

Writing a winning communications strategy

How to set your focus and make sure you get there

Why do we need a communications strategy?

- Everyone thinks everything is 'communications'
 - No-one understands what communications is!
 - Everything goes across the comms desk – how do we know what's most important?
 - Yet, you need a communications strategy to help deliver your charity's objectives.
 - And the most successful charities don't just communicate the changes they make – they communicate to make change happen.
-

Strategy process

Audit and analyse

- Your comms
- Peer charities' review
- PEST analysis
- SWOT analysis
- Stakeholder consultation

Set direction

- Vision, mission, values
- Outcomes
- Agree objectives
- Audiences
- Key messages
- Stories / voices

Plan out activities

- 12-18 month implementation plan
- Resources needed

Monitoring and evaluation

- Outputs
- Targets
- Measure what works – and what doesn't

Audit: your communications

- What are you doing now? – lay print and media cuttings out.
 - Take the baseline numbers of your social channels and website analytics.
 - Look at your photo and video libraries.
 - Set out your case studies.
 - What's working well?
 - What's not working well?
 - Why? Get your colleagues and volunteers involved!
-

Audit: other people's communications

- Complementary / competitor organisations analysis – from websites, social media, e-newsletters, sign-up for print.
 - Top line messages (vision, mission, values, strapline, elevator pitches, case studies, etc.)
 - What do they do better?
 - Is there anything you could learn?
 - Examples of great fundraising, service delivery or impact?
 - Ask colleagues and volunteers to look out for examples of great charity comms!
-

Analyse: PESTLE analysis (external environment)

Political	Economic
Social	Technical
Environmental	Legal

Analyse: SWOT analysis (internal environment)

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats



Analyse: ask people what they think

- Build the case for a communications strategy among beneficiaries, supporters and other influencers. What is their awareness, interests and engagement with your charity?

Can be done cost-effectively through:

- Social media
- Newsletter
- Survey Monkey
- Focus groups
- Workshops
- Semi-structured interviews (phone, Skype, face-to-face)

