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A Communication Plan for Organizational Effectiveness in a Youth Development Organization

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A COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS
IN A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

by

Allison Foster

A Non-Traditional Thesis Submitted to the

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IN A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

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A Communication Plan for Organizational Effectiveness
in a Youth Development Organization

Abstract

by Allison Foster

University of the Pacific
2018

This project addresses communication issues within a youth development organization,

Northern California DeMolay, which endures an annual change in youth leadership. This

paper relies on the foundation of research within the field of youth development

organizations and incorporates public relations strategies to provide specialized help for

the organization. The outcome of this project is a communication plan for Northern

California DeMolay developed through research, strategies, and the strategic plan for the

organization. The balance of power between youth and adult leadership highlighted in

youth development organization research is manifested in the communication plan

through the division of responsibility between youth and adult leadership.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The nonprofit sector is an important but often overlooked sector of society. Well-known nonprofits such as The Red Cross and Planned Parenthood have limited funding but do, however, enjoy an ample amount of support, monetarily and in number of volunteers. Unlike these larger known nonprofits, smaller community-based nonprofits do not have the level of resources or support needed to truly thrive. When the organization needs help in specialized ways, knowledge from outside of the organization can elevate the success of the organization. Nonprofit work with youth is an especially important part of the nonprofit sector. Youth are the future of society. Youth will continue the work of previous generations and carry on the every day life of society. The work that is done with youth has a lasting impact. This project examines the communication problems of a Northern California youth organization and provides specialized help for its communication in order to ensure the organization's longevity.

Northern California DeMolay

One such nonprofit is Northern California DeMolay. Northern California DeMolay is a Masonic youth organization with male members between the ages of 12 and 21 years of age. Local chapters of members meet bi-monthly for stated meetings where ritual and public speaking are the focus. Each chapter also plans social activities, fundraisers, and community service activities in addition to their bi-monthly meetings.

There are 33 chapters throughout the Jurisdiction of Northern California whose boundaries span from Bakersfield in the south to the Oregon border in the north as well as one chapter in Reno, Nevada. The organization includes leadership at the individual chapters as well as the divisional level, which is made up of clusters of chapters located geographically close. See Table 1 for leadership structure of youth and adults in Northern California DeMolay. There is also youth leadership on the Jurisdictional level which represents all chapters and divisions in Northern California DeMolay. A team of adult volunteers make up the Executive Staff of Northern California DeMolay and youth leaders are elected annually. The executive staff does not change annually while the youth leadership does. The youth leaders on the state level, along with their advisors and a few other executive staff members, are responsible for the operations of the entire jurisdiction. Northern California's strategic plan captures the goals of the organization by stating: "As a youth-led, adult-advised organization, young men learn to plan, organize and facilitate their own activities and programs by employing practical and hand-on experience" (Northern California DeMolay, 2017). The key initiatives Northern California DeMolay (2017) has identified in their strategic plan include character development, relationship building, leadership training, and governance & administration (para. 3). DeMolay incorporates many components in one organization including: leadership, setting values, mentorship (both peer mentorship as well as adult-youth mentorship), traditions, responsibility, and empowerment.

Table 1

Hierarchy of Northern California DeMolay Leadership

Youth Leaders	Adult Leaders

Chapter Level (Local)	
Master Councilor*	Chapter Advisor
Senior Councilor*	Chapter Chairman
Junior Councilor*	Advisory Council
Sweetheart (Female)*	
Princess (Female)*	
Division Level (Clusters of Chapters)	
Divisional Representative**	Divisional Advisor
Divisional Representative**	
Divisional Sweetheart (Female)**	
Jurisdiction Level (All Divisions and Chapters)	
Master Councilor**	Jurisdictional Advisor***
Deputy Master Councilor**	Jurisdictional Sweetheart Advisor***
Senior Councilor**	
Junior Councilor**	
Sweetheart (Female)**	
Princess (Female)**	
Executive Staff (All Adults)	
<u>Primary Staff</u>	<u>Secondary Staff</u>
Executive Officer***	Jurisdictional Sweetheart Advisor***
Executive Director ***	Web and IT Director***
Assistant Executive Officer***	Office Manager***
Assistant Executive Officer***	Director of Ritual***
Jurisdictional Advisor***	Alumni Director ***
	Membership Director***
Key: *= 6 month term **= 1 year term ***= Longer than 1 year term	

Chapter 2: Problem

DeMolay relies heavily on interpersonal communication to keep the organization thriving. Membership numbers in the organization have decreased in the past few years. It is therefore important that communication within the jurisdiction remains constant and consistent in order to maintain and increase membership. When communication is not consistent or members and volunteers do not receive communication, there is an appearance to those involved with the organization that the organization is hurting. The more consistently that communication occurs, the more people involved with the organization see the organization as succeeding. In order to keep up participation and keep the organization thriving, a consistent communication plan needs to be developed. Currently, the organization has no formal plan dedicated to maintaining consistent communication as well as no one designated to focus on the communication issues in the organization.

The communication problem is aggravated by the lack of continuity in youth leadership, who only serve one year terms and do not overlap with each other. As each new group of youth leaders take their positions annually, the control of communication switches with no real plan that carries over from year to year. Northern California DeMolay has a presence on Facebook with a public page and multiple groups. The jurisdiction also has mass emailing capabilities through MailChimp, address lists for

physical mailings, and various social media. This project will develop a communication plan for Northern California DeMolay.

