

CSR Communication Tactics

Strategies for Planning and Spreading Your Message



Contents

- 3 Checklist: Communicating with Employees in Uncertain Times
- 4 Considerings When Planning Your Communication Strategy
 - 4 Think of All Your Employees' Needs
 - Involve Your Entire Employee Base
 - 5 Leverage Your Channels of Communication and Resources
 - Build Relationships Within Your Organization
- 7 Use Storytelling to Reach Your Employees
- 7 Find the Story that Represents Your Programs
- 7 Write in the Voice Your Employees Want to Hear From
- 8 Share Your Story and Spread the Message
- 9 Use Data to Make Communication Decisions
- 10 Communicating During Crisis
- 10 How to Easily Provide Employees Opportunities to Support Disaster Relief
 - Change Your Focus and Messaging
 - Reaching Out to Your Employees

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Checklist: Communicating With Employees in Uncertain Times

Use this time to strengthen program relationships with employees and establish new partnerships within your community. This checklist is a guide to push forward your mission.

Lay the Groundwork

- Work with your CSR counterparts to share messaging and resources.
- Spend time on social media to see what people are saying, what hashtags they are using and the general sentiment. This can help inform your communication strategy.
- Reach out to a few champions to ask how they are doing and get a feel for their sentiment and response. This may be important input for your decisions moving forward.
- Ask your champions to closely track their philanthropic work so you can identify trends in data and share their experiences internally and externally.

Make Communication Decisions

- Decide the tone for your communications, the cadence, and the opportunities you will provide.
- Consider whether you can implement a storytelling approach.
- Communicate your plans with your executive team.
- As you create communication plans, encourage your CSR champions to reach out to employees. Follow-up should be based on each employee's response. Was the employee eager to hear about the volunteering opportunity or did they seem too overwhelmed to engage immediately?
- Reach out to employees who are experiencing a lighter than normal workload due to economic shifts and provide them with opportunities to volunteer.

Use Data as a Guide

- Track and analyze results of all digital communications to determine the next course of action.
- Use data and personas to identify the top nonprofits your employees have engaged with to develop a focused giving campaign and/or volunteering event.
- Ask the CSR team to maintain detailed proposals so you have as much information as possible to forecast the future disaster outcome.

Don't stop here! Make sure you continue to communicate with your employees and community. Transparency builds trust and communicating your organization's response is the best way to keep your mission and impact top-of-mind.

Considerings When Planning Your Communication Strategy

Planning a successful overall CSR strategy goes beyond just creating events. The step that follows - communicating the message to your employees - is a key component you should utilize to resonate with your employees in many different ways.

In uncertain times, initiating the best communication strategy can be additionally challenging. Everyone is reeling. The line between professional and personal may be blurred. Virtual meetings may be held from home with children, spouses, or roommates all trying to share space and emotions are running high. Because of this, we added a few extra strategies to consider when communicating CSR programs during distress.



Think of All of Your Employees' Needs

It's no secret that employees crave opportunities to do good in the community. Bringing in all your employees to your efforts not only ignites a maximized impact, but it shows your company's investment and support for what's important to the employees.

Think about the things that make your employee-base diverse, such as location and tenure. If you're going to connect with each of them regardless of their role, region, or relationship in the organization, you need to adjust your messaging strategies a bit to gain everyone's interest. The messaging will be the same, but the tactics and mediums will differ.

INVOLVE YOUR ENTIRE EMPLOYEE BASE

When strategizing CSR communication, focus your thoughts on the entire company culture. Think of how you're going to communicate and engage all the groups within the company, from the new hires to the long-tenured executives.

New-Hires

Your new hires may be a bit more timid to participate, as they're just learning the ropes of the company. Don't let them slip through the cracks!

Regardless of their location or position, upon arrival to the company, new hires should learn how to immediately get involved and started on your CSR platform. Help them understand the value of employee engagement and bring them into the company culture. This can include requesting a session during on-boarding processes where you take time to address the value of CSR in your organization.

Remote workers

Pay special attention to looping in those not in your office. Many philanthropic efforts are taking place in or near the office, such as volunteer activities or in-office opportunities. Those remote or in-the-field folks may not be physically present to participate, so it's important to

connect with them and make them feel as included as the people who come into the office every day.

Are you getting your staff to wrap presents during the holiday season for underprivileged youth? Send a communication to the remote folks to wrap a present in their home. Wanting to volunteer at a food bank? Have your remote folks send in photos volunteering at their local food banks with friends and family. Always include everyone in the communications, regardless of their role or location.

