

NEWLY ELECTED OFFICIAL COURSE 2026

Communicating as an Elected Official

When life gets tough, hang out with your dog.



Communication Basics

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Communicating Successfully

Frame the Message

A PICTURE IS WORTH A 1,000 WORDS

Framing the issue is an important part of messaging, but the word “framing” also helps you narrow in on the most important message that you want to communicate. What goes in a frame? A picture. The saying is that a picture is worth a thousand words and that is certainly the case when it comes to communications.

As with any picture, you want to have a caption that explains to the person what it is they are seeing. That caption is your primary messaging to accompany the “picture” that you’ve painted for your audience.



Gather Info & Data

More is Always Better
“The More You Know”

Understand all sides - it's not
always just two sides

Know what's out there

Just like when you ran for office, to be successful, you need to build relationships - with your colleagues, with stakeholders, with opponents.

Working together and collaboratively isn't just a catch phrase - it's how things get done.

Even when you disagree, those relationships mean that the response or reaction to a message - or a proposal - is not the same as it would be if there was no relationship.

Build Relationships

Objectivity is Key

You're more successful if you keep the conversation on track.

Put aside your emotions and prejudices.

There is no "correct" view.

K.I.S.S.

Keep It Simple Stupid

"Great advice. Hurts my feelings every time." - Dwight



Keep it Simple

Crafting a Message

Prepare

Before you begin working out your message though, it's important to do some basic homework.

Start with the most important question: What are your goals? What do you want your audience's reaction or action to be?

Remember that picture? What's your caption? What do you want people to see, think, or feel when they hear your message?



What messages currently exist around this issue?



What alternative or opposing messages are out there?



What language is being used?



What language is being used?



Remember the Three C's

BE...

CLEAR

CONCISE

CONSISTENT

27-9-3

Communications Grid

27

Average length of time of a
radio or television sound bite

9

Average length of time it takes
to read a sound bite -- ALSO --
140 characters

3

Average number of messages
you'll be able to convey

Quick Tips: Check Yourself

Be Cautious
with
Numbers

Rule of Three

Test Your
Message &
Adapt

Practice

Constituent Communications



Best Practices

If you ask 100 people how they get their news, or how they communicate, you'll get 100 different answers. Even if the means is the same - the methods may change.

There is no One Size Fits All.



Quick Tips

Be Honest

Engage

Teach

Don't Take It Personal

Jargon is Confusing

Ask Questions

Listen

Don't Make It Difficult

Tips for Handling Media

Remember: Reporters Are People Too

- Media is much broader than traditional media
- Assume you're On the Record
- Don't hide and don't hesitate
- Follow through & follow up
- "I don't know" is not a bad thing
- Never say "no comment"
- Record (make sure you ask!), review, and revise

Value the Media

The media can be your biggest advocate or your worst enemy - the relationship that you have with them is up to you. Your word is your bond.

- Answer the question you wish they'd asked rather than what you've been asked.
- Stick to your message. Always pivot to your own talking points and remember the 27/9/3 communications grid.
- Think about it. Take a breath. Take a moment. Think about your responses.
- You're in charge. They're coming to you for a reason. Don't lose sight of your own goals.
- Learn from your mistakes and experience. Address errors quickly and own up to your mistakes.
- Take all kinds of feedback in and adjust your message accordingly. This isn't about changing positions. It's about being clear - and that can change.

Thank You!

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