objectives/goals

- An additional step in your strategic/work planning processes
- Your Strategic Communications Plan helps to meet these objectives




Objectives need to be SMART

- specific, significant, simple
- Measurable, manageable
- Achievable, agreed, assignable
- Relevant, resourced
- Time bound, trackable



Step 2: Target audiences

- Who do you need to communicate with to achieve your objective – mapping
 - Beware the “general public”!
 - Who influences who?
- What do you want them to do?
 - the call to action



Categorise your audiences in relation to your situation and your objectives

- Power/influence + interest + supportive – your partners in achieving your objectives
- Power/influence + interest + opposed – use persuasion and dialogue; accurate coverage of your objectives/views; correct their claims
- Power/influence + not interested – capture their attention; enlist the help of your partners
- Use third parties to help persuade and create interest



Target audiences - analysis

- Analysis
- Striking a Responsive chord!
- Analysis Qs –
 - what are they like?
 - What's in their heads? (attitudes, beliefs, biases?)
 - How engaged are they now? How engaged do you need them to be to achieve your goal? (Low, Medium, High)



Step 3: Messages

- Messages move your audience to action
- Tailored to your audience – strike a responsive chord!
- 3 maximum key messages
- Keep it simple

Messages

- What do you want them to know?
- What do you want them to think?
- What do you want them to do?
- Why should I care? How does it affect me?
- Tailor them but avoid contradiction and false promises
- Statistics and case studies
- Third party endorsements



