



Module 6

How to create and evaluate a Communication Strategy

Introduction to the module



Module 6:
How to create
and evaluate a
Communication
Strategy

Strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term aim or objective. Organisations (should) choose their activities and interventions on the base of their strategy, and not vice-versa!

It is a misbelief in the non-profit sector that working in the social field doesn't require strategic planning. For the sustainability of a non-profit organisation it is essential to have a detailed, schematic plan for growth, based on the analysis of needs, offers, resources and opportunities.

But how we design a strategy?

the sound of silence

In order to design a communication strategy, it is important to know:

- The vision, mission and values of your organisation (Module 2)
- Who your stakeholders are (Module 3)
- Which communication channels and tools exist (Module 4 and Module 5)



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Having clear the aspects mentioned above, the next steps are to:

- Define a long-term objective for your communication strategy
- Set medium and short-term goals
- Plan actions to reach those goals
- Analyse the resources you have and/or you need
- Keep in mind the obstacles you can encounter
- Define a monitoring and evaluation methodology to measure the success and to adapt your strategy

In this module we will guide you through the following arguments:

- How to set an objective?
- How to analyse the capacity of an organisation?
- What is a risk analysis?
- How should we give and receive feedback?



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SMART method – is your objective smart?

This method helps to analyse whether the objective that we set for our strategy is:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable, Accepted, Action-based
- Relevant, Realistic
- Time based

Ask yourself the following questions to see whether your objective is SMART or not:

- **Specific:** What do you want to accomplish? Who has to do What, Where, When and Why?
- **Measurable:** How will you demonstrate the results? Which methods you use to measure them? Which are your quantitative and qualitative indicators*? Is it flexible enough?
- **Attainable, Accepted, Action based:** Is your goal achievable? Is it accepted by your staff and by your target groups? Do you have a clear action plan to reach it?
- **Relevant, Realistic:** Is your goal relevant to the mission of your organisation? Is it realistic, or optimistic? Do you have the necessary resources?
- **Time based:** Have you set a time frame for your goal and for the actions to achieve it? Did you break it down to long term, medium term, short term goals? Did you set deadlines?



Example



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Terrible goal: “We want to earn a lot of money.”

Bad goal: “We want to make a profit (to reinvest in our activities) of 2000 euro this year.”

Smart goal: “We want to put aside minimum 10% of the income of the organisation each month for the next 12 months, which, based on the financial analysis of the last year of work, will result in 5000 euro plus.”

You can adapt your strategy to reach this objective by “making” it SMART as well, by:

- **Being specific:** all the staff of the organisation is responsible for designing and implementing activities that bring an average of 1667 euro/month to the organisation for the next 12 months. (In the detailed strategy you have to define which activities, and who is responsible for what.)
- **Being measurable:** there are quantitative indicators (10%, 12 months, 2000 euro) which can be monitored e.g. through the monthly balance sheet of the organisation. Monitoring can allow the organisation to be flexible in their strategy: for example, if they don't reach the average 1667 euro in the first three months, they have the chance to rethink their activities, and try more efficient ones.
- **Being accepted:** all the staff of the organisation feels responsible to achieve the goal, and they feel like it is attainable, because they have the capacity to reach it. They are ready to invest more (time, energy, financial resources) in order to reach the goal.



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- **Being relevant:** the 2000 euro yearly surplus will be invested in a project or in an activity that is relevant to the mission of the organisation.
- **Being realistic:** the organisation has analysed its past experience and financial growth, the activities proposed are answering to the needs of the users, there are existing resources to implement the foreseen activities and the amount is not too high.
- **Being time based:** the timeframe is 12 months, divided in monthly monitoring events, and all the planned activities have a well designed time schedule with deadlines.



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Exercise



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Change these terrible goals to **SMART** goals:

- 1) We want to be popular on social network.
- 2) We want to reach more people from our target group

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Possible solutions:

1) We want to raise the number of visitors to our Facebook page by 10% in the next 6 months.

Guiding questions: What “popular” means to you, how do you measure it? On which social network you would like to be more popular? How much increase you expect, how realistic is it? What is your time frame?
After you answer to these questions, here, you have your objective! Now go and think about which activities and actions could help you reach this goal.

2) In the next three months we would like to involve 15 women in our activities who have never participated in any of the activities of our organisation.

Guiding questions: Who are your specific target groups: your beneficiaries, donors, the general public, decision makers? How many you would like to reach? By which time? Is it realistic?





SWOT and PEST analysis – analysing the organisation, analysing the planned strategy

Part of designing a strategy is to analyse the capacity of the organisation to implement it. With the SWOT analysis we can identify the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation (internal origin).

However, in order to predict the possible success of a strategy, organisations also have to consider the external factors that can be helpful or harmful to achieving their objective (external origin).

This analysis can be helpful to confirm or redesign a strategy, and to prepare for possible risks.

