Communication strategy
Communication strategy creation

Strategic challenges

Communication is evolving from a tactical art to a business science. Organisations that understand reputation as a strategic asset are empowering communication as a core function.

This status brings new responsibilities, and management expect communication departments to raise their game.

ISOC regularly helps organisations of all sizes to design sophisticated communication strategies.

Our experts specialise in strategy development and bring international best practice based on personal experience of communication strategy development at other organisations.
STRATEGY REQUIREMENTS

A strategic function needs a business-like strategy – but designing a communication strategy is a complex challenge.

- This must be a living strategy, not a heavy document that gathers dust.
- It must explicitly integrate with top-level strategy and visibly support business goals.
- It must involve every department and every stakeholder, inside and out.
- It must connect intangible ingredients like sentiment and advocacy with measurable targets and justifiable budgets.
A communication strategy must govern the abstract complexity of modern communication while also giving pragmatic guidance in a simple framework.
Helping develop your communication strategy

Every organisation needs a different level of support. You may need a few days’ help with feedback and fine-tuning an existing strategy; or you may wish to fully outsource the development process. Perhaps you are looking for budgets and options for how we could get involved.

The key steps in a typical project include the following:

**PROJECT SCOPING**

We will meet with key people in your organisation and recommend a fully costed scheme of work.

Generally this will include a menu of service levels and price points for defined deliverables.

**TEAM SELECTION**

We will assign to the project a team of director-level communication strategists with at least 15 years’ experience.

They will take a collaborative approach and work alongside communication departments, who ultimately will own and deliver the strategy.

**STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

The ISOC team will evaluate the intelligence and develop the strategy section by section in an iterative process: create, reviewed, move on. We begin with top-level analysis and frameworking, then granular detail on initiatives, and supporting sections such as budgeting and resources.
Structured intelligence gathering

Information gathering is based on document review and structured interviews with communication directors and usually also key senior managers. Key areas include:

**BUSINESS STRATEGY**

What do we need to achieve?
- Top-level business strategy and management expectations
- Business goals that communication should support
- Existing communication activities

**INTERNAL CAPACITY**

What tools do we have to work with?
- Human resources: teams and skills
- Budgets including for external agencies
- Soft resources: messages, policies, procedures, templates, etc.

**EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

What will we talk about, and who with?
- Reputation audit
- Issues mapping
- Stakeholder mapping
Strategy deliverables

Situation analysis
A summary analysis of the status quo based on insights from the intelligence gathering phase, structured to explain and justify later recommendations.

Strategy framework
A hierarchy of top-level goals, tactical objectives that serve those goals, practical initiatives that serve those objectives, and KPIs that measure success.

Action plan
A time-line for roll-out of specified initiatives with project milestones and ownership. The schedule will generally mix quick wins and slow-burn projects.

Resources
A global budget with costing breakdown per initiative, and recommendations for human resource and soft resource development necessary for identified goals.
External research

External research can provide a valuable evidence base for communication strategy, including to target topics and messages and measure impacts. We can execute quantitative and qualitative tools such as surveys and focus groups.

Communication skills

Many strategies require communication departments to build human capacity. We can conduct competency mapping to identify gaps and build training programmes to fill them.

Message development

Messaging and positioning is essential to strategic communication. We can support message development either part of the strategy or as a standalone process.

Crisis communication

ISOC supports crisis communication preparedness including the design of communication resources and processes, and also crisis communication simulations.

Communication departments

ISOC advises on the design or restructuring of communication departments, including people, systems, policies, procedures, templates and resources.
We have helped to create dozens of communication strategies worldwide for organisations of all sizes, including:

- National governments
- Fortune Global 500 companies
- International institutions
- Charities and NGOs
- SMEs

Since every organisation has unique expectations and challenges, every ISOC communication strategy is entirely customised.
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