Pivoting Communications in a Time of Crisis

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Zoom Guidelines

- Turn off video function during presentation to conserve bandwidth
- Use the video option during Q&A
- Make sure your computer audio is on, but muted if you’re not speaking
- Use the “raise hand” option (under Participants) to let us know you have a question/comment
- Use the chat button to type out your questions
- Smile, ask questions, and offer insight
- Let’s have fun!
Welcome

- A little bit about me
  - My background
  - Why I’m here today
  - Why you’re here today
Agenda for this session

- The importance of strategic communications
- The need to pivot during times of crisis
- Survey discussion: your agency’s current communications work and challenges amidst the COVID-19 crisis
- Tips/tools for rapid-response communications in an ever-changing environment
- Case Studies (integrated throughout)
- Q&A
Brief Overview to Strategic Communications

- Necessary to advance your agency’s mission and program goals
- Is the overarching structure that includes media, public awareness campaigns, branding, marketing, social media, internal communications, public relations, and other forms of outreach
- Starts with a communications plan and builds competencies over time
- Best approach is proactive rather than reactive
Communications Planning

- Long-term:
  - Tied to your organization’s overall strategic plan
  - Focus on building communications capacity

- Short-term:
  - Tied to long-term goals and planning
  - Focus on a specific objective, like increasing attendance at an event or launching a public awareness campaign to combat stigma

- Crisis:
  - Focus on how your organization will handle current crisis
  - Timing and transparency are everything!
Not rocket science . . .

. . . but there is a science to it!
Elements in a Successful Communications Plan

1. What are your communication goal(s)?
2. Who is your audience?
   • Is there more than one?
   • Think about internal and external stakeholders
   • Prioritize importance and how often you need to reach out
3. What is the message you need to convey?
   • Does it change for different audiences?
4. What tactics are needed to reach your audience(s)?
   • Think “paid, owned, earned”
5. How can you evaluate your success?
But what happens to this planning when a crisis occurs?

You’ve got to be like Jack!
Why we need to pivot during times of crisis

- You may be forced to close in-person operations
- Your old messaging may no longer apply
- You need to let your constituents know they can still count on you and where they can continue to receive services
- You need to ensure your internal stakeholders that you can conduct “business as usual” or tell them what you’re doing instead if you can’t
- You need to be sensitive to the “new normal”
Here’s what you told me:

- Messaging focused on the “Three Rs”
  - Response
  - Relevance
  - Resources

- Tactics focused on the “Three Ps”
  - Personalization
  - Positivity
  - Partners

- Needs:
  - Staff
  - Time
  - Planning
  - Content
Tips for Internal Communications

• Messages to your employees and your board are critical during this time
  • They may be wondering- “How do we go on?”

• Transparency is best
  • May have to convey bad news but have a plan to reassure

• Make it as personal as crisis allows
  • Video meetings, personal emails if possible

• Should be a priority
  • Timely and ongoing

• Allow forum for asking questions of leadership

• Create talking points and disseminate to staff and board
Tips for External Communications

- Look at all pending communications/content and make sure they are still appropriate
  - If not, cancel immediately
- Do you throw out your old branding to show your sensitivity to the current crisis?
It’s a balance…

- BH Link changed some imagery to reflect social distancing guidelines

Source: BH Link
Tips for External Communications

- Quickly create messaging that details how your organization is responding to the crisis:
  - Are you open for business as usual?
  - Make sure your most vulnerable constituents know where to get help
  - What are you doing to guarantee safety?
  - Acknowledge supporters
Here’s how BH Link pivoted: Responded to rumors “We’re not closed!”

BH Link RI
March 17 at 12:33 PM - 📎

We would like to let everyone know that BH Link’s physical location is OPEN and will not be closing. Our specialists are ready and waiting to support you! As a friendly reminder, you can always give us a call if you feel more comfortable. Stay safe everyone!

#YouAreNotAlone #BHLink #BHLinkRI #ItsOKRI
Call: 401-414-LINK (5465)
Click: www.bhlink.org... See More

BH Link RI
March 23 at 8:00 AM - 📎

We hope everyone is staying safe! As a reminder, BH Link’s physical location is OPEN and will not be closing. As always, you can give us a call if you feel more comfortable keeping your distance.

#YouAreNotAlone #BHLink #BHLinkRI #ItsOKRI
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Source: BH Link
Tips for External Communications

• Have a content strategy
• Create new content to “fill in the gaps”
  • You’re the experts- what perspective can you share?
  • Ask your donors/members: what kind of content would you like to receive?
• Develop weekly schedule
  • Actually alleviates stress around this
• Include various forms of outreach
Here’s how BH Link pivoted: Developed a deep social strategy

- Be cognizant of the “personality” of each social platform but keep branding consistent
Tips for External Communications

- Pull resources from the internet
  - Government websites: local, state, federal
  - Nationally affiliated organizations
  - Be cognizant of copyrights and proper sourcing
- Share relevant content but don’t forget to communicate your own expertise and localized message
- Recycle your old content if it’s relevant
Here’s how BH Link pivoted: Shared COVID-19 messaging on social media

Source: BH Link

Check out these tips for taking care of your mental health while staying at home. You got this! 💕
#YouAreNotAlone #BHLink #BHLinkRI #ItsOKRI
Call: 401-414-LINK (5465)
Click: www.bhlink.org... See More

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources

There are resources to help you, your family, and loved ones stay safe during the coronavirus outbreak, also known as COVID-19.

