**Notes on creating a Communication Strategy**

***Amend as required to suit your specific needs***

* *Change the logo in the Header to your own*
* *Use the select all then replace all to amend the document for your NGB*
* *If your NGB is an unincorporated organisation i.e. not a Company replace all reference to the Board of Directors with the name of your NGB governing committee e.g. Executive or Management Group*
* *If your NGB is a charity your governing group may be the Trustees or similar*

Communication strategies can:

* provide a link between an NGBs aims and objectives and it’s communications planning and delivery
* help explain to Board members how communications will support NGB operations and which strategic choices have been taken and why
* build common understanding of audiences and priorities
* create continuity in communications activity over an extended period – particularly important when there is employee/volunteer turnover
* articulate objectives and measures of success (e.g. KPIs) when building a case for more resources, grants or evaluating performance
* explore and mitigate communications risks

Firstly set a reason for having a communication strategy, for example:

“Our coordinated communication strategy will ensure effective communication between the NGB and its members, partners and stakeholders, so that the NGB controls and maximises communication to support the achievement of our agreed goals.”

This document suggests what to consider when setting up, increasing and/or improving the communication flow between the NGB and its members, stakeholders and other external bodies. It suggests ways in which the target audiences can be identified and how to maximise delivery of important key messages to the right people at the right time.

**Crucial questions to consider before you start a communication plan**

* How can more/better communications help ensure successful implementation of the NGB strategy?
* What are we hoping to achieve, (our aim) with our communications, this may be one major aim or many smaller ones e.g. better awareness, improved attitude, change in behaviour, member consultation etc.?
* Can our communication objectives be measured?
  + How will the level of communication be measured?
* What does success look like?
* What are the budget constraints?

**Examples of Aims**

To raise the profile of Insert sport and NGB in particular in Wales in order to:

* Unite the sport through positive and professional two-way communication with the members
  + Make audiences aware of the role of NGB and its activities
  + Increase confidence in NGB among its members and stakeholders
  + Communicate effectively encouraging dissemination of information using regular and appropriate methods including e.g. emails, website, social media etc.
  + Ensure board members are well informed and able to be involved in the governance and management of the NGB.
  + Add other reasons specific to your sport
* Increase participation and develop more coaches, umpires and volunteers – *amend as required*
* Implement a public and media relations programme to maximise opportunities to build the image of Insert sport, increase visibility and attract sponsor interest.
  + Source future sponsorship
  + Build a brand
* Plan and deliver programmed promotional campaigns to raise awareness, increase the coach, umpire and volunteer base and maximise new member potential.
  + Keep the Insert sport community up to date about activities, competitions and news, thus creating a desire to be more involved
* Advocacy to Sport Wales and other key stakeholders.

**Audiences**

What do you know about your target audiences? What are their beliefs, attitudes, influences, behaviours – this can help in deciding both how to communicate and how often. Creating detailed audience specific messages can often be crucial, the information might be the same but the method of delivery and the style of the message text might need to vary depending on the target audience. In addition, consideration should be given the relationships between the various audiences, remember that often a person will sit within more than one audience group.

The following groups are examples of target audiences:

* Members at all levels - clubs, athletes, coaches, officials, schools, colleges
* Stakeholders - Sport Wales, Commonwealth Games Council for Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, Disability Sport Wales, Local Authorities and any other partners
* Employees
* Potential sponsors and possible funding organisations
* Media in all formats – TV, radio, print and online
* Event spectators
* Users of social media
* Add others that might apply

**Key messages**

Reinforcing a set of key messages is an important part of any communication strategy and they should be included in all outgoing and internal communications, examples include:

* NGB is well-organised and capable of shaping the future of Insert sport in Wales
* Insert sport provides opportunities for everyone – it is truly a “Sport for All”….insert new opportunities
* Insert sport has a track record of success in international competitions shown by recent results …..
* Volunteers are an important part of sport in Wales and vital to Insert sport, add in recent volunteer information e.g. Young Ambassadors
* Insert sport aims to encourage and recruit more people to get active and lead healthy and social lifestyles

Some key messages will be time influenced e.g. our next event will be…. Or tickets available from….

An easy way of promoting key messages that any NGB could start to use is to develop an email signature that includes some of the key messages, which can then be rotated monthly. [*It is important for NGBs that are Companies to comply with the requirements of the 2006 Companies Act with regard to emails*.]

