Communications Planning for Hospitals

presenter [date]
What is a communication Plan

• A communication plan is a written document that addresses:
  – What you want to accomplish (objectives);
  – Ways in which those objectives can be accomplished (goals)
  – To whom you will communicate (the audience)
  – How you will accomplish your objectives (tools and timetable)
  – How you will measure the results of your program (vleresimi)
What do you need a Communications Plan

- The hospitals have limited resources in both time and money, and a communications plan will help the hospital to set priorities and focus the resources on the most important tasks.

- Without the plan, the hospitals run the risk of letting external events dictate how the hospital uses its communications resources.

- A good plan will help ensure that everyone in your organization is on the same page when they communicate inside or outside of the hospital.
Why do you need a Communications Plan

• Strategic planning will help your hospital integrate all its communications work on a particular issue, such as media activities, government relations, fundraising and communications with internal staff, patients and their families;

• A targeted strategy will help develop better media plans. And a well-developed media plan is important because the media is the primary source of education and information in communities.
When you need a communications plan

• Whenever you are communicating with the public, stakeholders and policy-making;

• The best time to develop (an annual plan) is in conjunction with your annual budgeting;
The elements of a Communications Plan

- Internal Analysis (organizational background)
- External Analysis (public and environment)
- Communication Objective
- Target Audiences
- Key messages
- Strategies
- Tactics
- Timeliness
- Spokespeople
Internal Analyses

• Whether your hospital is developing an overall communications plan or a specific campaign, it is important to consider how you hospital is positioned within the community it serves. Considering the value of each point:
  – The history of your organization
  – The history/facts about the issue you are addressing
  – Why is it an important issue? (include statistics if people)
  – The services your organization provides to the community
Internal Analyses

– The people who benefit from your services
– The function your organization serves
– Your mission statement
– Your organization’s role in health care delivery in your community
– Where do you fit compared to other services in your market?
– Performance Indicators
External Analyses

• The environment where you will be making your case should be considered and be aware to the external threats so the following issues should be considered:
  – What is the current district/region perception of your hospital, program and issues?
  – Your credibility?
  – How do you want to be positioned?
  – Is there a history of media stories? How much exposed is your hospital?
External Analyses

– How has it been positioned within the media to date?
– Have any health care studies or surveys been carried out in your district/region?
– Is more research required to understand attitudes and public opinion toward your organization?
– Who are your allies? Who publicly support your position?
– Do certain groups disagree with new initiatives at your hospital?
– What are their messages? Do they have any effect in the hospital work or your work?
Communication Objectives

• Objectives (results) you want to achieve should be concrete, measurable and specific. Some of the following questions can help:
  – What is your basic objective?
  – What reactions are you trying to provoke in your target audience?
  – How will you measure success?
  – Do you want to provide your audience with new information?
Target Audiences

• Listing individuals or groups that have an interest in or an influence on the hospital is key to delivering a focused communications plan

• List all the audiences that your hospital serves, might contact or attempt to influence;
  – E.g policy makers, patients and their families, media, academics, the health care industry, minority groups, community groups etc.
Key Messages

• There are many ways of communicating about the same issue. It is important to choose words that resonate with your audience and frame ideas in ways the public will embrace.
Strategies

• Strategies should not define the plan, but otherwise;
• The strategy that needs to be selected depend entirely on the situation, objectives, and a clear understanding of who constitutes the target audience and what will move them to act.
• Consider the following question when developing your strategies:
   – Is your strategy proactive or reactive?
   – What are the major communications opportunities?
Strategies

– What communications strengths are available in your organization?
– How creative can you be?
Tactics

• Tactics depend on:
  – How big is your budget?
  – What personnel resources are available to you?
  – How much time will they be required to spent on communications efforts?
Timeline

• Once the objectives, goals and audiences and tools have been identified, the results should be quantified in a calendar grid that outlines roughly what projects will be accomplished and when.
Spokespeople

• Determine who within your group will project the most credible voice to your key audiences.
Evaluate the results

• The evaluation might take the form of:
  – A monthly report on work in progress
  – Formalized department reports for presentation at staff meeting
  – Periodic briefings to the director and departments heads, and
  – A year end summary for the annual report
NOW use the plan!!