

# Planning advocacy communications

## Introduction

Advocacy is all about effective communications, and so this factsheet focuses on preparing a detailed communications plan. A complementary sheet introduces more general project planning techniques such as flowcharting and Gantt charts.

Careful planning of your communications will provide you with a detailed list of actions targeting key people and milestones to help you measure progress. It will help to ensure that you use your limited resources in the most cost-effective way.

There is a handbook (see further reading below for link) which also covers this topic and does so in much more detail should you need it.

## Stakeholders and target audiences

Stakeholders are all those people and organisations with a stake or interest in the issue. Within the stakeholders, you will want to identify specific target audiences with whom you will plan to communicate. So start by brainstorming a list of stakeholders. And then, you may find it useful to consider whether stakeholders are likely to be allies or adversaries, prospects or opponents. You will almost certainly need to undertake some stakeholder analysis to assess where each of the stakeholders fit – and can then determine your key target audiences. Bear in mind that these may not all be allies – you may for example aim to bring round some of the adversaries.

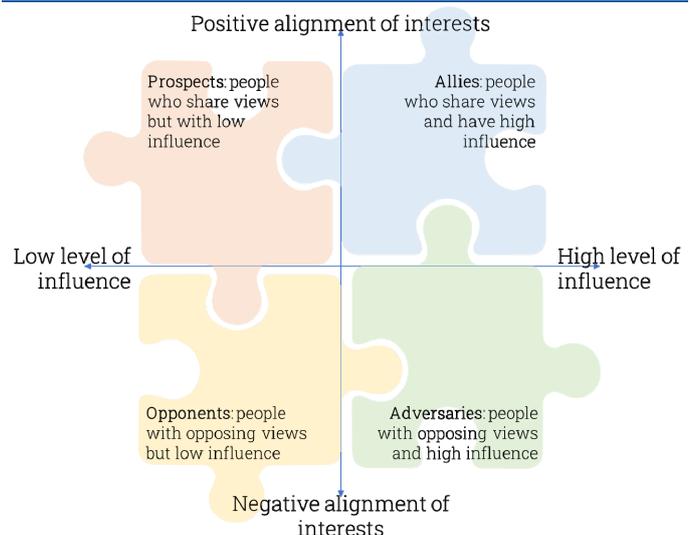
You may not be able to reach all your target audiences directly – so consider whether there are intermediaries through whom you can work to communicate a view to them.

Be as specific as you can in listing your target audiences – if possible, name specific individuals. You are then ready to start preparing a plan.

## Purpose of communications

Effective advocacy requires that you can communicate your message convincingly. This requires not only that you have persuasive evidence but also that you can prepare and convey your argument in a way that is totally compelling.

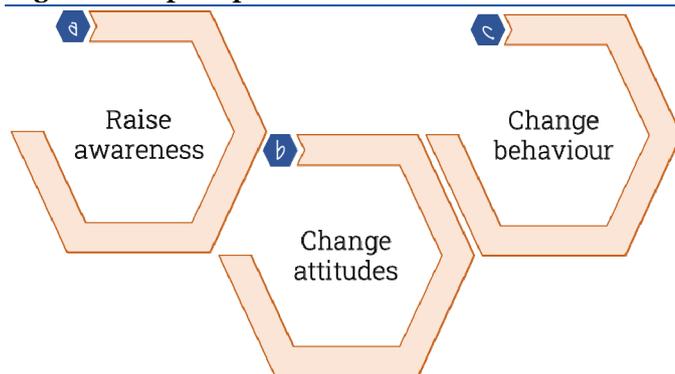
**Figure 1: Alignment & influence**



Source: adapted from an idea by Mendizabal, ODI

Consultants in communications and public relations perceive three possible communication objectives. In private sector advocacy, it is more sensible to consider these as a progression. There may be a need to raise awareness, perhaps amongst members or the wider business community and amongst public servants and politicians, about a specific issue. There will probably be a need to change attitudes amongst key audiences so that they become (more) supportive. Most important of all, there is a need to encourage public servants to act, that is, to change behaviour, since otherwise you will not deliver the policy reform.

**Figure 2: Steps in public relations**



### Preparing the plan

You have identified the target audiences. You have your policy position. But the target audiences are unlikely to have the power to change the policy by themselves – so your objective in communicating to each of the audiences will be to stimulate them to act in such a way that you make progress towards your ultimate objective. Perhaps you meet with the chair of a parliamentary committee, to persuade her that the committee should debate the topic, with the further objective of taking a resolution to parliament; or you meet key civil servants, with a view to them persuading the Minister and taking a proposal to cabinet.

**Rationale for communicating with the target audience:** It will help, therefore, if for each target audience you describe the rationale for why you are communicating with them at all. Then describe your objectives in meeting with them: you will find this easiest if you write it as a description of the action that you wish the target to take.

**Key messages for each target audience:** Then think about the key messages: what are the arguments that you will use to justify your position and persuade the target audience to act? Whilst you can only have one policy position, you may find that you need to use different messages with different audiences. And if you are working through intermediaries, you may need additional messages.

**Channels to reach target audience:** What channels will you use to reach the audience? In most cases, especially if you adopt an ‘insider’ approach, you will be looking for a face to face meeting. But if you are going for a mass audience, you may need leaflets (say to reach all your members) or place a story in the media (though you need to be careful with media – it may lead to policy makers becoming more determined or may awaken interest groups opposed to your position).

**Actions you need to undertake:** Lastly, think about the actions or activities that you will need to undertake to make all this happen. Use a table like the one below to set this out systematically. Add timescales and the names of the people who will be responsible for making it all happen.

Target audience	Rationale	Objective	Key messages	Channels	Actions



## Further reading and further information



- Planning your advocacy project (see [businessadvocacy.net/dloads/cb/5.1\\_planningAdvocacyProjects.pdf](https://businessadvocacy.net/dloads/cb/5.1_planningAdvocacyProjects.pdf))
- An annotated sample of a public relations strategy (note that this has been prepared by a consultant so there is more content than would be required if the BMO had prepared it for its own use) [businessadvocacy.net/dloads/prSugarEX.pdf](https://businessadvocacy.net/dloads/prSugarEX.pdf)

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