Purpose of Thesis

The focus of this project is how a stable communication plan enhances effectiveness in a youth development organization. When it comes to developing a communication plan, the communication that it will be centered on is primarily communication within the organization and utilizes the different levels of leadership in the organization. Multiple public relations strategies are utilized in order to establish a communication plan for the Jurisdiction. Currently, the biggest challenge that the group is facing is keeping consistent communication. The individuals that create content for all of Northern California DeMolay do not follow a cohesive plan for communication so it is inconsistent. This communication plan addresses the problem of consistent communication and help with internal communication as it would put every person creating content for the organization on the same plan.

Chapter 3: Key Terms

Youth development Organization - Today there are many programs youth can participate in both inside and outside of school. The structure of those programs varies greatly. Youth development organizations may look different, but all share a common goal: the healthy development of youth as active citizens and more importantly preparing them for life as adults. The Youth Development Committee of the Lilly Endowment said:

> Youth cannot be sustained and helped to grow by chance arrangements or makeshift events. Something far more intentional is required: a place, a league, a form of association, a gathering of people where value is placed on continuity, predictability, history, tradition, and a chance to test out new behaviors. (Pittman, 1991)

Walker & Dunham (1994) state that youth development organizations are organizations that "exist to promote the positive, healthy development of youth" and go on to say that their mission is to provide the challenges, experiences, support, and help young people need to develop to their fullest potential." Youth development organizations differ from formal education in that they are mostly volunteer and the teachings, values, and priorities of the organization are based upon the adults and youth that support the organization (Walker & Dunham, 1994). Not all youth development organizations may look the same but, they share these characteristics.

Youth Empowerment - Empowerment is not a new term, but is widely used and does need defining. Often adults that work with youth assume that empowering means to relinquish guidance, control, and responsibility to the youth (Huebner, 1998). Empowering teens is a "process through which adults begin to share responsibility and power with young people" (Huebner, 1998). The relationship between the youth and the adults is an important aspect for youth empowerment. Ultimately, the process of empowerment leads youth to becoming competent (Huebner, 1998).

Public Relations - Public Relations is often defined as maintaining the relationship between the organization and its publics. The field of public relations covers an array of functions within organizations in order to maintain the organization. The Public Relations Society of America offers the definition: "public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" (PRSA, 2014, para. 2). PRSA also highlights the work that public relations does as a management function within organizations such as "counseling management at all levels in the organization with regard to… communication, taking into account their public ramifications and the organization's social or citizenship responsibilities" (PRSA, 2014, para. 4).

Communication Plan - A communication plan organizes actions that will lead to fulfilling a goal of communicating (University of Kansas, 2014, para. 3). By developing a communication plan, the focus of a message is clarified, therefore, making it easier for target audiences to receive. A communication plan provides a structure for how communication will occur and to whom it will be directed. An eight step process developed by University of Kansas (2014) in their online Community Tool Kit resource is

an approach to creating a solid communication plan. It includes, identifying the goal, identifying audience(s), designing the messages, identifying resources, crises and emergencies, utilizing others, creating action plans, and evaluating those plans (para. 8). Another important piece necessary to begin communication planning is to take an inventory of what the organization communications currently looks like. Without taking proper inventory, it is impossible to set goals and determine if the communication plan will be effective. The communication plan developed through this project will be a template that remains consistent with each annual organizational change.

Constitutive Communication - A constitutive approach to communication is a meta-theoretical framework in which "we constitute- not just express- our social realities in our actions with others" (Koschman, Isabell, & Sanders, 2015). Communication is an interactive process and not merely a transmission of information (Koschman et al., 2015). This view can help to capture the dynamic essence that comes with communication within public relations, which incorporates the many relationships of those sending and receiving the communication.

Chapter 4: Feasibility of Study

Creating a formal communication plan can easily be completed in the timeframe of this project. The research needed for this project provides the foundation that the organization does not currently have. Once the plan is complete, the organization will adopt it and implement it according to where they are in the yearly process. This project does not include ongoing maintenance of the plan. However, an annual check of the effectiveness of the communication plan along with a reworking is included in the plan but cannot be seen in the timeframe of this project. This plan's resources utilize existing tools from the organization and mainstream media.

Significance of Study

At the present time there is a significant gap in the research on using public relations strategies in youth organizations. This study is important since it will provide a research-based foundation for the use of public relations strategies in youth development nonprofits. Youth development organizations often lack the resources that formal education has and by completing this project, this communication plan will give DeMolay an effective way to address problems in communication. Communication is crucial to the livelihood of these organizations, yet they do not have access nor the time to research best public relations practices that can help guide them. Looking at research that can be applied will help create the most effective communication plan. Most youth development organizations do not have a qualified person that can serve as a

communication leader. By creating a communication plan for Northern California DeMolay, DeMolay in other states could use it as an example for their own communication plan. This would help impact a larger population.

This project is important because this organization serves a part of the public and does not have the ability to make a communication plan on its own. There is nobody within the organization that would be able to lay out a communication plan such as this one that is thorough and based on research. Since the organization is completely staffed by volunteers, the amount of time needed to develop a communication plan such as this one is simply not an option for an ordinary volunteer. The access and use of research makes this project a unique step toward more cohesiveness in the organization of DeMolay. Up until now, DeMolay has never drawn on scholarly research to develop organizational structure.

