

Developing Communication Strategy

Advantages and Disadvantages of Different Types of Media

Different media have different strengths, weaknesses, drawbacks, advantages and costs. An effective communication strategy usually uses a mix of at least 2 or 3 different types.

Choice of media and format depends on:

1. your audience(s) ✓
2. your budget ✓
3. the communication channels best for your specific audience(s) and ✓
4. how long the communication intervention will continue
5. and how critical it is to encourage genuine participation for social change communication. ✓

Matrix #1 gives an idea of the advantages and disadvantages of some of the most common media you might want to consider for a communication strategy. The list is not meant to be exhaustive.

The more you can afford, the better – but *select those that most fit your desired audience and will help you meet your needs* without blowing your budget.

Matrices 2, 3 and 4 give an idea of how we can get to the specifics in terms of issues, message development, and working through communication objectives

| Advantages and Disadvantages of Different Types of Media | | | | | |
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| Type of Media | Potential for Participation & Two-way communication | Target Audience | Advantages | Disadvantages | Rough Cost Estimates |
| 1. Television spots | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass media – can reach many people • High status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General public • Can also be tailored to Specific target audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide reach • High status and perceived credibility • Audio and visual (can see and hear) • Good for simple messages and slogans • Can help to generate interest, awareness and excitement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive • Programs not always on at convenient times • Not everyone has TV • No room for interaction unless linked to a TV call-in show | \$5000 to \$10,000 US for 30 second TV spots, prime time |
| 2. Radio spots | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass media – can reach many people • High status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific target audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to wide reach • High status • Good for simple messages and slogans • Can help to generate interest, awareness and excitement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively inexpensive (compared to TV) • Programs not always on at convenient times • No room for interaction • Audio only, no visual communication. | \$2000 for 30 second psa/community announcements over two weeks (unless government sponsored) |
| 3. Radio call-in shows | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass media – can reach many people • High status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific target audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to wide reach • High status • Allows greater room for feedback, questioning and input | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively inexpensive (compared to TV) • Programs not always on at convenient times • Audio only, no visual. | \$1000 if sponsored as a host guest |
| 4. Newspaper features/pages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little room for participation or input, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literate public | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High status • Can review and re- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public generally does not read | Free – if you produce your own news release |

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| | except for letters to the editor, news releases and sometimes community columns | | read as needed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires literacy • Not as deep reach as TV or radio • Publication depends on the whim of editors | and photos and hope the press pick it up. \$1000 for a freelance PR writer per each article |
| 5. News paper advertorials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little room for participation, but provide opportunity for paid information to be included | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literate public | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as paid information, • Moderate status • Can be reviewed & re-read | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as newspapers, but with higher cost | Between \$500 and \$1000 per feature |
| Type of Media | Potential for Participation & Two-way communication | Target Audience | Advantages | Disadvantages | Rough Cost Estimates |
| 6. Websites/internet & blogs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be computer literate, but otherwise lots of potential for participation through blogging, list-serves, e-networking, specific websites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literate public • Specific listserves and networks can be set-up for particular audiences/clients, such as the media directly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global info can be obtained, not only local or regional • Youth becoming computer savvy • High-status • List-serves can be quite inexpensive • Can establish links to other sites (CFNI, FAO, etc and MOA, local networks) • Can also establish pages on existing sites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers needed and may not be widespread • Listserves and websites require someone to manage and facilitate them and provide content as well as technical assistance | Establishing a webpage can be expensive (\$1500 to \$5000). Linkages are cheaper (\$500 or so). List serves can be minimal in cost, but require managers/facilitators who can be expensive. |
| 7. Mobile phones and text messages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tremendous potential for two-way communication and one-on-one communication among public directly. Also provides timely, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific publics, teenagers in particular | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing reach, especially in rural areas • Low cost for text messages • Highly popular | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text messages must be short • Best if linked or tied to other communication efforts | Cost of messages by your server |

