

& GUIDANCE for public sector communicators



01 Try to **stay away** from the politics of the day

- A public officer has a job to do and will be evaluated on the basis of how well it is done
- **Regardless of politics of survival, what people will remember is what was achieved and how well the job was done**
- Public sector communicators should be the conscience of the office and ensure that adequate attention is given to achieving milestones that enable credible storytelling

02

Resist the urge to make propaganda the default communications style

- In today's world of real-time fact checking with AI tools, it is short-sighted to rest your communications strategy on propaganda. It is not only unprofessional but makes your principal look incompetent and untrustworthy.
- The shelf-life of the propaganda may be less than 24 hrs. And once debunked, cannot be convincingly referenced anymore
- **The role of a public sector communicator is to build ever-green messaging that will stand the test of time**

03 Manage reputation not media headlines

- **The era of top-down communications is gone forever. Preventing the media from covering a story or reporting a negative issue will not stop public speculation or address negative sentiment**
- Yes it may prevent widespread coverage but may likely result in the public believing any version that is eventually put out by anyone on social media and the public is more likely to disbelieve the “official position” when it is eventually put out

04

Aim to win Hearts & Minds

What is the point of communicating without creating goodwill?



- **Use communications and stakeholder engagement to win hearts and minds**
- Do a stakeholder mapping of the citizens, residents or those within your service population and ensure that you have a communications and engagement strategy that targets identified segments within that population with relevant information, programs or activities

05

SERVE the people with information that is **relevant** and useful

Does anyone know
that your office
exists?



- **Initiate and run public service information and communications campaigns as a matter of course. Have a calendar of notifications or campaigns that touch on issues of interest to women, youth, artisans, white and blue collar workers, students etc**
- Build trust in government through communication that helps people. e.g. health information, traffic, safety, security tips, education, culture, age group events etc
- Your communications strategy should not just be built around your leader's events calendar or the ruling party schedules. There needs to be a strong people focus as well, based on research and evidence-based findings on what resonates with different demographics

06 People-first not project-first

- Put people first in your communications and engagement strategy
- **Humanize your storytelling. Make it about the people not your office**
- Write your messaging from the perspective of the audience
- Build your messaging strategy on what you want them to KNOW and DO
- Also focus on how you want them to FEEL about the initiative, agenda or the office that is promoting or implementing the agenda

07

ONE Brand Reputation

- Remember that actions taken by one department or an official will influence public perception and sentiment about the whole institution for good or bad
- **Ensure that the internal organization is aligned on the one brand and reputation ideals**
- With leadership support - Deploy an internal communications campaign to promote an aligned culture and perspective of brand values

08 Treat **ALL** citizens like stakeholders

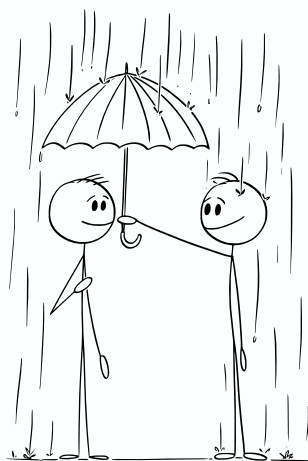
- Map all stakeholders and citizens within your jurisdiction and develop a communications strategy that bridges the information gap between the governed and the government.
- **Do not fall into the trap of Them Vs Us messaging.** It alienates a significant proportion of well-meaning citizens and robs you of potential goodwill ambassadors (which is crucial for government to be able to do its work)

09 Build trust through performance, behaviour and **communication**

- Public sector communicators and strategists should subtly and discretely remind political leaders, appointees and public office holders that the road to re-election or re-appointment begins from the 1st day in office and not 6 months to the next election or end of tenure
- **It therefore makes sense to consistently build trust through-out the tenure of service by impactful performance, citizen-centric relationship management and proactive communications**

10

Address issues, **resolve problems** and demonstrate **CARE** through communication



- Address issues head-on. Don't shy away from having difficult conversations in a constructive manner and on a credible platform when necessary
- **Show consideration for the pains and daily struggles of the people through proactive communication about issues of interest and concern that are within the specific portfolio of your office**
- Embed themes like **CARE, WELFARE, WELLBEING** and **WELNESS** into your communications strategy and engagement approach
- Demonstrate emotional intelligence, inclusiveness and responsiveness through institutional actions and public messaging



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