The work the organization does has a direct impact on youth throughout Northern California. The organization develops and empowers young men by providing them opportunities they might not have otherwise. Creating a communication plan for this organization will increase the effectiveness of this organization by guiding an important aspect of the organization with research. The development of a communication plan will have a direct impact on how the organization functions by providing the organization with a practical approach to communication which is a binding piece for the organization.

This is an important project to the members, with communication being a constantly talked about subject for the organization. Communication is key and the members, adult volunteers, and everyone involved with the organization recognize this. The excitement that has come with the news that this project is occurring has shown that

this will be a significant endeavor. Since Northern California DeMolay has never developed a communication plan that has been driven by scholarly research, the staff and members have expressed excitement at the prospect. Any work done on communication for the organization is welcomed by the executive staff of Northern California DeMolay since communication is a highly discussed topic for the continuing success of the organization.

Chapter 5: Literature Review

This literature review includes research on youth development organizations and it builds to how public relations and its strategies are vital to the development and success of this plan.

A look at research on nonprofits is a starting point for this project and can help with understanding the organization. However, when it comes to research that can be applied to address the problem of communication consistency in DeMolay, there is little research within the nonprofit field to incorporate in this project. Much of the literature on nonprofits centers around "fundraising and donor relations, client relationships and service delivery, volunteer management and board governance, collaboration and cross-sector partnerships" (Koschmann, Isbell, & Sanders, 2015). DeMolay does include these arenas but, that is not the focus of this project. Research in the nonprofit sector has developed greatly over the past decade or so and the focus of the research has been deliberate (Koschmann et al., 2015). Koschmann et al., compiled a look at where communication scholarship has been incorporated into research on nonprofits and found that communication scholarship was lacking in the nonprofit research field (2015). Nonprofit research focuses on the structure and funding of nonprofit but does not capture the role that communication plays in this organization.

Previous research on communication within youth development organizations has not been explored deeply. Yet, there is still a great deal of research that provides the

foundation for this project. Research conducted on youth development organizations is crucial to understanding the structure of the organization and provides knowledge that can be used to improve DeMolay. This project calls for a layering of research on the structure of the organization, aspects of the organization, and tools from public relations to demonstrate how the set up of the project would work.

      Koschmann et al., produced a well-compiled assessment of where the research in the nonprofit sector has gone (2015). Mostly research has focused on communication in organizations as being merely sending and receiving information. Koschmann et al., presented viewing communication in organizations as constitutive as a possible way to incorporate communication scholarship in the research of the nonprofit sector (2015). When most scholars research communication in organizations, they see communication in organizations as two separate things but Koschmann et al., encourage viewing the organization as a communication vehicle (2015). It is important to acknowledge that "organizations are not neutral structures that exist apart from human interaction; they are visible manifestation of human interaction" (Koschmann et al., 2015, p. 214). Thinking of DeMolay as being constitutive communication helps influence the communication plan created for this project.

      The characterization of nonprofit research did not fully incorporate the characteristics of DeMolay that are central to the organization so the next line of research that was examined was youth-empowerment. Youth-empowerment put the development of the youth as the focus. Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger-Messids, & McLoughlin (2006) took inventory of youth-empowerment models and developed a critical social theory of youth empowerment. The first piece of information that Jennings et al.,

provided that fit DeMolay was the focus on positive approach of empowering rather than the more negative connotation of risk-based preventative approaches to youth organizations (2006). When researching youth organizations, a lot of research was focused on at-risk youth. While DeMolay does have at-risk youth, that is not the primary demographic of membership. Jennings et al., looked at four existing models of youth empowerment that included characteristics such as youth as active citizens, community service based activities, and teaching youth leadership which are all characteristics DeMolay incorporates (2006). Jennings et al., presented Critical Youth Empowerment as a theory that incorporates the six key dimensions of "a welcoming and safe environment; meaningful participation and engagement; equitable power-sharing between youth and adults; engagement in critical reflection on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes; participation in sociopolitical process to effect change; and integrating individual- and community-level empowerment" (p. 41, 2006). All six of these dimensions are important pieces to the organization of DeMolay. This line of research and its dimensions can be aligned with particular PR strategies.

Continuing the path of youth empowerment research exploration, Serido, Borden, & Perkins (2011) examined youth voice and its positive outcomes in youth empowerment. Serido, Bordern, & Perkins worked off the expectation that "youth voice would account for the association between supportive relationships with adults and benefits of program participation" (p. 49, 2011). This research provides a key element as it helps shape the project and understanding of the dynamics of the youth utilizing the communication plan. Serido, Borden, & Perkins found that "youth who feel they have a stronger voice in the program will report more benefits from their participation" (p. 53,

2011). This piece shows the youth using the project need to be able to have their own voice in order to get the most out of the experience. Another aspect that Serido, Borden, & Perkins examined was the interaction of youth voice, relationship with adults in the organization, and benefits gained (2011). Serido, Borden, & Perkins found that "opportunities to interact with adults benefit youth in multiple ways: first, by directly contributing to the perceived value of program participation and second, indirectly, by promoting youth voice" (p. 55, 2011). The adult involvement in DeMolay is an important part of the organization. This study helped to incorporate the adult involvement while keeping the youth component in mind. This study also offered some research that could help shape the interaction of adults and youth within the communication plan.

