

PLANNING AND TIMING

Chandana Siriwardane
University of Moratuwa



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Communication process

“Who says what in which channel, to whom, with which effect?”
(Harold Lasswell, 1948)



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



We have now analysed and filled all the boxes in the Lasswell’s model. We have also discussed about obstacles and challenges (noise).

Now we need to find out WHEN we start?

Timing is very important element in a successful communication process.

Timing

- ▶ Researchers and policy-makers operate with *different values, languages, time-frames, reward systems and professional ties* to such an extent that they live in separate worlds.
Dr. Roger W. Harris, 2013
- ▶ Secondly, *impact is regarded differently by each community*, with academics fretting over publications, citation counts and journal impact factors, while practitioners look for actionable advice that can be put to use for increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy.



One of the Research to Action (<http://www.researchtoaction.org>) bloggers, Dr Roger Harris summarized nicely the challenge of communicating with policy-makers and practitioners.

We have to be aware of the differences when planning our communication and outreach – what will make them (our audience) interested? “What is in it for them” – we need to serve the message in a way they can see the benefit.

What is good timing?

- ▶ Use windows of opportunity - events, debates, visits etc.
- ▶ Think how you make your story interesting and relevant - prioritise and be strategic!
- ▶ News hook - the critical piece of information that catches the attention of news media and audience.
- ▶ Possible news hooks - identify key moments in the political process or events, such as national and international mark days in advance, so you have time to prepare and act effectively.



Timing is always difficult to plan. Something urgent can happen (a natural disaster, political crisis, international events) that draw all the attention, and your plan fails even though you have planned a good and strategic communication process. BUT often good planning bears fruit.

- Link your activities / stories / products to larger (and relevant!) events and debates.
- Avoid holidays (if communicating to other countries, find out when they have national holidays)
- News hook – try to find an angle that “hooks” the journalist, reporter or audience.
- In our field, we can find political events or international mark days that might provide opportunities to “sell our stories”.

UN international days

- ▶ 11 February: International Day of Women and Girls in Science
- ▶ 22 March: World Water Day
- ▶ 17 May: World Telecommunication and Information Society Day
- ▶ 5 June: World Environment Day
- ▶ 19 August: World Humanitarian Day
- ▶ 13 October: International Day for Disaster Reduction
- ▶ 10 December: Human Rights Day

<http://www.un.org/en/sections/observances/international-days/>



Here are some of the UN international mark days. Good idea to link our communication to something bigger.

- Often media wants to bring stories that relate to them. We need to be strategic: have our (relevant!) story ready and contact the reporters in advance.
- We can make an event that coincides or celebrates the international day.
- Or we can advocate that a certain day should be celebrated...

What is needed?

- ▶ An effective communications system requires:
 - ▶ Institutional infrastructure dedicated for the advocacy and communications;
 - ▶ Well-prepared communication policy, strategy and plans; and
 - ▶ Dedicated staff who have the needed skills and knowledge for execution and monitoring of communication activities.
- ▶ Also, remember to monitor and evaluate your activities:
 - ▶ What worked well? What did not work well? How can we make it better? What do we need to make it better?
 - ▶ Include them in your communication plan



- Today we have learnt that an effective communications system requires institutional infrastructure, communication policy and plans, and dedicated staff.
- It is important that you monitor and evaluate your progress. Include M&E in your communication plan: should there be a mid-term evaluation? How do you measure the progress?

Communication plan

WHY?

- ▶ Gives structure and focus.
- ▶ Helps to map out your resources and available skills.
- ▶ Makes communication efforts more efficient, effective, and lasting.
- ▶ Makes your life easier - you know exactly what you should be doing next.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



And remember: a good plan is realistic! Too ambitious plans that need unrealistic resources are going to fail – or cause extreme pressure and stress.

Exercise 3

Prepare an outline for a communication plan. Consider timing, including external processes and events, and identify possible news hooks.

Remember to be realistic and prepare the plan according to existing resources. If new skills, resources or infrastructure are needed highlight the immediate needs that would improve the execution of the plan.

Identify ways to monitor and evaluate the process.



Then it's time for the last exercise. You use the material you already have prepared in exercise 1 and 2, and based on them, you will now prepare a communication plan. After the exercise we will have a coffee break (20 min) and then the outputs of the exercise will be shown to your colleagues in a "market place": Output is displayed across the room, one person from each group stays with their output to explain and answer questions, while the rest of the groups wander around to examine other groups' work, compare experiences and ask questions.

Reminder:

- Strategic research communication includes understanding the obstacles and analysis of the most appropriate strategies, tools and channels to reach key audiences.
- AUDIENCE: did you consider the different levels and you boundary partners and implementing partners?
- PRODUCTS: Remember that the products need to **interesting, easy to understand and short** – a journalistic rather than an academic approach.
- TIMING: identify key opportunities, event and news hooks
- RESOURCES: identify gaps and if they are crucial for the process, propose actions needed to fill these gaps. Can you cooperate with someone? Or make

partnerships?

Next step:
Coffee break & Market place



After the group exercise we will have a Coffee break (20 min).
Then we are ready for the “Market place” with group presentations and feedback.

Feedback and discussion



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