	<i>Helpful to achieving the objective</i>	<i>Harmful to achieving the objective</i>
Internal origin (attributes of the organisation, controllable)	STRENGTH	WEAKNESSES
External origin (attributes of the environment, not controllable)	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS





External aspects can be further divided in:

Political, Economic, Social, Technological **(PEST)** Opportunities or Threats, for example:

Political aspects	Economic aspects	Social aspects	Technological aspects
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- political stability- government policies- favourable tax policies- proper security- proper laws and legal framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- unemployment rate- number of "customers"- interest and inflation rate- exchange rate and currency stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- demographic (growth rate, sex ratio, age distribution etc.)- social culture and lifestyle- basic and higher education- social safety and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- technological development- skilled resources- investment in research and development- information and communication





	Helpful to achieving the objective	Harmful to achieving the objective
Internal origin (attributes of the organisation, controllable)	<h3>STRENGTH</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- skilled and competent staff- long experience in the field- wide network of stakeholders- good physical location of the organisation	<h3>WEAKNESSES</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- low number of staff members- low financial capacity- dependence on public grants- the legal status of the organisation requires special and complicated administrative procedures
External origin (attributes of the environment, not controllable)	<h3>OPPORTUNITIES</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- easier access and better acceptance of new media opens up more economic and instant communication with target groups (Technical)- the European Union increases the financial support to social organisations working in the third countries (Political, Economic)	<h3>THREATS</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- the issue the organisation works with is a taboo in the society (Social)- national elections coming up and the radical parties are gaining popularity (Political)- unemployment rates are high and the target groups can not afford to pay for the services the organisation offers (Economic)





Exercise

Analyse these organisations with the SWOT analysis based on the information below:

1) Organisation name: Herodotus

Goal: To raise awareness about media manipulation and to investigate information present in the media; to empower people to get access to information and to use critical thinking

Activities: The organisation has a blog where they publish the results of their investigations. Besides, they are organising thematic events on “hot” media topics. They sometimes organise workshops with young people on media use, advantages and disadvantages of social media ecc.

Target group: General public, people with medium or low level of education, illiterate people, young people in general, decision makers

Additional information: the staff of the organisation is composed by journalists; it is an international group of people. The organisation has been working for 5 years already.

The number of readers of the blog is low; they have difficulties engaging people from disadvantaged backgrounds in their activities (illiterate people, people with economic difficulties, people with low level of education); the organisation offers its activities for free, therefore they face economic difficulties and sustainability of those activities; their work is not supported by the current government.





2) Organisation name: CFA – Circus For All

Goal: To bring arts (especially circus and performing arts) to the public who can not afford to pay for it. To enrich the cultural life of the community, using arts as a trigger for encounters between people with different social status.

Activities: So far the organisation has implemented only some small shows on a public square, to promote itself. They are planning to organise festivals and workshops (e.g. juggling) in poor neighbourhoods of the city.

Target group: General public, involving people from rich and from poor areas (any age).

Additional information: The organisation is not well known in the local community; however it has a wide international network thanks to the artists' personal connections. The organisation has a good financial capacity at the moment; the members are ready to invest even a larger amount of money.

The organisation is only 3 month old. Circus and performing arts (street arts) are not very popular in the city. The members have financial capacity to implement the activities, but they want to find a sustainable way to, at least, cover the costs of the activities.

Not all the members of the organisation live in the same city, and they also travel a lot. Most of them have different artistic focus; they are specialized in different type of performing art.





3) Organisation name: TOGETHER Foundation

Goal: To empower and build the financial capacity of small organisations who work with migrants.

Activities: The foundation collects donations for the support of small organisations who work with migrants. It continuously maps the presence and work of organisations engaged in the topic.

Target group: donors/sponsors, decision makers, public institutions, small NGOs and social enterprises

Additional information: The organisation has offices in 4 different regions of the country. It has already created a rather wide map of small organisations in those 4 regions who work with migrants (they are not yet in partnership with all of those organisations).

The organisation has difficulties with finding donors and sponsors due to the lack of trust of sponsors – they say they are not sure where their money ends up. There is general discrimination and racism towards migrants in the local communities, reinforced by politics.

The organisation, besides giving out grants and financial support for NGOs, also has to cover their own staff and management costs. All the staff are part-time workers.





Possible solutions:

1) Herodotus

	Helpful to achieving the objective	Harmful to achieving the objective
Internal origin (attributes of the organisation, controllable)	STRENGTH <ul style="list-style-type: none">- international staff with international connections- expertise in journalism- 5 years of experience and curriculum	WEAKNESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none">- economic instability- missing expertise of staff (only journalists, no project managers, administrators etc.)
External origin (attributes of the environment, not controllable)	OPPORTUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none">- opening to international public- new media and technology allows to reach wider public- possible international grants to support activities with people from disadvantaged groups	THREATS <ul style="list-style-type: none">- government opposition





2) Circus For All

	Helpful to achieving the objective	Harmful to achieving the objective
Internal origin (attributes of the organisation, controllable)	STRENGTH <ul style="list-style-type: none">- wide international network- economic stability of the members of the organisation	WEAKNESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none">- young organisation, not yet well known in the local community- the organisation doesn't yet have a strategy for economic sustainability- the members are not always available and physically present in the same place
External origin (attributes of the environment, not controllable)	OPPORTUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none">- attracting public by inviting international artists to perform	THREATS <ul style="list-style-type: none">- arts and circus is not popular in the community