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| | current lost cost information. Good for 'reminder' messages. | | | | |
| 8. Posters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No potential for feedback, unless widely tested or if produced together with communities through participatory processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General and specific publics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can deliver simple messages and slogans Not necessarily expensive and can often be produced in-house | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires visual and written literacy Generally better for simple messages and slogans | \$5000 for 1000 or so full colour, 24X32 inch posters |
| 9. Brochures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No potential for feedback, unless widely tested and produced through participatory workshops with participants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General and specific publics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can deliver more information than posters, good for instructional info Don't have to be expensively produced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to specific distributions Requires visual and written literacy | \$1000 for 1000 full colour, but cheaper if done in house on an as needed basis |
| 10. Fact sheets and flyers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No potential for feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be distributed after meetings, in markets, Can also be mailed Cheap if done in B&W on coloured paper reviewed at leisure Inexpensive/cheap Can be produced in-house through desk-top publishing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> limited to specific information for specific topics – single facts or tips | Same cost as brochures, unless done in black & white – then \$500 per fact sheet for 1000 copies |
| Type of Media | Potential for Participation & Two-way communication | Target Audience | Advantages | Disadvantages | Rough Cost Estimates |
| 11. Newsletters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No potential for feedback unless produced with community input – then can be highly effective at promoting local | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General and specific publics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can deliver more information than posters and brochures Not necessarily | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to specific distributions Requires visual and written literacy | <p>\$1000 in B&W for 1000 copies, 2-page fold.</p> <p>\$2000 for 2-colour for 1000 copies, 2-page</p> |

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| | innovations and activities particularly if local people 'report' and write the news items | | expensive, can be done in-house <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for reporting on progress and achievements • Credibility can be high if produced by community (people like to see themselves in print) • Can be produced in-house through desktop publishing | | fold. \$3000 for full colour, 1000 copies, 2-page fold |
| 12. Instructional video | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback and questioning can be built into the presentation and learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be paused for deeper discussion and replayed as needed • Most communities are likely to have at least one VCR • High status • Equipment is getting cheaper to use and purchase • Can record 'before', 'during' and 'after' steps in process • Can be played back immediately | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires editing equipment and software unless in-camera taping is followed • Usually needs to be supported with other printed materials • Can be over-used when other methods may be more appropriate • More expensive costs up-front | \$5000 to \$10000 including local talent, script development |

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| 13. Drama | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of potential for participation and interaction, forum theatre and participatory drama especially – wherein audiences analyze the plot and characters and can revise scenarios and outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target audiences and others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can present sensitive issues in a humorous manner to avoid confrontations Encourages creative brainstorming for solutions Highly interactive Helps to support the building of relationships Uses local talent Breaks down barriers between formal and informal expertise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not a permanent record unless videotaped and played back again Usually significant preparation and up-front work to focus and get desired results Requires a team of people/actors Can be costly if actors are all paid, but relatively inexpensive if local community talent is used | <p>\$3000 with paid talent, \$2000 if you get volunteer talent and script writers</p> <p>extra costs will be incurred for venue, refreshments, etc. to host the drama</p> |
| 14. Public presentations & community meetings, service clubs, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of potential for interaction and participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different audiences can be targeted directly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages group formation Helps to publicize general info Generates local ownership Builds partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only good for one-off moments in a process Need to be held when people are available (nights, weekends) Don't always attract desired audience | <p>Cost of speakers' mileage, time to make formal presentations</p> |
| 15. Power point presentations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can incorporate feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good for more sophisticated audiences like service clubs and professionals, civil servants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If well done, good for marketing or selling ideas and generating interest Can be accessed over the internet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires computer skills and equipment to view, projectors Cannot communicate large amounts of detailed information Requires electricity | <p>Staff time, cost of CDs to produce and label</p> |

