

Ad Hoc Communication

Do's and Don'ts

Session I:

Effective Communication by a Public
Authority in the Energy Sector



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Hello!



Awele Okigbo

Founder & CEO
Credo Advisory

www.credoadvisory.com



Credo Advisory is a strategic and development communications firm in Abuja & Washington D.C. Clients include development partners, governments and organizations.

We help them to **raise awareness**, **build trust**, and **effect change** because we are passionate about **communications impact** in development.



Experience



- 25 years of communications experience working with donors and development partners.
- Work includes driving communications interventions in the health, agriculture, economic, social, energy and public sectors.
- Credo Advisory communications disciplines include media relations, marketing, public relations, crisis communications, digital communications, stakeholder engagement, government relations, research + insight, community engagement, content development and capacity building.

Energy Sector

- World Bank - Energy Efficiency & Just Transition Programmes in **Kazakhstan, Bulgaria & Romania**
- World Bank - Power Sector Recovery Programmes in **Sudan, Nigeria, Zambia & Jordan**

Public Communications: Do's & Don'ts



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Research



■ ■ ■ Research



- **Opinion Research:** Invest in quantitative and qualitative research to understand and assess public opinion and perception for a data-driven communications strategy.
- **In-depth Interviews:** Conduct interviews with sector key informants (utilities, unions, interest groups, etc.) to understand the political economy.
- **Quantitative Research:** Hire a research firm to assess public knowledge, concerns, and sentiment to determine campaign strategy and messaging.
- **Qualitative Research:** Conduct focus group discussions to explore attitudes, experiences, and opinions in a more interactive and in-depth manner.
- **Research Insight:** Findings guide communications strategy development...stakeholder mapping, messaging, communications channels, third-party advocates, etc.

Don'ts

- **Overly Long Survey Instruments:** Lengthy survey questionnaires can lead to respondent fatigue and decreased response rates. Keep surveys concise and focused on key objectives.
- **Neglecting Pretesting:** Failing to pretest the survey with a small group can result in overlooked errors or confusing questions.
- **Lack of Representation:** Select a sample size representative of the population. Don't survey only urban or lower-income areas for campaigns.
- **Lack of Privacy and Anonymity:** Not ensuring respondent confidentiality can impact the honesty and accuracy of the responses provided.

Message Development



■ ■ ■ Message Development



- **Audience Analysis:** Understand your target audience's demographics, preferences, behaviors, and needs to tailor messages that resonate with them.
- **Clear and Concise Objective:** Define the specific goal or purpose of the message. Is it to inform, persuade, educate, or inspire action?
- **Value Proposition:** Clearly communicate the benefits of the regulation, service, or information. Health benefits of clean energy, cost savings from energy efficiency, etc.
- **Call-to-Action:** Encourage the audience to take a specific action - following a process, signing up for a service, or changing behaviour.



■ ■ ■ Message Development

Don'ts



- **Technical Language:** Don't use overly technical language or industry jargon that may be difficult for stakeholders (especially the public) to understand.
- **One-Size-Fits-All Approach:** Avoid generic messaging that does not address the unique concerns of stakeholders, which may fail to resonate.
- **Overload Information:** Don't use too much information in a single message or risk overwhelming the audience. Focus on the key points to avoid diluting the message.
- **Negative Messaging:** Avoid using language or tone that conveys negativity, fear, or criticism. (Don't waste energy vs conserve energy)
- **Insensitivity:** Be mindful of cultural sensitivities, current events, and societal issues to avoid inadvertently offending or alienating the audience. (tariff increase vs interest rate)

Strategy Design



■ ■ ■ Strategy Design

Do's



- **Set Clear Objectives:** Define specific, measurable objectives for your communication initiatives to guide strategy development. (ex. behaviour change for complaints)
- **Define Strategy Framework:** Target audience, key messaging, communications channels, timelines, activities, implementation plan, etc.
- **Appropriate Channels:** Determine the most effective communication channels to reach your target audience. Consider a mix of online and offline channels such as social media, email, website, PR, events, etc.
- **Content Calendar:** Develop a calendar for messages, campaigns, content development, and timing to ensure consistency and relevance.