Rhode Island Department of Health
March 24 at 8:31 AM

Check out PreventOverdoseRI.org's new COVID-19 webpage dedicated to resources on peer recovery support and safer drug use.
https://preventoverdoseri.org/covid-1... See More

1 Share
Tips for External Communications

- Make sure what you’re saying isn’t “tone deaf”
- Do you continue with any old messaging or is that insensitive to the current crisis?
It’s a balance…

- BHDDH focuses on COVID-19 messaging but also sends out some messaging regarding issues that were critical “pre-pandemic”
- Other messages become part of “post-pandemic” communications planning

Source: BHDDH
Tips for Dealing with the Media

- Ensure media list is updated
- Be ready for rapid response
- Have a protocol
  - Designate a media contact
    - Ensure correct contact info included in all communications with media
  - Designate person to shape your message
    - Make sure message isn’t “tone deaf”
  - Develop a quick approval process for the message
    - ED? Board? Both?
  - Who are your key spokespeople?
    - Who is back up if person not available?
- Ensure spokespeople are available for remote interviews
Here’s how BH Link pivoted: Disseminated press release

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 19, 2020

Media Contact:
Karen Jeffreys, Program Director, Horizon Healthcare Partners, 401-954-1510 or kjeffreys@hhpartners.org

Behavioral Health Organizations Vow To Continue to Serve Rhode Islanders in Need
Thank State for Support To Meet Need During COVID-19 Pandemic

East Providence – The five behavioral health organizations that make up Horizon Healthcare Partners (HHP) vow to continue to serve all Rhode Islanders in need of mental health and substance use disorders during the COVID-19 crisis/pandemic.

Community Care Alliance, Newport Mental Health, Thrive Behavioral Health, Tides Family Services and CODAC are the five behavioral health and substance use organizations that comprise HHP. In the midst of COVID19 directives to implement social distancing protocols, HHP agencies will remain open due to the essential behavioral health services they provide to individuals and families that are most vulnerable in local communities across the state. Several of the HHP agencies are also working with state officials to implement telehealth consultations for therapy sessions via audio or video communication.

Source: HHP
Here’s how BH Link pivoted: Lots of press outreach

Thanks to Caroline Goggin and WPRI 12 for their story last night about reaching out for mental health support during #COVID19!

Engage in online meetings: www.ainri.com

#YouAreNotAlone #BHLink #BHLinkRI #ItsOKRI... See More

State’s mental-health hotline, triage center adjust to coronavirus-related needs - News - providencejournal.com - Providence, RI

To our readers: We are providing vital coronavirus content for free online as a public service during the outbreak. Please support local journalism by subscribing to The Providence Journal. EAST ...

www.providencejournal.com

Source: ProvidenceJournal.com
What tools can you use to help you pivot quickly?

- Video conferencing
- Webinars, podcasts, blogs or vlogs
- E-news blurbs or email blasts
- FAQs for external audiences
- Talking Points for internal audiences
- Social media posts
  - Create a template that can be quickly updated
  - Canva.com is a great resource for non-designers
- Livestreams on social media
  - Facebook, Instagram, YouTube
- Press releases or PSAs
  - Post online and disseminate externally
- Website Updates
  - Create a COVID-19 page with button featured prominently on homepage
Here’s how BH Link pivoted: Added COVID-19 page/resources on website

https://www.bhlink.org/covid19

Source: BH Link
Newport Mental Health: Pivoting Tactics

- Now is the time to be willing to try new ways to communicate with your audiences
- Implemented Town Hall Live Session on Facebook
- Some challenges
- If the event isn’t perfect - it’s okay!
- Podcast Series
Share the load!

- This is the time to work with partner organizations
  - Formal or informal workgroups
- Share resources and content if appropriate
- Use project management or file management software so everyone can access content remotely
  - Basecamp, Google Drive
- Great intern projects if you’re lucky enough to have them
Sharing the load: May is Mental Health Month

- Quick pivot: the group had to move from an events-based strategy to a virtual strategy
- Biweekly Zoom sessions
- Basecamp group
Sharing the load: May is Mental Health Month

- Created a shared social content posting calendar
- Check out the link: [MMHM Basecamp](#)
And don’t forget to listen!

- Have a designated person to monitor your social media
  - Understand you may have more “traffic” than usual
  - Respond ASAP to comments/questions
- Take your cues from what people are saying and craft messaging that speaks to those issues
- Listen to how the media is covering the crisis
  - Tailor messaging to speak to the coverage
Things to remember…

- Be nimble
- Be transparent
- Your communications should be timely and ongoing
- Focus on both external and internal audiences
- Be as proactive as possible
- Be as consistent as possible
- You’re not in this alone—so share the load!
Some resources

BHDDH COVID-19 Resources

Coronavirus Crisis Comms Triage Kit

Ten Tips for a Better Crisis Communications Strategy
Thank you!

Any questions? 
Feel free to reach out: 
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