

Communicating Your Impact

Social Purpose Organizations (SPOs) are doing impactful work to solve pressing social problems, yet communicating impact externally can often be overlooked. To be investment-ready, SPOs need to share the impact of their work through evidence-based storytelling and impact reporting and communicate their value proposition to investors.

Developing a communications strategy is your roadmap to enhance your SPO's ability to tell meaningful stories that move audiences to action and attract investors that are aligned with your social mission.

LIFT Philanthropy Partners is a national, non-profit organization working with social leaders across Canada, helping them build their capacity to do more through improved efficiency and effectiveness, and by applying an adaptive and innovative business mindset and resources to the social sector.

The Canadian Women's Foundation is a national leader in the movement for gender equality in Canada. Through funding, research, advocacy, and knowledge sharing we work to achieve systemic change.

Key Benefits of Communicating Impact

- Demonstrates the outcomes, benefits, and value you bring to your clients.
- Shows potential investors, donors, and funders what you can do with their support.
- More intentional and strategic way of communicating your value proposition effectively to different audiences.
- Raises the profile of your organization and mobilize support.
- Builds trust and confidence among your audience by backing up claims with data.
- Helps you reach and engage with your community and the public.
- Helps your audience better understand complex issues.

Top Tips

- Build consistent messaging that outlines the specific action you are taking and why your SPO's plan for impact is viable.
- Ensure your messages are clear, simple, and will connect with your target audience.
- Consider the use of an impact dashboard that helps to translate your SPO's impact data and insights into a powerful visual story that moves audiences to action.
- Avoid outlier stories that do not link strongly to your core outcomes.
- Create messages that demonstrate your willingness to collaborate and learn.
- Reflect on your SPO's capacity to implement a communications strategy and ask yourself what should be prioritized.

Steps to Establish a Robust Communications Strategy

The following steps outline the critical foundational pieces to help inform your communications strategy and content:

1 Research

Gather data to learn about your social impact, existing audience, and the general sector landscape, i.e., what topics and trends are top of mind.

It is not about the raw data itself but the insights you can gain from it. What picture does the data paint about your SPO, your impact, and how, why, and with whom you want to communicate?

2 Audience & Key Messages

Define your key target audiences and your SPO's value proposition. A value proposition is linked to your SPO's vision & mission and explains what you will deliver and how your audience will benefit. Once you know your value proposition, you can begin to craft your key messages.

Look at mining your existing audiences before putting time and resources into acquiring new ones. Who are your existing supporters or champions? Who is following and interacting with you on social media?

3 Outcomes & Measuring Your Results

Measuring results through return on engagement metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) are an easy and specific way to evaluate your performance. It can also help you get buy-in within your SPO and create accountability for what you are trying to achieve.

What is your SPO trying to achieve in the medium- and long-term? Identifying two or three outcomes to focus on for your communications strategy ensures your team is working towards the same desired result.

4 Strategy

Your communications strategy is a culmination of what you've learned through your research, your audience and what they value, and the outcomes you would like to achieve. Use these insights to determine the best channel and tactic to achieve your goals and add a KPI to keep yourself accountable for achieving results.

Always determine your strategy before coming up with channels and tactics. It is your roadmap to effectively communicating your impact with purpose and intention.

5 Content, Channels & Tactics

There are infinite amounts of communications channels and tactics to share your content. Each one serves a different purpose and should be chosen based on your goals, strategy, and what you know about your audience.

It is not a one-size-fits-all approach; adapt your content for the channel and audience you are aiming to reach. What is the purpose of your communication? Who is your audience and how do they obtain information? What is the main message you want your audience to remember?