Leverage Your Channels of Communication and Resources

When you think about how you would traditionally communicate upcoming volunteer events, holiday campaigns, or disaster response to your employees, are mass emails the first thing that come to your mind?

Sure, it's a quick and easy way to provide information, but it may not be very effective to just do email blasts as your sole method of communicating. With each stage of your program development comes different objectives, so utilizing different kinds of mediums is going to maximize engagement potential.

To reach your desired engagement level, your entire employee base needs to resonate with your program's message. How are your employees going to best receive the message? This is where the multiple medium approach comes in full swing.

Use your internal channels

Did your CSR program just get approved? Have you mapped out a month of service events that are brand new to your company? Has a natural disaster just occurred in which some of your employees, stakeholders, or customers have been impacted? Whichever situation you're in, your employees need to know what's coming! It's important to get support and spread awareness right off the bat. Use internal channels that will get attention around your office. Think posters on the wall and TVs in the lobby, or any other spots that get high traffic in the

workplace. Take it a step further and get some face time by making in-person visits to offices or departments. With remote folks not around, brainstorm creative ways to reach them in addition to an email. An out of the box strategy we saw was one organization sending voicemails to all employees!

Don't forget about your platform!

Using your employee engagement platform is another great way to send out your message. Engagement elements within your CSR platform can be customized to show information about a certain event or fundraiser approaching. The order of these elements can be rearranged as well, so any events quickly approaching, or any timely messages can be placed in a readily seen area of the homepage. Splash modules are another great feature to really get the message seen within the platform as users are guaranteed to come across the message. When logging on, the splash module will pop up and require the user to exit out of the message in order to continue in the platform.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION

Taking a look at your CSR calendar, certain events will take place at a recurring point in the year, such as holiday giving campaigns or an annual week/month of service. Before you schedule volunteering or giving events on any of your open days, find out from all departments what major events are to come. By zooming out of just your calendar and considering initiatives across the company, efforts are more globalized and can be ideally timed to get the maximum engagement from your employees.

Meet with your committees

Getting all your company's committees in one room at the same time can be tough to schedule, but even having just one meeting to collaborate on timing is going to be beneficial for your programs and the other teams' as well. First, figure out the time of year when company events are already scheduled. You won't have much success hosting a CSR event during your major

company conference. Then visit with individual teams to understand their plans for the year.

By doing so, you can schedule those more flexible (non-seasonal) events during a time when it's going to be relatively quiet on the company's and other committees' schedules as a whole. By collaborating early, you're going to avoid the challenges that arise when numerous events are taking place at the same time, including potentially overwhelming employees with too much communication and event time conflicts, forcing employees to have to choose one over the other.

Share your resources

Yes, your committees may have different focuses, but they all share the same objective - engaging your employees! Take advantage of building relationships with other committees to see how your events can correspond with one another and if they're taking place around the same time. Be sure to make it clear in your communications if participation in one event is related to another event within the company. Connect the dots for employees and make it easy for them to understand how company events relate to one another. Using existing marketing material and commonly used communication

methods streamlines all these efforts and will likely spark interest for employees to make that larger impact.

CSR champions

Don't overlook the influence of your people! Employee engagement can have a ripple effect within your company and recognizing the great work your internal champions do for the company and the community will spread excitement about your CSR programs. During the program planning phase, take the time to find out which causes your employees are most passionate about. It is more likely employees will want to spread the word and advocate for these initiatives if the programs are supporting causes they care about.

With an upcoming event, use internal champions to build excitement and deliver the message to colleagues encouraging participation! Make sure to get buy-in from those who interact with an entire department or across multiple day-to-day. For those working on the floor (if applicable) and not in front of computers all day, work with a program advocate who can best communicate out to all of them. These internal program champions are an integral part of your communication strategy.



Use Storytelling to Reach the Interests of Employees

As the CSR team, you have the unique opportunity to provide your employees with career-building opportunities alongside their co-workers that benefit their friends, families, and communities. All you have to do is have a communication strategy that engages your employees enough to show up.

People are more likely to join something when they hear of another person doing it first. That is why sharing stories of impact is the best tactic for your CSR communications and will benefit not only your program engagement but also your company brand and reputation.

Find the Story that Represents Your Programs



Ask for volunteers

Identify the employees within your company with the most potential. People with the most potential might be those who are very active on social media, very involved in company initiatives, or friends with many different departments. Within a collaborative culture, hearing stories from fellow employees is likely to inspire and encourage colleagues.



Ask nonprofit partners

Reach out to some of your nonprofit partners and ask for specific stories of impact and how your organization and employees have helped them achieve their goals, raise money, or just made a difference in the community. This is also great press for the nonprofits and will help get their name out in the community so many will probably be willing to share!



