

TSI Consulting Partners, Inc.

Communicating the Strategic Plan

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the typical steps that organizations use to communicate their strategic plans to key internal and external stakeholders.

KEY STEPS IN THE PROCESS

- Identification of key stakeholders
 - Be sure to focus on key people/groups whose support is critical to the success of implementation efforts.
 - Pay special attention to those in leadership roles
 - Identify external stakeholders as well as those that are internal.
 - In considering external stakeholders, determine whether there is a need to communicate with funding organizations and/or major donors.
- Approach to communications
 - Try to make the communication as personal as possible, particularly with key people involved in leadership.
 - Emphasize approaches to communication that go beyond delivering a message
 - Take specific steps to secure feedback from each key audience.
 - Balance large-group communication sessions with smaller (even one-on-one) personal visits with key people.
 - Consider a broad range of communications methods and then select the best mix for each audience. This may include such methods as:
 - Small group meetings
 - Briefing existing committees and other groups
 - Large group meetings
 - Group telephone calls
 - Video conferences
 - Newsletter articles
 - Website
 - The purpose of each communication session is to present the future strategic direction of the organization and solicit feedback to stimulate ownership and acceptance of the plan.

STRUCTURE OF THE SESSION

Here is the typical agenda for a communications session—whether large or small group. (If it is a large group, small groups are used for the feedback portion of the meeting.)

- Welcome and overview of the session (*3 minutes*)
- Presentation of the organization's future direction (*15 minutes*)
 - Mission
 - Vision
 - Strategic Map

- Answering clarifying questions to ensure understanding of the future direction: Mission, Vision, Strategic Map *(10 minutes)*
- Feedback in small groups *(30 to 40 minutes)*
 - Approximately five to seven people per group
 - The group appoints its own spokesperson.
 - The comments are recorded for later consideration.
 - Sometimes, a recorder is assigned to each small group; other times, the group identifies its own recorder.
 - The small process is similar to a focus group.
- Several focusing questions—such as the examples that follow—are used to solicit feedback from the group.
 - What do you see as the strengths of the future direction?
 - What issues or concerns do you have about the strategic direction?
 - What suggestions do you have to ensure successful implementation?
- Feedback from the small groups *(15 to 20 minutes)*
 - Each small group has a chance to provide a report on its discussion.
 - Sometimes, this is a complete report.
 - Other times, when there are a large number of small groups, the report may be briefer—focusing on “highlights” from the group. For briefer reports, each group provides one or two items in response to each question.
- Concluding comments, including:
 - Explaining the next steps in the process
 - Letting people know when they will hear more and/or how they can help
 - Thanking people for their participation.
- Adjourn

CONCLUDING THE COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

After the communications process, leadership usually takes some or all of the following steps:

- Compiling the feedback from all the sessions
- Reviewing the feedback to see if there is a need to make any changes to the Strategic Map
- Considering the implications of the feedback for implementation efforts, paying particular attention to the suggestions people offered to ensure the success of implementation
- Providing participants with the summary of the feedback—either in total or as an executive summary
- Thanking people for their participation and reminding them of next steps—noting particular ways in which the next steps incorporate suggestions from participants in the feedback process
- Letting participants know “what’s next”—including the ways in which they will be involved in implementation or will be updated on its progress.