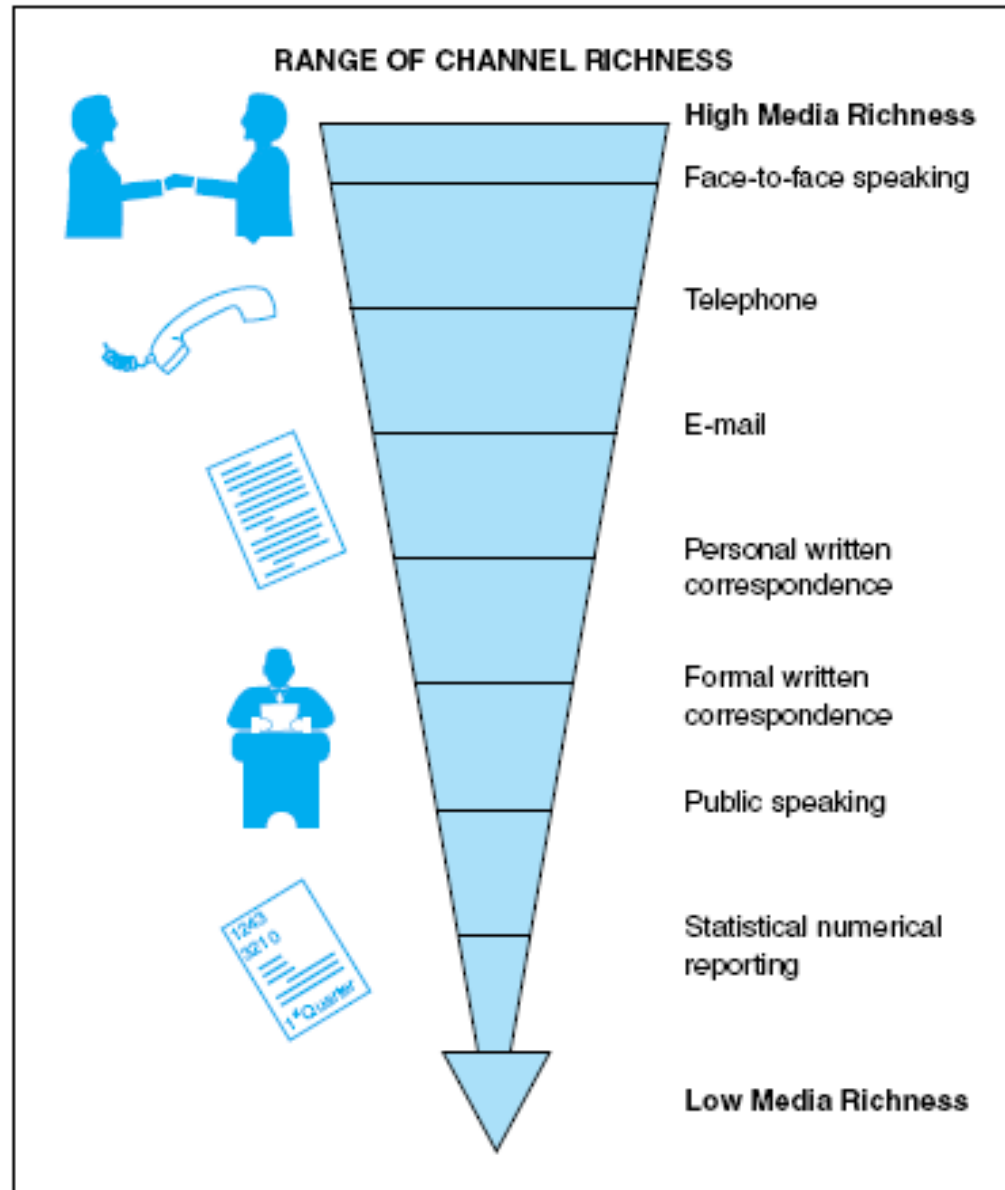
Step 4: Strategies/Actions

- How are you getting your message to your target audience - vehicles
- What vehicles/resources are already available?
 - Personal communication
 - Work – integrate into your everyday work
 - Materials – new & existing
 - 3rd Party – messenger as important as the message

FIGURE 2.6

Range of Channel Richness

Wide variations exist in channel richness. To identify the most appropriate channel, the sender considers the goal of the message and characteristics of the intended receiver. Where do you think the Web might fall on this chart?