Ask the community

Sometimes the volunteer hours and donations your organization and employees give directly impact the lives of people and groups in your community. In this

case, ask them to share their story of how your teams' efforts made a difference in their lives. If your employees are already super dedicated to your company's cause, sharing an external contact's message may be the best perspective in that scenario.

Write in the Voice Your Employees Want to Hear From

Sometimes what is being communicated is not positively received by employees solely based upon who the message is coming from. Having communication come from a superior or an external source can result in quicker response or higher participation within the CSR program.



Communicate from the right perspective

Communicating the story in the correct perspective is an essential step in order to get different types of employees to engage and to respond positively to your program. When we say the 'right' perspective, we're referring to the perspective you believe would suit your organization best. There are several directions you can take your communication's perspective in, however, the most appropriate one will most likely be similar to pre-existing communications that your employees respond best to.



But keep it consistent

If your employees are used to hearing from the CEO for important company-wide initiatives, don't try to shake up the process. Same thing applies for employee perspective- If employees are sharing stories and experiences for other company initiatives, use this method for your efforts. You want the communication to be natural and fluid, so keep it consistent with how all departments communicate across the company.

For the most success, you can collaborate with your company's marketing team. Together, you have more resources, along with an entire team that can help ensure your program's branding aligns with the corporate branding. For example, your team can bring



the mission statement and cause pillars to the marketing department and your teams can work together to write messaging for your CSR program that aligns with your corporate brand's voice.

Leadership, employees, or nonprofits

Depending on the company, external contacts, management, or even the CEO may send out CSR communication messages to all employees. If your CEO is deeply involved in CSR efforts and employees are aware of this, a message from him/her can be very effective. However, if your company is passionate about employee-led activities and collaboration, hearing a directive from executives may turn your employees off. This is why it's so important to understand who you're communicating to before sending your message so the program is perceived in the best way.

Share Your Story and Spread the Message

Use external channels

As your programs progress and events are taking place, your messaging is going to look a little different. You want to continue to engage as many of your employees as you can, but the focus shifts more on building reputation and sharing the impact.

Now's the time to brag about the awesome work everyone is doing! This is when your external channels are best utilized, with press releases, blogs, and social media platforms being the ideal ways to communicate

the impact. Sharing these stories will not only let your fans and the rest of the community see the awesome work your company is doing, but employees will get even more excited to be a part of your next event.

Use short videos taken on their smartphones

Video is a very successful way to communicate, especially during a disaster when people are isolated, remote, or not able to connect in person. It is an important part of your strategy and does a great job sharing your message. Video connects people to the outside world and makes them feel like they are a part of something bigger. You are giving people access to stories they otherwise wouldn't hear.

Ask your storytellers to post on social media

Social media platforms love content that comes from real people. You should absolutely post on official company and foundation accounts, but also ask your storytellers to share on their personal social media accounts. This is the best way to get stories out into the community. It's more personal, authentic, and official accounts (like your company page) won't receive as much prioritization by the social platforms as personal accounts will.

Tweak your message

Use the same story on all your different marketing channels - social media, email, website - but use different words, images, and delivery based on the platform. Maybe you have the storyteller record two different video messages and use one in an email and the other on social media.

Use Data to Make Communication Decisions

Uncharted territory is just that: uncharted. It has never happened before, there is no precedent, there are no best practices. How do you know if you're saying the right thing to employees?

Now, more than ever, you have to try things, analyze the data to determine what worked, and try again,

Digital communications are the best place to start because they provide you vast, nearly instant data to analyze. Once you have drawn conclusions from your digital communications, you can translate that learning into other marketing channels, such as direct mail.

Start with social listening

Look on the most popular social media platforms - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram - and see what people are talking about and where. Identify and follow the most popular hashtags, plus see what your peers are posting.

Look at your organization's social media posts (if you aren't already involved in some of the messaging) to see which have the highest (and lowest) reach and engagement numbers. Track mentions and conversations related to your organization and discover influencers and advocates. Questions to ask yourself:

- Which social media platform is getting the most engagement?
- What type of content (photo, video, poll) is getting the most engagement?
- What are the most popular hashtags?
- Which messaging is getting the most engagement? Is that engagement negative or positive?
- Are you connected to and resonating with potential influencers?

Use what you have learned from the above analysis to test changes in your organization's content or messaging. Continue tracking and analyzing your social media content so you can help to guide your organization's overall messaging (especially following a

disaster) and provide insight into how your employees and organization is continuing to make an impact.

