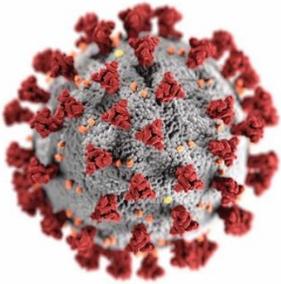


## Communicators are the Eye of the Storm

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It is in times like these that a communicator's value exponentially grows. It is also the time when we can be the calm in the storm. The eye of the storm, essentially, as the chaos reels in every direction around us. Let us be the ones who remain sound, stable, constant and rational. Sound counsel is of the essence, always, but during unprecedented crises, it is especially so. Be that calming voice of reason. Let us be leaders at the highest level.

Business owners – this is the time to listen to counsel. Don't make rash judgments and decisions based on panic. This pandemic is overwhelming, confusing and even alarming at a level that many have never seen before and may not again. But, that doesn't mean we waver from the core of our business and the work we must do. Adjust in the short-term, plan for the long-term.



Communicators, fellow PR professionals – This is the time to step up as a leader like never before. Help others rise to the occasion and bring communities together. We have stories to share and resources to provide. We can be the calming force that helps the workplace navigate the unknown and the media relay (digital and traditional) information honestly and accurately.

Communications needs to be as active a voice within the top of your organization as possible. You need to develop your plan with intention and a strategy that will see you through to the other side. That is done with preparation. That may be weeks, could be months, but nevertheless you need to ride the wave *and* shift course if needed. That poses some real challenges for any business, organization or association. Sound public relations efforts can help you travel that journey effectively.

Here are my three tips to help you guide your strategic communications to a successful, rational outcome.

**Assess** – we are doing this by the moment. This is a crisis in “internet time” – developing at the speed of the internet with daily and even hourly changes. Dedicate someone to assess information, recommendations and evolving data. Anticipate questions based on this information gathering. You need to know how things are developing and what parts *you* need to focus on to continue operations, inform employees and provide service to customers, donors, volunteers and the broader community. Seems basic, but many overlook this piece of the process and jump to activate a plan without understanding where things stand.

**Activate** – get strategic and plan. With the changing landscape, governmental mandates and personal turmoil, you need to be actively, more than “proactively,” communicating with your audiences. Employees are looking to their employers, donors and volunteers to their associations to provide information that is concise and easy to process. Does that mean hourly? Does that mean daily? There is a mass of information flying into/out of inboxes from grocery store chains to financial institutions to your satellite radio subscriber and the local brew pub. How do you fit in the mix? What should you communicate? Have you modified your scheduled digital posts to avoid inappropriate content? Are your employees informed? Prioritize your audiences and how you can best reach them with information that's valuable not dumped into the delete folder.

**Analyze** – there's no lack of data being bandied about in this frenzied outreach. Is it accurate? Is it up to date? Is it credible? Now is the time to analyze and mobilize and have valid sources available and accessible for yourself, your team, your customers, your employees, your community. By monitoring, gauging reaction and reviewing the state of affairs you can reset as needed without moving into panic mode. This shift might mean a tweak to the website, streaming a town hall meeting for staff and stakeholders or developing tools for your industry partners, demonstrating visibly your actions – walk the walk with intention. Whatever the case, keep analyzing, which then leads us back to assessing. It's a wonderful circular process to keep you moving forward.

Be purposeful and stay true to your brand, mission in all of this chaos. Maintaining your reputation during this crisis will help you reduce the impact of variables out of your control. You can be the leader by setting an example through your actions and your communication channels.

**Now is the time for communicators to lead – assess, activate and analyze** – to remain a steadfast source with strong, consistent messaging. That is how the eye of the storm brings calm to chaos. I call it leadership.