

Communicating Your ANR Story

Creating a Communications Plan – Template

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Why Create a Communications Plan?

- Extending information is fundamental to the Extension mission
- Just posting information on a website is not enough in today's social environment
- A plan – even a simple plan – provides a roadmap to help identify who we want to reach, what we want them to know, and the best way to get our information to them.
- There are many ways to spread information. Doing some advance planning may help you determine what will work best for you.
- Efficiency and capacity.

Assumptions:

You have a blog post, FAQ sheet, report, research paper you want to share, OR you have a program/project/office that you'd like to increase the visibility of. Also: that you'll use one or more social platforms in your plan.

1. Determining Your Objective(s)

- What do you want to communicate about? Do you have an idea for something **specific** you'd like to communicate about, or are you primarily seeking to increase your **visibility** over time? (These are not mutually exclusive!)
- What are your overall goals/objectives? How and where do they align with ANR communications goals/messages and brand messages? If you're a specialist, how/where do they align with campus?

2. Audience

- Who are you trying to reach? That is your audience.
- Remember: An audience in the case of Extension is usually not only individuals, but also groups, including industry groups, professional associations, government agencies, NGOs, community-based organizations, etc.
- Be as specific as possible (ex: ranchers in Ventura County).
- Where on social media might you find these people and groups? (Hint: Consider finding groups on Facebook, LinkedIn, hashtags, industry groups, professional associations, etc.).

3. Knowledge and Feeling

- What do you want your audience to know?
- To feel?
- To do? (Call to action or behavior change)
- What do you want your audience to remember?
- Pick 1-2 things

4. Messages

- What are 1-3 key messages or ideas that you'd like to communicate?
- Keep these short, simple, and memorable.
- Think about how these messages would work as stand-alone pieces (ex: a meme). Would they make sense?

5. Social Platforms

- What social platform(s) do you think might be the best fit for your strategy/plan?
- What social platform(s) do you think might be favored by your audience(s).
- What social platform(s) are you interested in, and which matches your abilities and capacity?
- What are you already using? Are you maximizing the features and strengths of that particular platform?

6. Tactics: Social Posting, Content Sharing

- What frequency of social posting are you interested in?
- What can you sustain?
- Who else might share your message/information? (Hint: Other organizations are eager for well-written and produced content that is information-rich and credible).

7. Analytics and Measurement

- How will you measure your success?
- Analytics. Most social platforms provide basic insights free of charge. There is quantitative information that you can collect easily.
- Think about qualitative information, too. Did someone praise your work on social media? Were you consistent in posting? Those are successes, too, and important to keep track of.
- Looking at insights – even if you're working on a small communications project – is important for learning what's working, and refining your message and approach.

8. Timing and Accountability

- What will you do? (ex: Start a Facebook page, write a blog post, commit to three Facebook posts a week, etc.)
- When will you do it (start date, frequency, duration if a limited-time campaign).
- Are there any tools that can help you? (ex: Hootsuite, Planoly, Facebook scheduler).
- Do you already have places to post what you produce? (i.e., social media accounts, county or departmental website, newsletters, industry groups, etc.)
- Is any approval or buy-in needed?