The development of this communication plan must take into consideration what research has found will be best for an organization such as DeMolay. Mortenson et al., filled a gap that had been identified by previous research: what youth viewed as leadership characteristics (2014). This study is important because understanding the youth lens of leadership will better engage youth leaders. Mortenson et al., point out that youth often occupy a much different role in society than adults do which causes adults to have a much different idea of what leadership looks like (2014). Most organizations are built around leadership through an adult lens which means youth will not identify with it as much. In order to have the most impact, the organization should incorporate leadership as defined by youth. Mortenson et al., found that youth defined leadership as "available to anyone in any context, and involves creating change, collective action, modeling and mentoring, and a strong character" (p. 453, 2014). Using this information to shape the communication plan will ensure that it will be more effective and better received.

Youth empowerment research illustrated the importance of the relationship between adults and youth in youth organizations. To expand on this relationship, Hobbs & Yoon address the fact that when the operations of an organization are based on an adult-commanded setting, the youth are not as engaged (2008). Hobbs & Yoon (2008) specifically looked at how the power relationship between adults and youth can be shaped in order to maximize engagement from the youth. When the adults have too much control, the youth do not engage and therefore do not gain anything from the experience (Hobbs & Yoon, 2008). Again, the balance of power between the youth and adults in the organization is shown to be an important factor in an organization that is empowering youth. Hobbs & Yoon also address a specific type of organization which is a youth development organization saying they "have begun to strengthen their organization to sustain themselves by focusing on their core goal: to improve the capacity of young people to be effective problem-solvers, communicators and citizens" (p. 150, 2008). In order to create the most advantageous communication plan, the correct balance of power needs to be identified. Youth-empowerment research alludes to this notion without providing guidance or findings.

Looking at youth development organizations is the next step. Youth development research focuses more on the balance of power between the youth and adults that youth-empowerment research lacks. A prime example of examining the balance of power is provided by Larson, Walker, & Pearce (2005) who looked at youth-driven programs versus adult-driven youth development programs. Youth-driven programs are programs in which the youth are the ones dictating the program whereas adult-driven programs are dictated by the adults (Larson et al., 2005). This research specifically addresses ways in

which to shift organizational power and helps guide how the communication plan is set up. Having examined the continuum of adult-driven organization and youth-driven organizations, Larson et al. (2005) found benefits come from different placement on that spectrum. In a youth-driven framework, the benefits observed "appeared to derive from the teens' experience of ownership over the direction of program activities" (Larson et al., p. 66, 2005). Youth feel empowered when they have control and that empowerment can carry over into other aspects of their lives as well (Larson et al., 2005). Adult-driven framework also offers its own benefits in that adults can pass on their knowledge (Larson et al., 2005). Adults can offer great assistance in keeping the youth on track when the youth are in charge and can make sure that the youth feel they have control when the adults are in charge. The specific context of DeMolay will not exactly match other organizations. However, the research is a good guiding tool but the understanding of the organization will ultimately guide the setup of the communication plan.

Understanding a youth development organization is crucial to understanding the work this project seeks to do. Wheeler (2000) provides a definition of a youth development organization as:

> "it considers the underlying causes of problem behaviors and stresses positive outcomes for youth, including competence, confidence, character, connection, and contribution; it takes into consideration the full context of young people's lives….; it emphasizes that everyone has a stake in youth development…; it calls for communities to provide supports for young people and real opportunities to learn, earn, and contribute." (p. 50)

The five C's Wheeler mentions are identified, succinct desired outcomes for youth. They include "competence in academic, social, and vocational areas; confidence or a positive self-identity; connections to community, family, and peers; character or positive values, integrity, and moral commitment; and caring and compassion" (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000). Youth development centers around "youth-adult partnership, an advance that sees youth as equal partners with adults in decision making, planning, and implementing actions" (Wheeler p. 50, 2000). Roth & Brooks-Gunn add to the classification of youth developments by indicating that "knowledgable and supportive adults empower adolescents to develop their competencies"
(2003, p. 101). Roth & Brooks-Gunn (2003) also identify three characteristics of youth development organizations: program goals, program atmosphere, and program activities. With this definition, the structure of DeMolay has emerged in the research.

Wheeler (2000) also explores the changes in organizational theory that could possibly be used in youth development organizations. Wheeler (2000) notes that the social sphere can often take cues from the corporate sphere, meaning that the social aspect involved in a youth organization such as DeMolay could take cues from operations of the corporate world. Organizational shifts that have occurred include a virtual workspace and the design of the high-performance system which creates smaller teams within the organization that have greater freedom and are responsible for more (Wheeler, 2000). The organizational setup of DeMolay lends itself easily to both the high-performance system and a virtual workspace. An important piece of DeMolay is the organizational change that occurs each year when a new team takes over. Looking

towards how the corporate world deals with change could be a benefit for youth development organizations.

As DeMolay changes their youth leadership annually, it is important to look to research of other organizations that undergo a similar change. Legg, Snelgrove, & Wood (2016) examined how youth sport dealt with organizational change. Sports have an advantage due to institutional continuity from rules. Teams can change members because new members already understand the basic rules of the game. Overlap with youth sport and DeMolay does exist, sport teams disband and assemble every year usually with different members. DeMolay elects new youth leaders every year. The hierarchy of power and the positions of DeMolay leadership remain the same year to year but the people change. The organizational template is created by values, beliefs, and ideas that are shared by organizations in similar fields (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). When an institution undergoes change, that template is shifted and reconfigured into the new template.

In order for the institution to be ready for change, it is important the members understand institutionalized practices (Legg et al., 2016). In their study of organizational change, Legg et al., found that a change in the institution came from the top-down (adults in the organization were setting goals for the youth) and was framed in a way that encouraged the youth to continue participation (Legg et al., 2016). The organization accepted the changes even though they were implemented from the top of the organization (Legg et al., 2016).