3) Together Foundation

	Helpful to achieving the objective	Harmful to achieving the objective
Internal origin (attributes of the organisation, controllable)	STRENGTH <ul style="list-style-type: none">- offices in different regions- large network- holding information about other organisations	WEAKNESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none">- the management of donations is not transparent enough- low capacity of the organisation in terms of working hours (part-time workers)
External origin (attributes of the environment, not controllable)	OPPORTUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none">- international grants supporting the integration of migrants- possible collaboration with stakeholders in more regions	THREATS <ul style="list-style-type: none">- anti-migration politics and public opinion





Risk analysis

Once we are clear about the weaknesses and the threats, it is important to think about the level of their possible impact, which are the risks they bring and how to prevent or manage them.

Risk analysis is a crucial part of strategy planning: it allows the organisations to prepare in time for the difficulties they could face and to plan different alternative solutions in order to reach their objectives. In this chapter we propose a very simple model of risk analysis template:

CAUSE	RISK	LEVEL	PHASE	PREVENTION	MANAGEMENT
All the factors (internal and external) that can result in an obstacle to reach the objectives	Description of the risk (the effect of the cause on the successful implementation of the strategy or action)	The level can be small, medium or high, depending on the probability of the risk	It is important to identify in which phase of the strategy implementation the risk can occur (e.g. initially, in the first half, second half, at the end), this way organisations can prepare themselves in time	Actions to prevent the risk (e.g. eliminating the causes)	Actions to overcome the obstacle encountered

It is important to repeat the risk analysis during monitoring moments, since internal and external factors can change with time. So don't forget to update your analysis!





Exercise

Analyse these risks of the organisations from Chapter 2 and design interventions for prevention and management:

1) Herodotus

Risk: The government tries to shut down the activities of the organisation.

2) Circus For All

Risk: The members of the organisation quit.

3) Together Foundation

Risk: The organisation doesn't receive any donation.





Possible solutions:

1) Herodotus

CAUSE	RISK	LEVEL	PHASE	PREVENTION	MANAGEMENT
The present government is against the activities of the organisation	The government tries to shut down the activities of the organisation	Medium-high	Throughout all the functioning of the organisation, at least until next elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- establishing good relationship with decision makers and winning the support of the civil society- studying all the legislations that can defend the organisation etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- bringing the case to a national or an international court that protects the rights to freedom of speech- negotiation with the government, if it doesn't interfere with the values of the organisation etc.





Possible solutions:

2) Circus for all

CAUSE	RISK	LEVEL	PHASE	PREVENTION	MANAGEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the members of the organisation live in different cities - all members have their individual interest and artistic focus - the members of the organisation are also travelling for work, the organisation is not their only focus 	<p>The members of the organisation quit</p>	<p>Low-medium</p>	<p>It can happen after an unsuccessful project of the organisation, or when the financial capacity is not anymore sustainable; but in general in any time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - coaching and team building activities - active involvement of all members in decision making - transparent, honest communication - building resilience of team members - mastering online collaboration techniques etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - analysis and evaluation of the reasons for quitting, resolving eventual conflicts, improving situations that caused quitting - re-thinking the purpose of the organisation, adapting activities to the changed operational capacity - recruitment of new members etc.





Possible solutions:

3) Together Foundation

CAUSE	RISK	LEVEL	PHASE	PREVENTION	MANAGEMENT
<p>communication about what happens to the donations is not transparent enough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the purpose of the organisation is not supported by the public opinion due to anti-migration politics 	<p>The organisation doesn't receive any donation</p>	<p>Medium-high</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more transparent communication strategy - participation in events where the organisation's stakeholders are present and where they can meet face-to-face - sensitization and advocacy activities about migration - hiring a professional who is expert in fundraising - reinforcing collaboration with partner organisation, launching joint communication and fundraising strategy etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improve communication strategy and reinforce sensitization activities about migration - investing in fundraising experts - updating stakeholder analysis, finding new target groups - reinforcing networking and collaboration etc.



Feedback



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A good strategy includes periodic monitoring activities; however hearing from your colleague or from an outsider that something went wrong or is not good quality, is not easy. Internal communication is a crucial aspect of organisations and a commonly agreed method to give feedback is essential for the members. So do not forget:

Feedback is NOT criticism: both sides – who gives and who receives feedback – have to be aware of the (constructive) purpose of the feedback.

Feedback should analyse and describe:

- What happened
- Why it happened
- What is the impact of what happened
- How can we prevent it (in case of negative effect) or reinforce it (in case of positive effect)

The principles of feedback:

- it is commonly agreed by everyone to give and receive feedback for the purpose of improvement
- a feedback is reasoned, explained, based on an analysis
- a feedback shouldn't be emotional and mustn't be judging
- who gives feedback is open to rethink his/her analysis based on newly gained information
- who receives feedback is ready to accept and admit his/her eventual absence
- negative feedback has to be followed by proposals for improvement
- it is essential to give also positive feedback, not only negative

Annex: Communication Audit Checklist



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