Test your digital communications

It seems as though every organization is trying to cut through the noise and make sure their messages are heard. That's why, now more than ever, you need to analyze your email stats for insight and adjust accordingly. You're looking at the following stats:

- Open Rate Indicates the reader's interest in your organization and the subject line
- Click Rate Indicates their level of interest in your message and whether your message was compelling
- Unsubscribe Rate Indicates how many readers have lost interest in your content and/or organization. A high unsubscribe rate could also indicate you are sending emails too frequently, the content is irrelevant or doesn't match the reader's expectations, or your list is not targeted.

You may consider A/B testing - dividing your audience into multiple segments and altering just one part of the email. Start with the subject line and have one subject line focused on how the reader can help and the other focused on what your organization is doing to help. This can tell you which message your audience is most likely to respond to. For the next email, focus more on messaging that was well received.

Once you have gained insight from A/B testing, segment your audience for the best response. For example, send different messages to recent customers, lapsed customers, and employees.

The big picture

The information gained from digital communication can help to inform more than just your marketing. It may give you a better idea of what customers and the community are looking for from your corporation.

When you integrate your messaging with your audience profile, you can see when customers and employees are interacting with your digital content and reach out to them personally.

Communicating During Crisis

While we love the organization of a calendar, not all CSR efforts can be scheduled. It goes without saying that there is never a perfect time on the calendar for disaster, but certain seasons do bring a higher risk of natural disaster, giving some guidance on timing and preparation for planning early.

If you have employees spread throughout the country or the world, there is the probability more disaster could impact your workforce. Even if your employees aren't directly impacted by a crisis, providing opportunities for your employees to give back is an important way to incorporate disaster response within your CSR programs while giving your company a leg-up with community relations.

How to Easily Provide Employees Opportunities to Support Disaster Relief

Once a disaster has occurred, whether it has impacted your employees directly or not, the clock is ticking. You have to get your communications out the door and into your employees' hands as quickly as possible so they can start creating impact. Like we said above, in this case, we are hoping you at least made some earlier plans for your disaster relief strategy, such as determining who you're going to partner within the community, like nonprofit organizations or other corporations.

CHANGE YOUR FOCUS AND MESSAGING

In times of uncertainty, communities rallying around organizations that are looking for ways to help. Offer people an opportunity to be part of the fight – a way to support in times of need.

Your communications should reflect empathy and kindness, but don't let that take away from your important mission. Motivate your employees to feel good about donating their time and money to your opportunities.

YOUR COMMUNICATION SHOULD BE:

Be transparent: Keep your employees and community regularly updated on what your organization is doing to aid the disaster response and frequently share data, impact, and results to bring hope.

Provide support: Depending on the type of disaster, your corporation's resources could be tied directly to some of the high priority issues that need support (supply chain, medical supplies, food). Reach out often to remind employees of 1) your ability to support them and 2) how your organization is responding to the needs of the community.

Make it easy to give: Make sure all of your employees know how to use the CSR platform before a disaster occurs, so they can immediately look for donation and volunteering opportunities. This makes it easy for employees to get engaged as soon as possible.



REACHING OUT TO YOUR EMPLOYEES

Tell employees about volunteering opportunities.

Let employees know about the nonprofits that your company has partnered with and the goals you are trying to achieve. Encourage your Champions to create volunteering events with these organizations within the CSR platform so employees can immediately register and start providing support the moment they receive your communications.

Tell employees about matching gifts.

Hopefully your employees already know that your company matches their donations through the CSR platform, but if not, remind them of that benefit, and maybe even increase your match cap for all donations made to your nonprofit partners or organizations supporting disaster relief. Commit to transparency and work with the nonprofit partners to provide impact reports on what their donations were used for.

Tell employees about relief funds.

In the case that your employees are impacted by the disaster, you can work with third-party contractors to create a relief fund directly supporting your employees. Since the idea is to quickly provide a way for employees to help change the situation of fellow employees, don't wait for a perfect case for support to be developed.

Clearly communicate with employees how spending decisions will be made and how impact will be shared. As the situation evolves, you can better craft a case for support within your relief fund communication plan.

Tell the employees' stories of impact.

After a few days, you will begin to receive word and data back from employees, nonprofit partners, and other organizations of the impact that is being made. Now is the time to share those stories to encourage and excite more employees to continue to support the cause. Some stories that motivate are:

- ✓ Stories of the community coming together
- ✓ Their motivation during the disruption
- ✓ Their needs with the community
- ✓ Something positive they have seen in the community
- ✓ A glimpse into their new normal.
- ✓ What is giving them hope

To learn more about communicating during a disaster and to view our disaster resources, visit our disaster resource hub at www.yourcause.com.

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