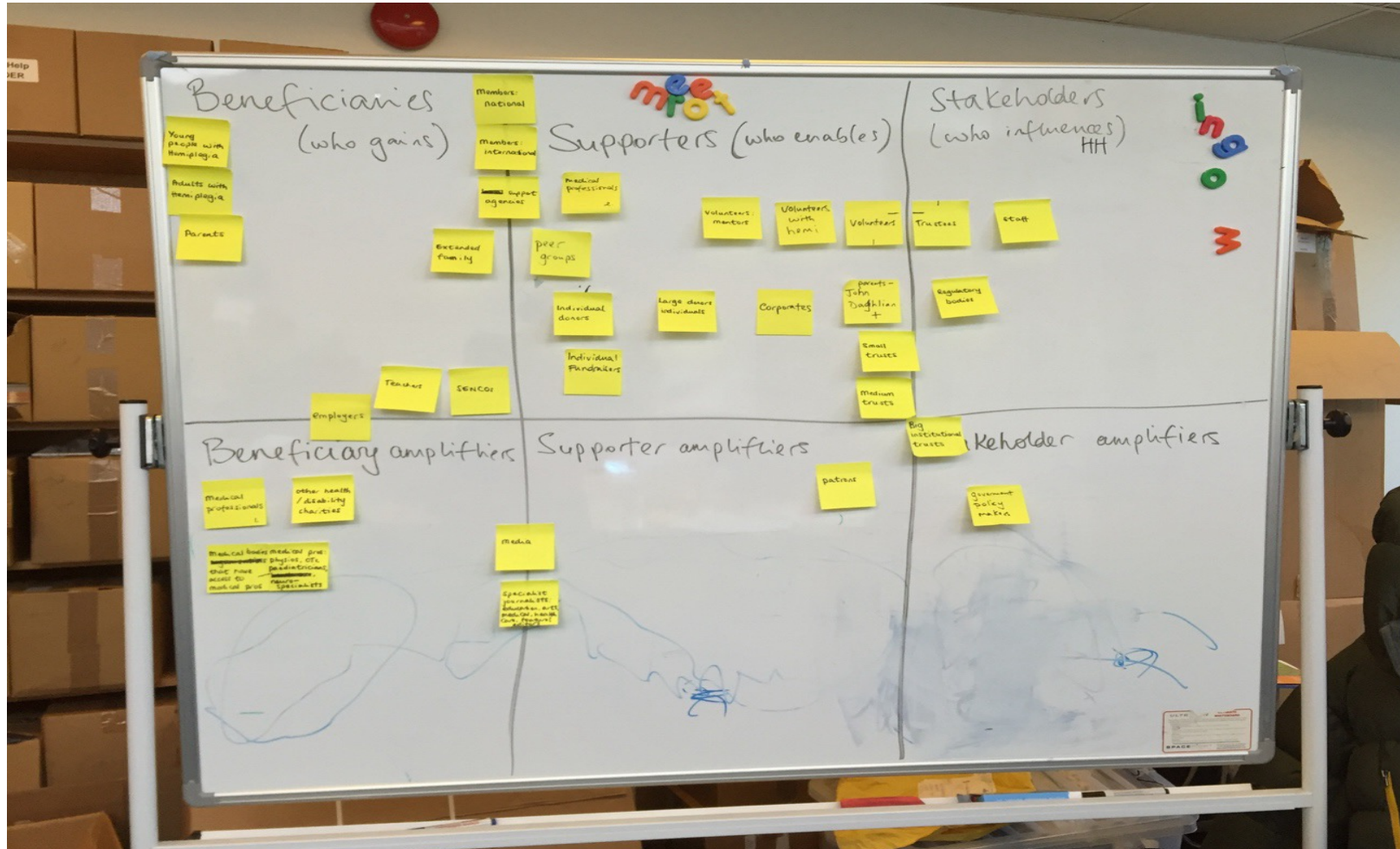


Direction: Who do you need to talk to?

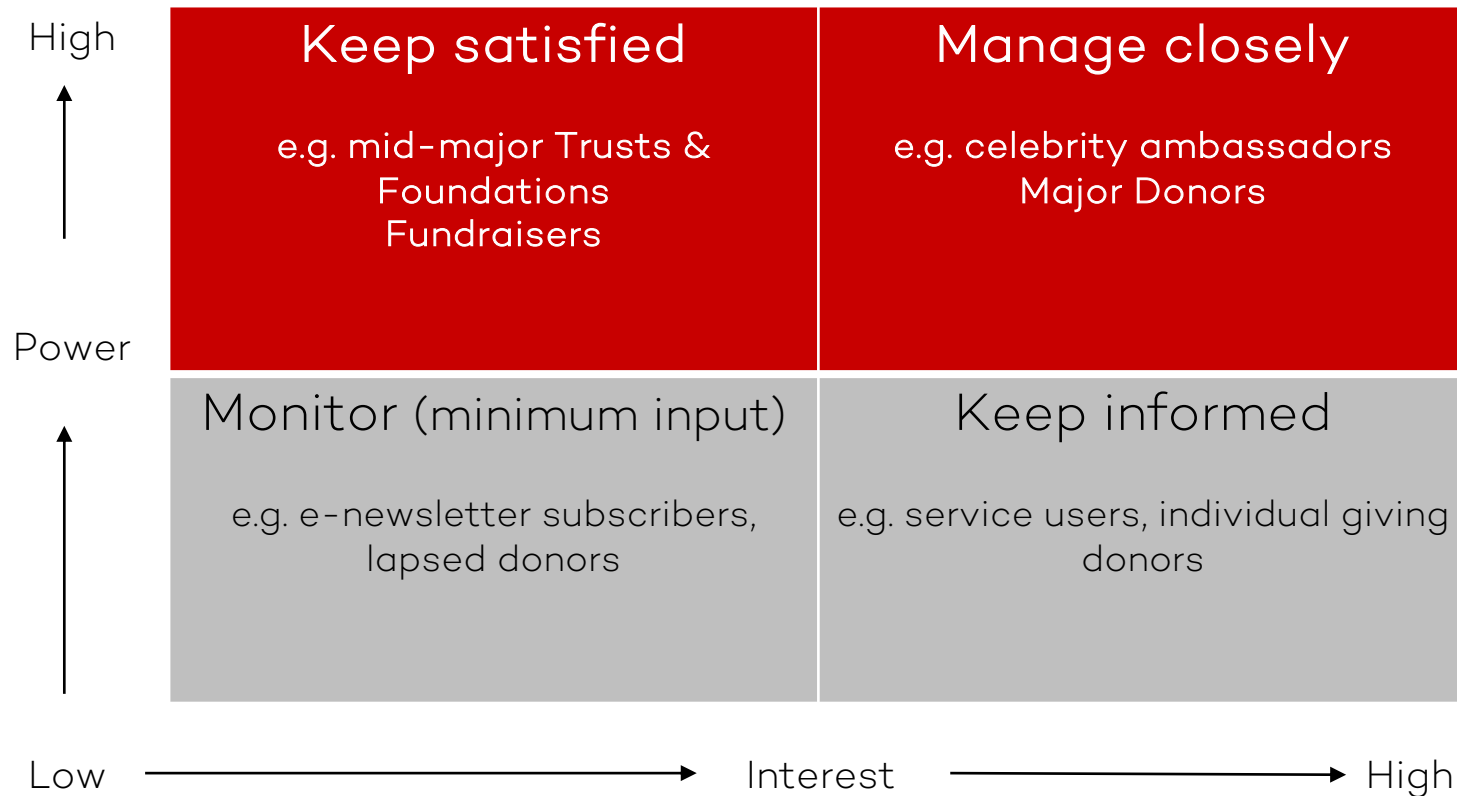
Beneficiaries (who gains)	Supporters (who helps)	Stakeholders (who influences)
Who can help you reach them? (amplifiers)	Who can help you reach them? (amplifiers)	Who can help you reach them? (amplifiers)