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| | | | | and some amount of technical savvy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projectors can be expensive | |
| 16. Bumper stickers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not participatory at all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General public and specific audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually attractive But not all cars will post them | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Message/slogan needs to be kept short and punchy | \$1000 for 1000 copies of 2-colour bumper stickers |
| 17. Billboards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not participatory at all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General public and specific audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best for one main message or slogan Fairly permanent depending on duration posted Highly visible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very expensive People forget to notice after a while | \$6000 for 3X6 foot signs, about 20 |
| Type of Media | Potential for Participation & Two-way communication | Target Audience | Advantages | Disadvantages | Rough Cost Estimates |
| 18. DVDs/CDRoms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not participatory unless designed as interactive game | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific audiences, particularly attractive to young people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively cheap to produce and transport High status and seen as 'professional' More durable than videotape | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires computer access, specific software to produce, particularly with audio commentary and video animation | Staff time, cost of CDs to produce and label Video animation is more expensive - \$2000 |
| 19. Diaries, Calendars and Almanacs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be participatory if local communities and audiences are profiled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General publics and specific audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly popular Lots of information and tips can be included | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very expensive to produce – particularly in colour People expect them to be free Limited to one-year only, unless designed in such a way that tips/info can be torn off and kept for future reference (such as: menu ideas, | \$6000 for 2000 copies of full-colour, 12 page calendars |

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| | | | | shopping tips, etc.) | |
| 20. Comic book or colouring book for children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be designed as an activity with school children – soliciting their suggestions for comic characters or illustrations; • Interactive when colouring the comics/books | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be designed in house with the assistance of a graphic artist • Can be cheaply produced on newsprint and widely distributed • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited edition (unless also made available on-line) | \$5000 for 5000 newsprint cost, B&W, 20 pages |
| 21. Promotional items such as T-Shirts, cups, aprons, caps, shopping bags, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory, to the extent that people like them and use them | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shoppers, mothers, consumers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • moderately inexpensive • make a visible statement in the market popular | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be costly to produce, although can be done in partnership with small enterprise | Prices for promotional items vary |
| 22. Jingle, song competitions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory to the extent that people get involved. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general public | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • popular, generates momentum and energy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • usually requires sponsorship • could generate a song that is ultimately not usable • require effective organization and promotion | Between \$500 and \$1000 for newspaper promotion, \$2000 for 30 second psa/community radio announcements over two weeks (unless government sponsored), professional production with artists, \$2000 Then there needs to be paid airing of the jingle for at least 3 months - \$600 per week for prime time airing |
| 23. Campaign Slogan competition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory to the extent that people get involved. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general public | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inexpensive to generate, even free • can help to unify all materials and outputs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can generate a slogan that is ultimately not usable or effective • require effective organization and | Between \$500 and \$1000 for newspaper promotion, \$2000 for 30 second psa/community radio announcements over |

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| | | | | promotion | two weeks (unless government sponsored) |
| 24. logo and/or branding competition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participatory to the extent that people get involved. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> general public | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> can help to unify all materials and outputs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> could generate a logo that is ultimately not usable or appropriate needs sponsorship | Between \$500 and \$1000 for newspaper promotion, \$2000 for 30 second psa/community radio announcements over two weeks (unless government sponsored), professional graphic art rendition and electronic production \$2000 |
| 25. Additional poster competitions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participatory to the extent that people get involved. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> general public | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> popular, generates momentum and energy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> could require sponsorship require effective organization and promotion | Between \$500 and \$1000 for newspaper promotion, \$2000 for 30 second psa/community radio announcements over two weeks (unless government sponsored), printing costs for final winning poster – approximately \$3000 for 2000 copies |
| 26. Goodwill ambassadors (sports figures, singers/celebrities, beauty queens, personalities) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on the personality, they can be highly engaging and interactive and attract high levels of community/audience participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> different ambassadors can be identified for different target audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> if the right people are committed, can lend high status and credibility to a strategy and to its messages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> not always available have to work around their schedule not always 'reliable' must be credible not always willing to work for free or for charity may not actually believe or practice the recommendations being promoted | Most will work voluntarily – 1 or 2 times per year, but will usually require honorariums, accommodation in order to participate |

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| 27. Murals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be highly educational and participatory, high visibility if done in a high traffic zone for intended audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General public, especially attractive for young people and children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes good use of space that is otherwise wasted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires permission and partnership with local owners of the property | Cost of paint, possible graphic artist |
| 28. Animal mascots/costumes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly interactive at fairs, exhibits, events and expos – also can go into schools, birthday parties, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fun, interactive, highly visible and colourful if properly designed • could be promoted at a 'fee' for children's parties, etc., to promote healthy eating habits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • must always have a 'person' inside who is knowledgeable of the facts • costumes can be 'hot' | \$2000 or less for well designed mascot |
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