In organizations that highly regard tradition and the founding of the organization, change can oftentimes be a hard transition. Individuals who have a strong connection to

past traditions can sometimes impede the process of change. These individuals are referred to as "founders" and have been seen as an issue in volunteer organizations throughout the nation (Huff & Pleskac, 2012). Founders have a strong influence and it is important for the organization to be aware that new thinking should be embraced by the organization, "It's how we've always done it" should be a trigger that something needs to change (Huff & Pleskac, 2012). Organizations need to be fluid and willing to change in order to keep members engaged (Wheatley, 2011). Therefore, this communication plan should be both flexible and fluid in order to remain effective.

Communication within youth development organizations is not a widely explored path of research. That means there was not perfectly specific research that could be used for this project. Public relations bridges the gap in this project. In an in-depth study on the importance of public relations in organizations, Grunig and Dozier (2003) found that "the value of public relations comes from the relationships that communicators develop and maintain with their publics" (p. 4). In addition, Grunig and Dozier (2003) found that "communicators cannot be successful unless they are part of the top-management team that develops an organizational structure" (p. 5). Grunig and Dozier (2003) also found that symmetrical communication, as opposed to asymmetrical communication, is especially important within an organization where it helps build a participative culture which increases employee satisfaction with the organization (p. 5). Public relations is vital for a number of reasons. Public relations builds relationships to advance and promotes and benefit the reputation of the organization. Public relations communicates your message to gain advocates and supporters as well as aids in marketing for recruitment. Public relations improves the reputation of the organization and it educates

and informs people about the contributions of the organization which makes the organization more relevant. Further, public relations provides a boost to staff morale which increases staff motivation and it provides clarity about key organization messages.

Defining how public relations will be used is important since public relations can be used many ways. The founder of the organization that became The Public Relations Society of America compiled over 500 definitions of public relations (Wilcox, Ault, & Agee, 2006) which shows that public relations can be used in a variety of ways. Wilcox et al., present a long-standing and widely accepted definition of PR developed by Lawrence L. Long and Vincent Hazelton as "a communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals" (p. 8, 2006). Public relations within the organization is a vital part to the health of the organization, not just communication with the audience. Public relations is often identified as building and maintaining relationships between the organization and its publics. However, a more assertive approach has emerged. This approach is called strategic management of communication (Wilcox et al., 2006). Public relations tactics do not have to be used just with an outside target audience. Internal communication is also part of public relations. In order for organizations to have good communication with the public audience, the internal communication system of the organization needs to be operational.

Most of the communication activities included in this communication plan will involve online outreach and use of various social media. Research for online communication and social media communication for youth and organizations is crucial to guiding this project. Most youth have a social media account but do not have experience

communicating in a professional manner such as that required by the organization.

Content that is shared as the organization should take on a voice that is appropriate to the

target audience of the post while still carrying some personality of the person creating the

content. Looking at research on how youth use social media and the best way for them to

use it as an organization is important when setting guidelines. When it comes to using

social media as an organization, each person that creates content is going to approach the

social media in their own unique way. Treem & Leonardi (2013) refer to this variance in

the use of social media as affordance. Social media tools are available to each individual

using the social media but they will not be seen or approached the same by every single

individual (Treem & Leonardi, 2013). This communication plan will need to be

developed in a way that creates a voice for the organization that will allow variances,

such as style, to exist. Using social media as a focus for communication is important

because millennials are present on those platforms and do engage with them (Garcia

Galera, Fernandex Munoz, Porto Pedrosa, 2017). Garcia Galera et al., (2017) found that

millennials will participate and become advocates for causes on social media that

resonate with them. Youth feel empowered through social media because it gives them a

place to express themselves. Providing a communication plan that utilizes the social

media they know and understand can have a positive impact on the success of the plan.

  Understanding the structure and inner workings of the organization of DeMolay

and looking at research on what the organization is and is not helps to guide the

communication plan. The balance of power and control between adults and youths and

the youths feeling empowered will be critical in developing a successful communication

plan. Not much research has been done on communication within youth development

organizations so this project will fill that gap. Research on how youth use social medias

and other types of communication that will be included in the communication is

important in order to shape the communication plan to be effective.

Chapter 6: Summary

To address the problem of communication within the organization of Northern California DeMolay, a communication plan was developed (See appendix A). The communication plan includes an overview, purpose, incorporates the 2020 Strategic Plan developed by the executive staff of Northern California DeMolay, goals and objectives for the communication plan, internal and external target audiences, DeMolay International's brand theme, measurement and evaluation, quality control, and communication tactics. Northern California DeMolay faces organizational change annually with the change of leadership. The organization did not have a formal communication plan causing inconsistent communication within the organization. Communication is crucial to an organization such as DeMolay that relies on volunteers and participation in order to keep the organization thriving. By developing a communication plan, the operations for communicating are explicitly stated and can be referenced when communicating on behalf of the organization.

The communication plan for Northern California DeMolay formally covers information that is needed to communicate effectively on behalf of the organization. Since many individuals communicate for the organization, it is important that the goals of the organization are incorporated into communication in order to advance the organization. The strategic plan developed by executive staff of Northern California DeMolay serves as reference for goals of the communication plan. The different target

audiences were identified in characterization of internal and external audiences to assist individuals in understanding the variety of audiences they will be communicating to on behalf of the organization.