Source: Charity Marketing by Ian Bruce

Direction: An audience map in action



Direction: How often do need to talk to them?



Direction: Where to start? One director's dilemma



We keep bumping against the chicken and egg dilemma; we don't know what comes first. Everything is so inter-related and complex that is very difficult to visualise a clear pathway.

The vision for communications

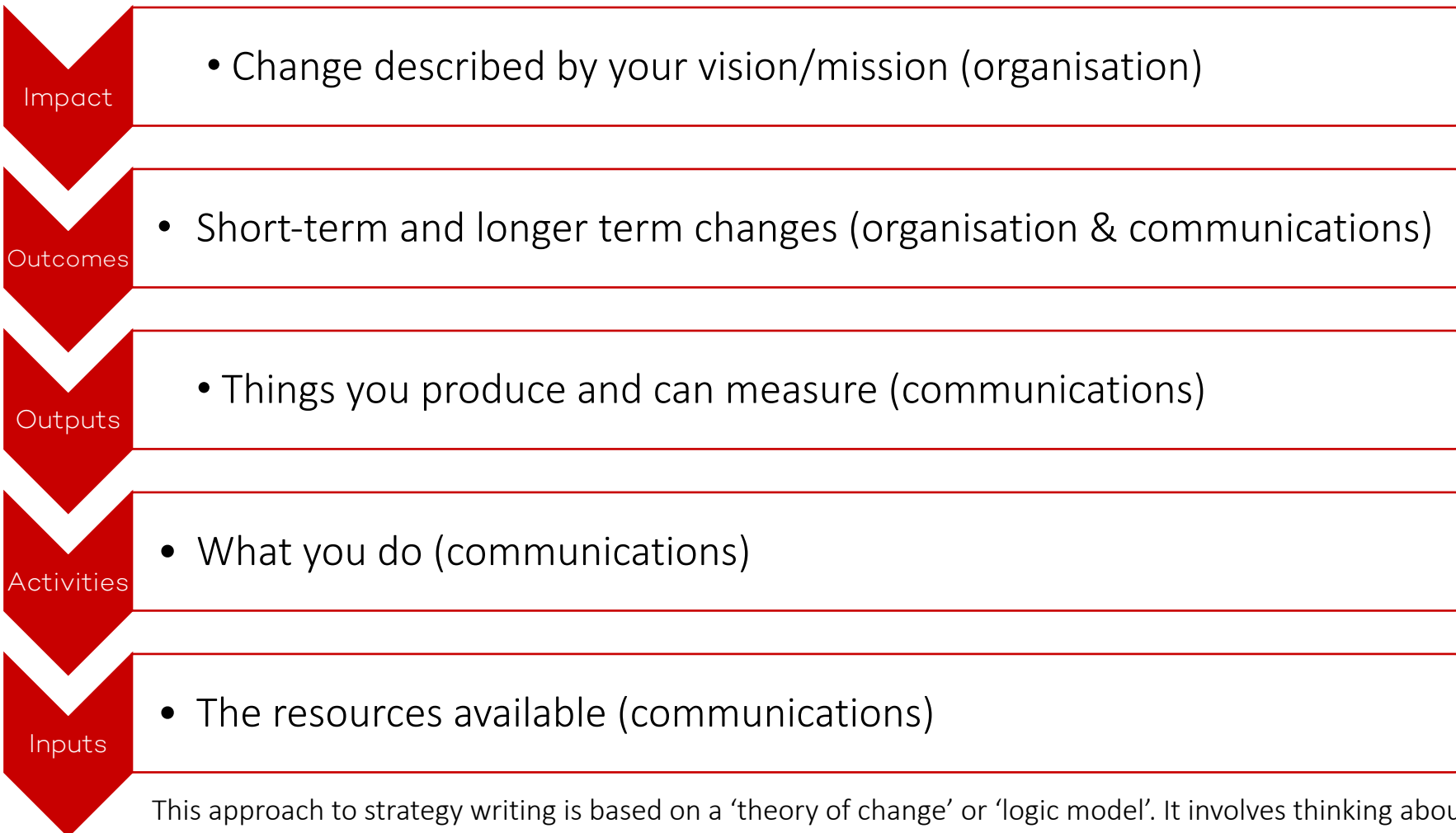
Our communication activity is developed around segmented audiences and 'business' objectives based on an annual strategic framework; and all our actions work in unison across all aspects of our communication activity, rather than in isolation.

