Communications During Social Distancing: Suggestions and Advice on How to Stay Connected

Tuesday, April 7th, 2020
1PM – 2PM
Welcome

OUR GOAL TODAY

Provide advice and suggestions to help your organizations continue to effectively communicate your message, vision and needs, as social and physical distancing continues to be essential.

For Questions:
Please use the chat function in zoom so that we may answer them without talking over each other.
To open the chat, hit Alt and H on your keyboard.
Introductions

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WEBINAR:
COMMUNICATING THROUGHOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: BEST PRACTICES FOR NON-PROFITS
April 7, 2020
The world is in the midst of an unprecedented crisis.

- While your organization plays a vital role in society, this disruption is extensive, widespread and changing quickly.

- On an individual level, the people you communicate with may themselves be sick, be caring for or worried about loved ones, or managing their own financial concerns.

- Amidst crisis, effective communication is critical to nonprofit leaders.
COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY THROUGHOUT THE CRISIS
Communicating During COVID-19 - Do’s

• Acknowledge the situation for what it is and lead with empathy.

• Remember your audience.
  o Board, donors, employees and beneficiaries.
  o Tweak your message depending on who you’re talking to.

• Be transparent and accessible.
  o Determine point person - Who can people contact with questions?

• Provide a call to action.
  o Keep in mind your various audiences and what you want them to do.
  o Employees: reiterate your organization’s purpose, why involvement is integral.
  o Donors: remind them of the tangible impact of their donations.

• Anticipate questions that may arise and address them proactively.
Communicating During COVID-19 - Don'ts

• **Avoid articulating a panicky narrative.**
  - Be factual, calm and demonstrate an appropriate level of emotion.
  - If the leadership is panicking, the donors, employees and beneficiaries will also panic.

• **Do not assign blame for current situation.**
  - Be action oriented and focus on the future.
Be prepared to briefly but effectively outline your operational and financial status.

- What do you want your audience to remember from your communication?
  - Your organization is not immune from Covid-19 shockwaves but you’re trying to maintain operations and stay true to your mission.
  - Help from donors is more important than ever.
  - Remind audience of who they are helping most.
- Deliver primary key messages early – e.g. *we face unprecedented times but we are maintaining some operations.*
- Be prepared to disclose broad, high-level financial overview to the donors – lack of specifics might create more unease.
- Share the appropriate information with the right audience – it may not be helpful for all employees to be privy to specific financial details.
- Acknowledge the situation for what it is. Empathy and reassurance in uncertain times is also crucial.
How Frequently Should You Communicate?

When organizations go quiet in times of crisis, people often either assume the worst or forget you’re still operating.

- The personal touch goes a long way when fundraising. Phone or video calls will prove most effective.

- Communicate often and effectively, but be careful not to spam.
Get Ahead of Frequently Asked Questions

Start making a list of potential questions and the key messages you have in response.

Weave these into the narrative or have a breakout Q&A in your communications. This reassures recipients that you are acutely aware of general concerns:

• How are your operations and/or programs impacted?
• (If operations will resume through the crisis) How are you making appropriate changes to ensure the safety of beneficiaries, employees and volunteers?
• Have your costs changed?
• What is your overall financial situation?
• What can we do to help?
Ideas for Staying Connected While Social Distancing

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Audiences

- Employees
- People you serve/engage with
  - Students
  - Parents
  - Other?
- Board and Donors
- Others?
Employees

What They Are Looking For:

- **Critical Information:**
  - Updates on your organization: Plans for the short-term and some sense that you are looking to the mid- and long-term
  - Expectations for work
  - Information on and links to benefits they may need

- **Empathy and Understanding**

- Say *thank you*. Often.
Engaging with Employees

Ask your staff for ideas on continuing to engage those you serve in new ways:

- **Resources:** Ways to help people get the resources they need: for example, technology for learning if you work with students, food, etc.

- **Celebrate Previous Success:** Look for photos, videos, etc. that they can share via social media. (*make sure you have signed releases*)

- **Remote Activities:** Consider which if any activities you were doing could be done remotely – music, art, exercise, etc.
Those You Serve

- It is not just your employees who will be feeling the loss of your organization, it is also those you serve. Consider how you can connect with them remotely.

- If you work with students, make sure you include parents in this group.
  - Keep them informed.
  - Consider how you might be able to help them connect to resources.
Engaging with Those You Serve

- **Connectivity**: More students may have some way to connect via social media, zoom, etc. Try to gauge how many can connect.

- **Virtual Activities**: Art, writing, music, exercises they can do from home (sports), etc.
  - Encourage people to post and tag you, so it’s not all on you.

- **Team/Group chats**

- **Things to Do**: Suggestions for parents at home with small kids, etc.
Boards and Donors

As funding is currently an issue, it is important that those who support you financially understand how you are being impacted:

- **Share Data** that explains the impact of the shutdown and what you were doing before.
- **Describe Changes** you need to make because of budget.
- **Share How You Are Engaging** with your key stakeholders now and what you were doing before this situation.
- **Ask for Help**. Don’t be shy, ask for help.
Key Channels

There are various channels you can use. Start with those you are already using:

- Email
  - Social Media
  - Website

Don’t forget to create content in all forms:

- Photos
  - Video
  - Writing
Question & Answer

To pose a question
• Use the chat function

To open the chat
• Hit Alt and H on your keyboard

To pose a question for a specific presenter
• Type the presenter’s name: Rachel or Arabella with your question

If we are not able to get to your question before the end of the webinar, we will follow-up with you via email with a response.
What is one you learned or will take away from this webinar?

Please write your response in the chat box for us to read a few out loud.

Closing Remarks from

Arabella & Rachel
Thank Yous

A BIG THANK YOU TO

Arabella & Rachel

Rachel Rosenblatt
Senior Managing Director
Strategic Communications
FTI Consulting

Arabella Meyer
Principal and Founder of ACMeyer Strategic LLC
Announcements

Learning Collaborative
Creating Virtual Programming
*Wednesday, April 8th 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM*

Virtual Workshop
Leading a Virtual Team
*Tuesday, April 14th 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM*

Learning Collaborative
Fundraising: Transitioning to Virtual Event
*Thursday, April 16th 12:00 PM – 1:00 AM*

*Find the registration link in the chat box or email Marc Fernandes, mfernandes@youthinc-usa.org*
Youth INC’s Partner Network is a community of talented and capable high impact organizations serving over 200,000 kids of promise in NYC. Members of our network share a passion for transforming the lives of kids. Through a multitude of unique missions and programs, the Youth INC Partner Network is turning the potential of our kids into the progress of our city.

Thank you!

Find more COVID-19 related resources for nonprofits at www.youthinc-usa.org