Measurement and evaluation are important aspects of communication plans in order to understand the effectiveness of the plan. Social media platforms have insight tools that can assist with the measurement of engagement. While the outcome of this communication plan will not be seen in the space of time allowed for this project, the organization must be able to gauge their own performance so they may do so in the future as well. Other outcomes of the communication plan will be seen in the participation of events and programs of the organization.

With multiple individuals communicating on behalf of the organization, the need for quality control is pressing. The section on quality control provides guidelines to maintain quality in communication such as grammatical standards, accessibility to communication platforms, protocol on the dissemination of sensitive information, and an annual check on the organization's communication. These are all small details that provide cohesion in the communication of the organization.

Two different categories of communication tactics are included in the communication plan, long-term and short-term. The short-term communication tactics are the tactics presently being used by the organization and this section includes information useful to structuring communication. The long-term communication tactics are tactics the organization could pursue in the future. This section is included to remind individuals that other forms of communication should be considered in order for communication to remain effective.

A list of eight principles was identified in order to connect the research to the plan since the research done on this project is not feasible to present to the organization (see appendix B). The first four principles identified anchor around the youth-adult relationship that youth development organizations balance on. These principles manifest in the balance of control between the youth and adults within the communication plan. The youth will take the lead on parts of the communication plan while other portions remain the responsibility of the adults. The balance of power will shift with every new group that comes in annually and the communication plan will reflect that organizational change. The members should feel supported in learning the best practices of communication while preparing to become autonomous. The last four principles capture organizational communication and public relations tactics with capturing and embracing change, audience engagement, incorporating voice of the communicator, and thinking of communication as transactional.

The communication plan developed is a formal plan for effective communication tailored to the organization of Northern California DeMolay. The plan incorporates research from organizational communication, public relations, and youth development organizations to address problems with communication in Northern California DeMolay. The communication plan will see annual change but is a designated space that allows the communication for the jurisdiction to be discussed, planned, and understood. The future utilization of this plan will help the organization itself thrive.

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APPENDIX A. COMMUNICATION PLAN

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW

This plan is designed to improve the overall success of Northern California DeMolay. In order to uphold relevance and effectiveness, this plan should be reviewed and modified annually as the new Jurisdictional team takes their place. All individuals creating content on behalf of Northern California DeMolay should be familiar with all components of this plan.

This communication plan will aid the organization to successfully execute communication and marketing, which supports the strategic plan for the jurisdiction. This plan creates consistent communication themes, messaging, tones, and organization in communication and marketing. Additionally, this plan will serve to increase overall awareness for target audiences and highlight the work the organization does.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to establish strategies for consistent communication that will reach all those associated with Northern California DeMolay. The creation of a brand theme enables consistency between all individuals that are communicating on behalf of the organization. This plan establishes guidelines for communication with both internal and external audiences, captures goals and objectives, audiences, messages, media, measurements, and evaluation for communication purposes.

The overall purpose of this communication plan is to increase visibility of the organization and aid the organization in the execution of the strategic plan. The strategic plan for the jurisdiction serves as a guide in the development of this communication plan. In return, the communication plan will allow the members and individuals associated

with the organization to receive the information vital to support the jurisdiction's objectives.

2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

The following strategic plan was implemented in 2017 by the Executive Officer of Northern California DeMolay. The text can be found on the Northern California DeMolay website (https://www.norcaldemolay.com).

Throughout 2016, Northern California DeMolay conducted a self-evaluation of its member, chapters, and jurisdiction operations and programs. This work resulted in the creation of four focus areas: Character Development, Leadership Training, Relationship Building, and Governance and Administration.

Character Development - Engagement of DeMolay members in ritual, facilitated discussions, and mentoring designed to deepen members' knowledge and application of the values of DeMolay, which results in understanding of community needs and developing youth-led responses.

Relationship Building - Creation of an environment that welcomes new members, parents, and advisors to the Order, which is fostered by providing positive and robust experiences for everyone, offering new opportunities for younger boys, and nurturing life-long friendships.

Leadership Training - Instruction and hands-on experiences that teach planning, project management, public speaking, responsibility, and teamwork.

Governance & Administration - Adoption of policies and best practices that create transparent and efficient operation of chapters and the jurisdiction, which includes having jurisdictional leaders available to assist chapters, a comprehensive

communication plan, and education for all advisors. (Northern California DeMolay, 2017)

COMMUNICATION PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goals of the plan are to:

1. Generate greater visibility for the organization through a comprehensive communication and marketing plan that not only keeps the membership informed about events, but also elevates the understanding of the value of the organization and its activities.
2. Promote member networking, educational, and marketing opportunities to increase member engagement and retention.

These goals will help the organization to achieve the following objectives:

1. Increase visibility and awareness of DeMolay

2. Advance the Jurisdiction's Strategic Plan for 2020

3. Ensure that key audiences are well informed

4. Support the Jurisdiction's events and activities

5. Positively impact the reputation of the Organization

TARGET AUDIENCES
Internal Audiences

    1. Current Members - DeMolay members, ages 12-21, and members of affiliated organizations that are part of the Sweetheart Program (girls ages 14-20).