Amy Couture, former director HemiHelp

(HemiHelp is now part of Contact the charity supporting parents of children with disabilities)



Direction: Top-down strategy writing



This approach to strategy writing is based on a 'theory of change' or 'logic model'. It involves thinking about your strategy from the top down. All too often strategies start by thinking about the activities. However, thinking about the change you want to make BEFORE what you will do helps all your activities to be really purposeful.

Direction: The two Os – Outputs and Outcomes

- **Outputs**

- What you produce that can be counted.
- Communications outputs are typically combination of products, services and ideas.

- **Outcomes**

- Long and shorter-term changes that support vision.
 - Typically covering – knowledge > attitude > behaviours.
-

Example outcomes from HemiHelp

Everyone with hemiplegia can live the lives they choose	
Longer-term outcomes: People with hemiplegia and families have confidence to make informed choices	Longer-term outcomes: People with hemiplegia and families get the support they need
Short-term outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• People with hemiplegia & families/ carers feel less isolated• People with hemiplegia and families know more about HH's services and local services	Short-term outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health professionals know best practice in managing effects of hemiplegia• People with hemiplegia and families more confident talking about hemiplegia affects

Examples outputs from HemiHelp

Everyone with hemiplegia can live the lives they choose	
<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 x mentors matched • # calls, emails and visits per month (Family Back-up service) • 4 x magazines produced • Growth in people feeling emotionally supported (annual survey) 	<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # Professionals referring to HH • # Professional members • # people attending events
<p>Communications activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote mentoring scheme • Review mentors' materials • Launch and promote new 1:1 support (Family Back-up) • Commission magazine articles 	<p>Communications activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote professional conference • Distribute professional newsletter • Run targeted membership campaigns • Attend external events • Review training package

Planning: Plan your activities



- 12 to 18 months
- Start from top down – what changes are you trying to make (outcomes)?
- Do you have right communications products, services and ideas (outputs) to achieve your outcomes?
- What activities are needed to deliver your communications outputs?
- Put into a planning tool – or spreadsheet.
- Make sure wider team know about it and have access.



Planning: Do you have the resources

**What do you need
to deliver your
plan?**

**Time, people,
money**



Be realistic!

**Better to do less
and do it well**



Planning: Remember to measure

- Check what's working – and what's not.
- If something is not helping deliver your goals and achieve your vision – stop doing it!
- Find out what's working by counting numbers, monitoring and using analytics to plan your communications activities.
- Ask questions to test people's knowledge, attitudes and behaviours – annual surveys are great for this!



Communications should be a team sport



Involve other staff and colleagues in your organisation in communications. Generating content and stories and sharing your comms. Get your board involved and consider recruiting comms champions from your supporters and volunteers. Comms are not effective if only generated and managed by one person.

Who can help?

- CharityComms and Media Trust
 - Third Sector PR and Comms Network Facebook page and Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) charity and social marketing group on LinkedIn
 - Charity communications people - @GoreckiDawn @madlinsudn @GemmaPettmanPR @LondonKirsty
 - Network events – Chartered Institute of Fundraising (CloF) regional and SIG (Special Interest Group) meetings, #CharityMeetup online networking events
-

To sum up...

1. Planning, planning, planning (audit > analysis > consult)
 2. Start from vision
 3. Break changes into one, three, five years (outcomes)
 4. Agree communications products, services & ideas (outputs) to deliver outcomes
 5. Plan activities and check resources
 6. Remember to measure
-

Contact

www.redpencil.co.uk
@RedPencil_
natasha@redpencil.co.uk