

Communications Toolkit

Use this to review your communications and for ideas on what tools to use to get key messages to your audiences.



THE DIOCESE
OF SHEFFIELD

Why communicate?

We are constantly communicating, whether we know it or not! Consistent and clear communications, based on sound key messages, are vital in a media saturated world. To work at achieving the Diocesan Vision, and to develop our churches, spending time on communicating messages in different ways is vital. Communications is not just one way but is also about listening. The Diocese can be a complicated thing(!) but we are stronger together; developing ways in which we share our communications is essential for this.

Ask yourself, what are your aims?

It is important to spend 10 minutes thinking about the basics. What are the aims for your communications, broken down?

- A good number of attendees to a village fete?
- Young families attending a specialised service?
- Encouraging ethnic communities to a community event?
- Inviting young people to a youth event?

It may all seem logical, but very few actually go through these steps.

Who is the audience?

From the aims, look at who the key audiences are, separate them out and put them into similar groups. Do short profiles for them that will give a general idea of how they are most likely to engage with communications.

- Current Sunday attenders?
- Young families not currently engaged with the church?
- Young people in the community?

NAME: Current Sunday attender
AGE: 50-65
SEX: Male or female
HABITS:

- Reading printed newspapers/parish newsletters
- Uses email
- Some use of smart phones!
- Might do Facebook, probably won't Tweet.



NAME: Young people
AGE: 13-18
SEX: Male or female
HABITS:

- Won't read printed newspapers/parish newsletters
- Uses texts, picture sharing and Facebook
- Won't really email.
- Constant use of a smart phone.



The communications mix

You are conducting a promotional marketing exercise. The main elements of the mix are:

- » **Personal selling:** this is you as a disciple of Jesus Christ! Appearance, tone, manner and enthusiasm speak volumes.
- » **Websites:** for your parish, church and benefice.
- » **PR:** relations with the local media, getting stories in the papers and issuing press releases.
- » **Advertising:** placing adverts in other local publicity materials, newspapers, event listings and websites.
- » **Events:** This could be specialist services aimed at young families, or open days to show off the heritage elements of your church.
- » **Direct:** Going direct to audiences doesn't have to be costly and can yield impressive results.
- » **Social media:** Sometimes the dreaded one, but no, you can't ignore it, and yes it can be confusing but social media is often completely free, and when done right, is extremely powerful.

Now apply the mix to your audiences and pick which you think will work best for each. Often a carefully selected combination is the way to go. Messages must be consistent throughout the mix!

Tools you can use:

Websites

Many parishes have a website. Some good, some bad! A website gives you a shop window to display yourself to the world. People will often judge you on what your website is like and even if you have one at all. They do cost money but you will get an excellent professional site for well under £1,000 and you can update it with news yourselves. There may also be someone in the community that could do it for a low cost. The communications team can give you some contacts if you are unsure where to start.

Also keep your www.achurchnearyou.com page up-to-date as it is used regularly to access information.

+ Positives: Provides a window to display your offer, provides a central point for regular communications, expected of people today.

- Negatives: Need weekly updates, badly designed website are counter-productive.

Direct

Approach people with a direct piece of communication such as an email, letter, flyer, leaflet or newsletter. This is not as costly as you may think, see the following tools for a starting point:

- » MailChimp (www.mailchimp.com) FREE service, easily send good looking emails to your contacts and follow up on who has read it.
- » SaxoPrint (www.saxoprint.co.uk) and Instantprint (www.instantprint.co.uk) Cheap internet-based printers that are usually good quality, just upload your own design (templates available).
- » Esendex (www.esendex.co.uk) Don't overlook this one! Send one text message to a range of numbers in one go. Very quick, very cheap and very effective at reminding people when the next Fresh service is.
- » Animoto (www.animoto.com) Create easy, eye catching videos from still photos (not-for-profit can apply for free access).

+ Positives: Opens up a relationship with people to engage with you, it can yield good results and costs can be managed.

- Negatives: Expensive and not targeted, does not develop a relationship with people.

Useful documents: Diocesan Communications Strategy, Safeguarding Policy, Social Media Guidelines, Our Audiences, How to develop an effective press release all available on www.sheffield.anglican.org/communications

Always apply the AIDA model:

- Attention:** someone will glance at promotional material and appraise it in seconds, it has to immediately grab their attention (think design, fonts, colours and headlines).
- Interest:** if you've held them for a few seconds, next you need to hold their interest, so make it interesting to THEM (think subject matter and pictures).
- Desire:** so now they're interested, now appeal to their desires and motivations in life, a few hours away from the kids? Or, maybe the chance to volunteer for a good cause (think about the key messages).
- Action:** Don't leave them hanging. Give a call to action - what do you want them to do? Call a number, email someone, visit a website, 'Like' on Facebook? (Don't give too many though or it will turn people away.)

Social media

Social media can be difficult to define but is generally seen as online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives with each other.

Popular examples: blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Soundcloud, Audioboo, Foursquare, Google+, Flickr, Instagram, LinkedIn, Yammer and Pinterest. (Google them.)

+ Positives: All are free, potential to reach wide audience quickly, fast becoming the main way to communicate for individuals and businesses alike.

- Negatives: Need consistent attention, potential for escalations of releases, safeguarding issues for younger people.

Advertising

Promote relevant events in local papers and magazines, put eye catching posters in public places. Find out what magazines go out in your area and consider how you could use them.

+ Positives: Quick and easy.

- Negatives: Can be expensive and not targeted, does not develop a relationship with people, hard to gauge impact.

Public relations

Develop relationships with local newspapers, send press releases and speak to journalists. Being proactive is important. Story telling is powerful and people do want to hear it. Consider doing the 'Meet the Vicar' spot on BBC Radio Sheffield.

+ Positives: Powerful and lends credibility to the messages. Developing relations with local papers can help massively at times of negative stories about the parish/church.

- Negatives: Unpredictable.

Other things to consider

If you print items in-house and only have a black & white printer, design with this in mind. You don't need fancy graphics software; Word; Publisher; are ok; don't put in colours and photographs if it cannot be printed - it will not look good or professional.