    2. Adult Volunteers - Staff members and advisors for Jurisdiction, Division, and Chapter levels.

External Audiences

    1. Prospective Members

2. Alumni - Previous DeMolay members and members of the Sweetheart program (ages 21 and older).

3. Parents - Parents of current members that have limited connection with the organization.

4. Masonic Community - Members of other Masonic groups (ages 21 and older).

DeMOLAY INTERNATIONALS'S BRAND THEME

The DeMolay Brand is iconic and has a vast history of hundreds of thousands of members, advisors, and supporters since its inception in 1919. It's only fitting that our modern visual identity match the integrity, confidence, and reputation of our worldwide leadership. (DeMolay Style Guide, 2015)

When using the logo, the Style Guide for DeMolay International should be consulted.

DeMolay's motto "Building Tomorrow's Leaders Today" should be reflected through communications. The professional tone set by the reputation of the organization should be adhered to while still incorporating the voice of the individual creating the communication content.

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

A variety of methods will be employed in order to measure the effectiveness of the communications and marketing efforts:

1. Membership retention rate

2. Membership recruitment numbers

3. Event and program attendance

4. Publicity efforts success determined by:

    1. Social media analytics

        1. Facebook Insights

        2. Instagram Insights

2. Website analytics

3. Email analytics

QUALITY CONTROL

In order to maintain high standards, individuals communicating on behalf of the jurisdiction must follow editing responsibilities. Content produced by one member will be proofread by another individual before the content is published/distributed. The individual proofreading will be familiar with this communication plan and will check for spelling, proper tone for the target audience, and ensure that visual aids are effective.

Access to communication tactics utilized by the Jurisdiction will be monitored by members of the executive staff. The log-in information for all accounts will be held by members of the Executive Staff and members of the Jurisdictional team during their year of office. Upon the annual change of officers (Convention), the accounts will be secured with change of password and a review of individuals with access will be conducted.

Information on a sensitive topic will be confirmed prior to dissemination and approved by the Executive Director. For example, the death of individuals associated with the organization can be announced only by a member of the Executive Staff and must be approved by the Executive Director prior to dissemination.

A check on the communication presence of the organization should occur annually. In order to gauge how the organization is communicating, both executive leadership and youth leadership should evaluate the different ways of communicating as if they are a new person seeing it for the first time. Take in every detail of how the communication reaches the audience and see it from the audience perspective rather than

the communicator perspective. Strengths, weaknesses, and limitations should be observed and considered before setting up the goals for communication in the coming year.

COMMUNICATION TACTICS

This section of the communication plan should be viewed as a "living document." Changes should be made annually to this section in order to deliver the best communication practices. Youth leadership should take the lead on the best communication practices with the active members while executive leadership should take the lead on communicating with the adult volunteers of the organization.

To effectively communicate with all target audiences, different communication tactics will be utilized by both the youth leadership and adult leadership. The following communication tactics present concrete ways to communicate in order to achieve the goals of this communication plan. Consistency in utilization and frequency is important for reliable communication the audience can count on. Relevant content targeted to audiences furthers the organization's brand and image and helps to achieve the goals of the strategic plan.

Short-Term Communication Tactics

The following communication tactics are presented as short term as they can be implemented immediately to further the communication of the organization.

Email Communication

Communication provided by email will be distributed using MailChimp, an online based marketing automation platform that provides users with easy-to-create email campaigns. MailChimp streamlines the sending of email campaigns through preset

layouts and easily accessing the emails of all subscribers. Sending through MailChimp

also allows receivers to easily unsubscribe or change their email preferences.

Email	Schedule	Audience	Purpose	Lead on Content
Advisor Pipeline	Twice monthly	Adult Volunteers, Parents, Alumni	Inform advisors on organizational business, upcoming events, jurisdictional programs registration deadlines and schedules,	Executive Staff
Monthly Update	Once monthly	Members, Adult Volunteers, Parents, Masonic Community, Alumni	Upcoming monthly information, event registration and schedule, chapter events and visitations	Youth Leadership
Targeted Emails	As needed	Members, Adult Volunteers, Parents. Alumni	Provide information/ encourage participation in upcoming event	As needed

Social Media

Several social media platforms will be utilized in order to reach all target

audiences.

Social media posts should utilize current best practices for each individual platform.

Content on social media should be specific to the individual platform and geared towards

the target audience of the platform. Social media content should accomplish one of the following goals: inform, engage, celebrate and/or publicize. Current social media platforms and their URLs are as follows:

- Facebook - facebook.com/norcaldemolay

- Instagram - instagram.com/norcaldemolay

- Twitter - twitter.com/ncdademolay

Facebook and Instagram are priority platforms due to their large following of target audiences. The maintenance of other platforms are important to maintain the reputation of the organization.

Platform	Audience	Post Frequency	Strengths, Weakness, Limitations
Facebook	Adult Volunteers, Masonic Community, Alumni, Members, Prospective Members	Daily	*Strengths*: Admin feature shows who can post to the page, can receive direct messages from individuals and all admin can respond, easily reach a large public audience, can add links, easily provide a large amount of information, posts can be scheduled, drafts of posts can be viewed by other admin before being published *Weaknesses*: Posts can get lost in individuals' newsfeed, younger members are not as likely to have a Facebook account *Limitations*: Audience must have a Facebook account in order to see the page and posts

Platform	Audience	Post Frequency	Strengths, Weakness, Limitations
Instagram	Members, Alumni, Adult Volunteers, Prospective Members, Masonic Community	Daily	*Strengths*: Large audience of younger members, focus of post is picture *Weaknesses*: Harder to provide a large amount of information, cannot add active links to posts *Limitations*: Audience must have Instagram to see posts, algorithm used by Instagram means posts may not end up in newsfeed,
Twitter	Members, Masonic Community, Alumni, Adult Volunteers, Prospective Members, Masonic Community	As needed	*Strengths*: Easily provide links, hashtags, feed algorithm makes it easier to control when people will see posts *Weaknesses*: Harder to provide large amount of information *Limitations*: Length can only be 280 characters

GroupAhead

This mobile app is currently being used by the adult volunteers of the organization. It includes a homepage that is a newsfeed of other users' updates. There is also a calendar function, a messaging function, and listing of other users with contact

information. Updates should be provided weekly and interaction on the app is important

to keep engagement and usage up.