How follow up messages relate to and support each other is also important within a concerted communication plan. In the main, a key message will be short, jargon-free, concise and meaningful thus ensuring that it is read.

**Key Opportunity Examples**

* There may be many opportunities to get new people involved in Insert sport, so the members of the public need to be made aware of what is on offer and where.
* NGB and members have key individuals across Wales who could help to reinforce the message that there are opportunities to get involved at all ages and all ability levels
* There are some potentially high profile athletes who excel on the world stage so there is an opportunity to maximise their exposure to create a group of new household names.
* Website news stories and linking NGB with the member/other organisation sites, NGB website needs to be reviewed and regularly updated
* The feel good factor from recognising and rewarding volunteers may suggest that a special way of communicating with them could be developed or an annual awards ceremony.
* Team announcements are a good way of getting column centimetres, maximise exposure of Commonwealth Games and/or World Events but also consider local leagues or similar for regular local media input and interest
* Website development and improving its appearance and ease of use, would allow NGB to revisit its online communication
* The introduction of new technologies, including social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter could facilitate both internal and external communication. Consider a social media policy – example can be found on WSA website
* Options for NGB and to explore e-newsletter software and usage. The production of a monthly or quarterly e-newsletter that would be sent directly to members and stakeholders could hugely improve communication, particularly that relating to news and interest items.
* Work with Local Authorities could offer avenues to disseminate local information and this should be explored. LA Sports Development Officers could link into Local Authority websites and resident newspapers, particularly interesting at the time of Commonwealth Games, with opportunities to use the “local resident makes good” angle.
* Most stakeholders also have websites and it is worthwhile sending press releases to the relevant person to post on internet and intranet e.g. Sport Wales, WAG.
* It must be recognised that not all people (particularly older volunteers/officials) will have access to email and the internet, therefore, a hard copy newsletter must be considered at least at first or if requested. A hard copy can also be useful to send multiple copies to clubs who would be encouraged to display newsletters on their notice boards at Leisure Centres or similar.
* Clubs can also help in the process to improve communication by advising of the opportunities on offer the length and breadth of Wales. If NGB drew up press release templates and guidelines for clubs to send to local media about club competitions, news etc. the profile of Insert sport could potentially increase locally.
* Event programme forewords provided by the NGB Chair are also a good way of promoting key messages.
* It is worth creating a body of records with up-beat statistics and examples of good practice in order that applications for funding can be completed more easily. This body of records can then also be tapped into for annual reports and reviews.
* Announcers at events should be given a briefing sheet with bullet points of key messages that NGB would like to be announced, e.g. medals won at Commonwealths, coaching courses that are imminent, future ticket sales, sponsor names etc.
* Not all NGBs have employees to take on the publicity role, consideration of the creation of a Publicity Officer/Person for NGB or a Publicity sub-committee including representatives from clubs/membership base would be a good initial step forward as this group could work up an annual promotion plan for Insert sport in Wales.

**Specific Communications**

There are times when very specific communication needs to take place examples include

* Policy or process updates following decisions of the Board
* AGM or GM notices
* Anti-doping information
* Important announcements
* NGB sport rules changes

These will need definite routes of communication, sometimes in more than one way so make sure that the message is clearly received by the specific audience. In these instances just “putting it on the website” may not be enough, individual emails, letters or similar may need to be used. Email group mailing lists are easy to set up and should be used whenever possible. For information that needs a definite response or evidence of receipt use auto-response settings to make sure you can track delivery.

**Disability Awareness**

When developing a communication strategy NGBs must take into consideration ways that communication can be best delivered to individuals who have a disability. In many instances very simple options or changes can help e.g. all websites should have the option to increase the font size easily. If your NGB communicates with disabled members that might be deaf or hearing impaired detailed information should be included in the strategy so as to make sure their needs are catered for at all times.

**Communication Training**

There are various training courses that are run by groups including the WSA and WCVA, for a full spectrum of courses also see <http://www.trainingandcourses.com/wales/communication-skills-courses/qualification/study/all/default.html>

**Conclusions**

An NGB communication strategy needs to combine internal and external methods of communication along with media relations and direct links with the target audiences. This is likely to be a time consuming process initially and should involve a step by step addition of actions over the first 6 - 12 months. A review of the early strategy outcomes should take place, followed by the continuation or inclusion of different types of communication to ensure that good systems become part of the standard practice of the NGB and its members.