Communication strategy: Spreading the word

Getting the message out about your event is a critical component of its success. Having a winning communication strategy will help you raise interest in your event, get the most people out there on the day, and ensure it is talked about long after completion!

How to develop a killer communication strategy for every event

1. **Know what you are communicating.** The first step ensures that you plan your event carefully, and that you have a genuine reason for holding it. This could be as simple as “a trial had an unexpected result that you might find interesting”, or “we’d like to share what we’ve accomplished this year”. Whatever the reason, it has to be clear in your mind before you can even think about communicating it to your audience.

2. **Work out your target audience.** This step should be pretty straightforward; however, perhaps consider if there is a particular angle you could take that might interest people who don’t usually come to your events?

3. **Know the message you want to communicate.** The message is the key idea or central theme of your event. A good starting point is to sit down with pen and paper, and write a short statement about what you want to achieve. A snappy ‘sound bite’ (i.e. a quotable phrase) is often the best way to go; make it something that your audience will remember.

4. **Work out the best method to communicate to your target audience/s.** Now that you have your message and audience, how do you go about getting it to them? There are a vast number of options available; a flyer, email, through your website, through the GGA (Calendar, Newswire, website, contacts, etc.), or a public announcement. It’s important that you choose the option that best suits your particular event, your target audience, and of course, your budget.

5. **Keep track of your strategy.** Are you effectively raising awareness? Are you reaching the right number of people? Do you need to alter your strategy? How is your budget looking? A helpful tip: use a checklist to keep your group’s communication strategy on track and ensure that you complete all the necessary steps.
6. Review your strategy. Evaluating your strategy is incredibly important as it allows you to determine the success of your campaign. Did you reach the right people and the right numbers? What could/should you have done differently? What worked? What didn’t? Was your plan cost effective? This last step will help you to tweak your communication strategy and improve it for use at your next event!

Some further tips...

• Allocate someone from the group to be the key contact person for the media.
• Always get your copy to the media in good time. Ring up and check for submission dates, but aim to get it in a month in advance (two weeks is the absolute minimum). Make sure you include:
  - What, where, when it is, and who will be there;
  - Why it is important to farmers and the community;
  - Quotes from the chairperson;
  - Meal arrangements and alternate wet weather arrangements.
• Arrange for a media interview of the host/key from the group.
• Be prepared. However unlikely it may seem that you will be swamped with calls/emails, you need a plan to cover this possibility. Before you begin contacting broadcasters, or sending out emails, make sure that you can meet any potential demand for the event that the publicity may generate. Have an attractive circular printed up and ready to send out to those who request more information about you.
• Use the process of promoting your event to build up your media contact list. Record every media contact and its outcomes. To start with, the GGA can provide a list of media contacts who work for grain-related publications.
• Organise for someone to take photos during the day for later publicity. Close up photos featuring people are best.