■ ■ ■ Strategy Design

Don'ts

- **Lack of Alignment:** Developing strategies not aligned with organizational and sector goals or stakeholder interests can lead to wasted resources and missed opportunities.
- **Ignoring Risks:** Failing to anticipate and address potential risks can result in costly setbacks and reputation damage.
- **Failure to Evaluate:** Neglecting to evaluate the strategy's effectiveness can result in limited impact and continued ineffectiveness.
- **Lack of Flexibility:** Strategy as a living document. It should be revised periodically as things evolve.



Stakeholder Management



■ ■ ■ Stakeholder Management

Do's



- **Identify Key Stakeholders:** Identify who can impact or be impacted by your regulation or organizational activities. Categorize by interest and influence to prioritize your engagement efforts.
- **Segment Audience:** Know your audience - segment your target audience based on demographics, interests, and behaviour.
- **Engage Early and Often:** Involve stakeholders early and maintain regular communication. Seek their input, feedback, and buy-in. (ex. labour unions)
- **Build Relationships:** Build strong relationships based on trust, transparency, and respect. Listen to concerns, address needs, and involve them in decision-making processes where appropriate.

■ ■ ■ Stakeholder Management

Don'ts



- **Don't Hide Bad News:** Be transparent, even with unfavourable news. Facing problems head-on and involving stakeholders in problem-solving can build trust and credibility.
- **Don't Play Favorites:** Be fair and impartial in your interactions. Avoid showing favoritism or bias; it leads to distrust and conflict among stakeholder groups.
- **Don't Overpromise:** Avoid making commitments that cannot be fulfilled. It can damage credibility and jeopardize communications outcomes.
- **Don't React Defensively:** When faced with criticism or opposition from stakeholders, refrain from becoming defensive. Instead, listen empathetically and address concerns constructively.

Media Relations



■ ■ ■ Media Relations

Do's



- **Develop/Nurture Relationships:** Cultivate relationships with reporters to facilitate accurate reporting and build trust. (ex. media tours, workshops, media toolkits,).
- **Be Proactive:** Pitch story ideas, press releases, or expert opinions. Stay ahead of industry trends and topics to position your organization as a thought leader.
- **Prepare Spokespeople:** Train spokespeople to effectively communicate messages with the media. Ensure they are well-versed in the key talking points and prepared for interviews.
- **Be Accessible:** Be available for interviews, inquiries, and commentary. Accessibility helps establish credibility and strong relationships.

■ ■ ■ Media Relations

Don'ts

- **Don't Ignore Media Inquiries:** Non-response to media requests can result in misinformation or negative coverage.
- **Don't Mislead or Lie:** Avoid providing false/misleading information. Dishonesty can damage credibility and trust, leading to negative repercussions.
- **Don't Spam Journalists:** Refrain from bombarding journalists with irrelevant or unsolicited pitches. Tailor your communications to their specific interests to increase the likelihood of coverage.
- **Overreact to Negative Coverage:** Responding defensively to negative coverage can escalate the situation and attract further scrutiny.

Monitoring and Evaluation



■ ■ ■ Monitoring & Evaluation

Do's



- **Clear Metrics:** Define measurable KPIs to assess progress and outcomes. Number of media articles, press briefings, social media posts, etc.
- **Monitoring:** Implement regular monitoring mechanisms to track progress and identify deviations. Social media reports, website analysis, views, etc.
- **Audience Feedback:** Solicit feedback (surveys, comments, etc.) to measure communications impact and gauge perception.
- **Social Listening:** Use social listening tools (i.e. Hootsuite, Keyhole) to monitor online conversations, brand reputation, identify trends, and engage with their audience on social media platforms. (i.e. track hashtags, keywords,)

■ ■ ■ Monitoring & Evaluation

Don'ts



- **Inconsistent Monitoring:** Results in data gaps and hinders the ability to identify issues promptly. Monitor news outlets, social media, and online platforms to track media mentions and sentiment.
- **Ignoring Feedback** Disregarding stakeholder feedback can lead to blind spots and overlook critical insights for improvement. Townhall feedback, event surveys, social media comments, etc.
- **Fail to Act:** Ignoring evaluation findings and no corrective action can perpetuate inefficiencies and undermine future communications success.



Thank You

Questions?