<u>Printed Communications</u>

The Jurisdiction will send out newsletters targeted to specific audiences. These

newsletters will be sent out at scheduled times throughout the year in order to

Newsletter	Audience	Frequency	Content Coordinators
NorCal Update	Members and Adult Volunteers	Four times per year	Youth Leadership
Alumni Update	Alumni	Twice per year	Alumni Director
DeMolay Update	Donors & Potential Donors	Twice per year	DeMolay Foundation

<u>Website</u>

The website, having undergone a recent redesign, is now mobile friendly and

includes a strong layout and an aesthetically pleasing look. Information included on the

homepage should be updated frequently in order to feature important upcoming events.

The calendar on the website serves as a good central calendar but does need support

through other forms of communication (i.e., reminders through social medias and

newsletters) in order to bring in more participation from chapters.

<u>Media Relations</u>

Opportunities for media outreach will primarily fall on the chapter level. If

chapters do media relations, those should be highlighted through communication tactics

by NorCal. In the case of Jurisdiction-wide events that can showcase the high points of

the organization, a media relations plan for that event could be considered.

Long-Term Communication Tactics:

The following communication tactics are presented as long-term since they can provide a future direction for the organization's longer term communication goals.

NorCal DeMolay App

NorCal launched a new app in March 2018. The beginning set up and promotion of the app is important to its success. Engagement in the communication on the app will encourage participation in the app by the audience. "How to" videos and features posted on other social medias will help the audience become acquainted with the app before use.

LinkedIn

Northern California DeMolay is listed as a company on LinkedIn. The presence of the organization on this social media platform could be a use to support alumni and further the marketing of the organization. NorCal DeMolay's LinkedIn page should be updated and follow the professional tone of LinkedIn. Attention to this page could be a future direction for the organization.

Snapchat

Snapchat as a social media platform is being used by active members. It is a newer social media platform and the way it is used is changing as it establishes its place in the world of social media. This social media platform should be discussed by DeMolay to see if it would be an effective additional communication vehicle.

New Social Medias

With the world of social media ever-changing, the social medias being used by the different targeted audiences should remain on the radar of those using this

communication plan. The social medias being most used should be the ones receiving

priority on communication. In other words, go where the audience is.

APPENDIX B. EIGHT PRINCIPLES

Through extensive research on youth development organizations and organizational communication, the following principles emerged as the leading factors to be considered. These principles should be kept at the forefront in communication.

1. Youth-Adult Power Dynamic

In youth development organizations, the balance of power is important to the success of the organization. The youth should feel supported and guided while having time to be autonomous. The shared responsibility of the adults and youth in the communication of the organization is a manifestation of the balance of power. Since the executive team sees more stability than the youth leaders, they are the pillars for communication. Once the youth

2. Youth-Empowerment

Youth-empowerment is not the relinquishing of all control. Jennings et al., present the youth empowerment as six dimensions including "a welcoming and safe environment; meaningful participation and engagement; equitable power-sharing between youth and adults; engagement in critical reflection on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes; participation in sociopolitical process to effect change; and integrating individual- and community-level empowerment" (p. 41, 2006). Here again we see the importance of the youth-adult power dynamic.

3. Youth View of Leadership

The youth leadership that will be taking part in creating content for the communication plan should be able to see some of their own ideas come to life. At the beginning of the Jurisdictional year, the officers should brainstorm what they want to see

and how they would like to be seen. Their communication will shape how they are seen and in turn, shape how the jurisdiction is seen. The youth need to be brought into the model as well as full participants.

4. Youth Voice

The members of the organization should feel they have a voice. By bringing out the individual in the communication, they can see themselves in the organization and will be more encouraged. If the members ask for something, the communication should be adjusted, if possible, to give the members their voice.

5. Capture change, embrace change

With rapidly changing technology, the way we communicate changes also. Change will occur to the communication plan yearly with an annual check on communication and the incorporation of new goals when youth leadership changes over.

6. Audience engagement

Give the audience reason to engage so they feel the organization is communicating with them and not to them. Not all communication can encourage a level of engagement but if it can, it should at times. For example, posts on social media should encourage audience participation periodically.

7. Voice of Communicator

It takes a team effort to keep the communication for the organization going. While communication should take on a tone of professionalism. It should also carry the tone of the individual posting. Each person involved with NCDA represents a larger audience and their tone will appeal to others. Bringing variety to the communication will keep different segments of the audience engaged.

8. Communication as transactional

Communication within organizations is always occurring. The organization itself is a vehicle for communication. Often times we think of communication coming from the upper level of an organization as being one-way. Thinking of the communication as a chance for more engagement and to spark discussion will enhance the communication that occurs. This can very easily be incorporated through social media posts. This way of seeing communication should be incorporated in more ways that the organization does communication. Ways to offer engagement include posing questions and offering ways for users to respond on social media posts.