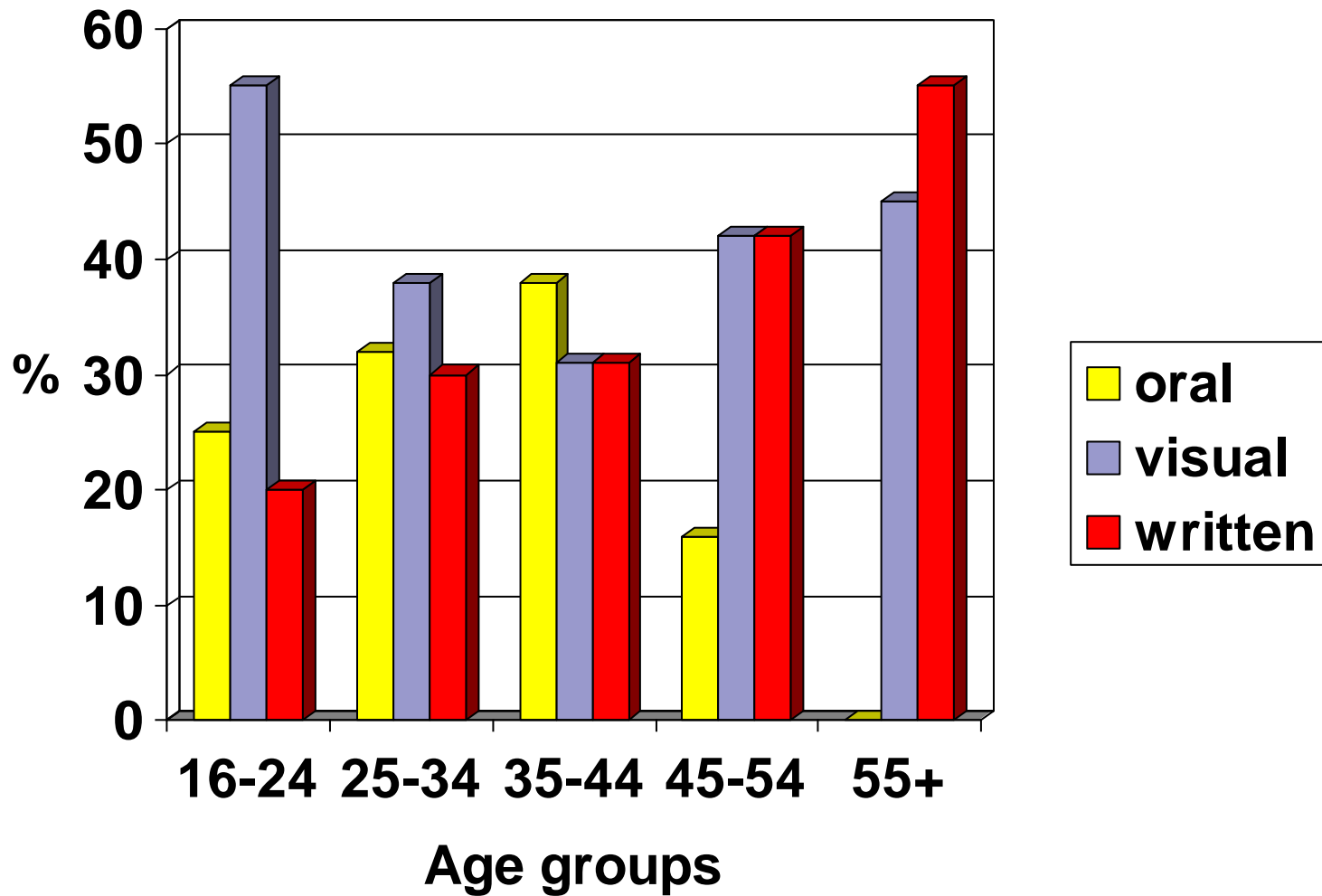





Strategies/Actions

- Right vehicle for right target audience
- Repeat! Repeat! Repeat!
- Congruence – bullshit meters!
- Resources – integration is key

How People Learn





Step 5: Implementation

- “buy in” at all levels – good process
- Integrate into your workplan
- Keep an ear out for ‘noise’
- Flexibility – new opportunities & crisis management

	September 2012	October 2012	November 2012
Lobbying	Ask local MP to book venue	Send out invitations	Event in parliament
Media	Identify key messages and spokespeople	Propose an interview	Issue press release
Publications	Design invitation and display boards	Print the materials	Distribute the materials at the event



Resources: people and money

- Who do you ideally need to assist you?
- Who is actually available to assist you?
- What funds do you need?
- What funds do you have?
- Do you need to bid for extra? From whom? When?
- Are there conditions attached to the funding?
- Prioritise, and manage people's expectations

Risks and mitigation

- Identify risks that could prevent you achieving your objectives
- How you will deal with them?
- Identify options – a plan A and a plan B
- Prepare ‘lines to take’ – anticipate audiences’

Risk	Mitigation options
A student protest could threaten the success of your event.	Plan A: Meet with the students in advance to discuss issues. Plan B: Change the event date/venue.



Step 6: Evaluation/Reflection

- Ongoing monitoring
- Reflection in lead up to next planning process
- Outcomes?
- Simple Q & A of target audiences

Evaluation: did you succeed?

- Often neglected
- Did you change understanding, opinion and behaviour?
- How will you measure – and will it cost anything?
- Quantitative
 - Event attendance, website visitors, donations, column inches
- Qualitative
 - Feedback forms, focus groups, key messages in the media
- ‘Wash-up’ with the project team




The written strategy

- Introduction: summary; emphasise added value
- Mission and vision, aims and objectives
- Audiences, messages, channels
- Timetable
- Resources
- Risks and mitigation
- Means of evaluation
- Approvals process



The essentials

- One or two clear objectives
- List of key audiences
- Summarise the key activities and dates
- Agree who is doing the work and who will pay
- Still write it down, even if it's just a side of A4

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- Keep a record of the communications strategy
 - Electronic and printed copies of material produced
 - Record of quantitative and qualitative evaluation
 - Minute the wash-up; record lessons learned
 - Keep a contacts list
 - Share best practice with peers
 - Publicise your success
 - It's good PR for our profession!

And finally...



■ Questions?



Group exercise

Objective 1:

To improve access to legal information for young people by better partnerships with local organisations.

Objective 2:

To improve wages and conditions for staff through better government funding.

Objective 3:

To have an engaged membership that reflects the diversity of our community.



Thank You