Find Your Niche

Using evaluation to improve business communications

November 1, 2018
About Innovation Network

Our work is concentrated in six practice areas:
About Me

• 6 years in communications
• Master’s of Social Work
• Evaluator at Innovation Network
DEMONSTRATION OVERVIEW

1. Project origins

2. Step-by-step approach
   - Phase I: Research
   - Phase II: Analysis
   - Phase III: Vision
   - Phase IV: Strategy

3. Resources

Please ask questions as we go!
PHASE I: RESEARCH

Evaluation Questions
1. Who is the audience?
2. What content is put out there?
3. What content are people engaging with?

Competitors/Partners

Innovation Network

Streams of Content
- Website
- Newsletter
- Social Media
- Publications (self-published and peer-reviewed)

PHASE II: ANALYSIS

Review data
1. What are our strengths/weaknesses?
2. Which of our practice areas come through?
3. How do we compare to others in the field?
4. Where are our competitors’ gaps?

PHASE III: OUR VISION

Define goals
1. What do we want to achieve?
2. Are we communicating to who and about what we want?

PHASE IV: STRATEGY

Develop a Communications Strategy
1. What content do we prioritize for each audience?
2. How should it be communicated?
3. How should we change our communications to meet our goals and stay competitive?
Research

Phase I
PHASE I: RESEARCH

Evaluation Questions
1. Who is the audience?
2. What content is put out there?
3. What content are people engaging with?

Competitors/Partners

Innovation Network

Streams of Content
- Website
- Newsletter
- Social Media
- Publications (self-published and peer-reviewed)
1. Listed partners / competitors

Who else is working in your space?

**Listed:**
- Name
- Website
- Location
- Size
- Income (From 990)
- Org Type (private or no?)
- Areas of work
- Client
- Mission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Org Type</th>
<th>Areas of work</th>
<th>Client</th>
<th>Mission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Identified targets

5

Five targets selected

Diversity of location

Organizations similar to ours, and those we aspire to
3. Dove into targets’ communications

### Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics published</th>
<th>Types of materials posted</th>
<th>Length of content</th>
<th>Amount of content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Popular topics</th>
<th>Popular types of materials</th>
<th>Popular lengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Audience

| Who is being targeted | Who is engaging with content |
Analysis

Phase II
4. Reviewed by committee

• Communications Committee pulled out interesting information

• Decided what to include on data placemats

• Initial discussion
5. Reviewed by all staff

- Data Placemats at retreat
- Brainstormed takeaways and ideas
6. Analyzed all data

Across all media types:

1. Who do our competitors communicate to?
   □ Where are the gaps?

2. What type of content do our competitors communicate about?
   □ Where are the gaps?

3. What content are people interested in?
   □ What are the gaps?

4. What are our strengths?
   □ Where do we fall short?
Our Vision

Phase III
Communications Plan

PHASE III: OUR VISION

Purpose

Goals

PHASE IV: STRATEGY

Objective 1

Objective 2

Audience 1 message & activities

Audience 2 message & activities

Audience 1 message & activities

Audience 2 message & activities
7. Developed a purpose and goals

Statement of Purpose:
*Why are we communicating in the first place?*

Goals:
*Specifically, what do we want our organization to achieve in the next 3 years? Consider our organizational goals*
Final purpose and goals

Statement of Purpose:
Innovation Network communicates in order to:
• Create **clarity** about who we are and what we do,
• Promote evaluation and **evaluative thinking** in the social sector,
• Showcase our **work** and gain recognition, and
• Engage, build, and sustain **relationships**.

Goal #1:
Nonprofits are adept at describing their work through a framework such as Theory of Change
Decision-making process

- Communications Committee brainstorm
- All-staff brainstorm
- Leadership Team refining and approval
Questions to consider

Refine goals by asking:

- **Is this a goal** - something we want our communications to achieve in the long run?

- **Is this goal tied to our organizational goals**?

- **Does this goal make sense for where we are at as an organization right now**?

- **Is this goal specific enough that our small team can make progress towards it**?
Strategy

Phase IV
Objective:

*What communications steps can you take to achieve your goal? Good objectives should be SMART.*
Final intermediate objectives

Statement of Purpose

Goal #1:
Nonprofits are adept at describing their work through a framework such as Theory of Change

Objective #1:
By the end of the year, increase by 50% the focus of messages to be on TOC and similar frameworks

Objective #2:
By the end of year 2, double the number of nonprofits developing a Logic Model through our Logic Model Builder on PointK
Questions to consider

• Thinking backwards, what steps need to be achieved to meet this goal?

• Who is affected by this goal?

• Is the objective we created SMART?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Specific</th>
<th>Measurable</th>
<th>Attainable</th>
<th>Relevant</th>
<th>Time-bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Be as concrete and focused as you can.</td>
<td>Ensure your objective is quantifiable. Can you easily put a number to it?</td>
<td>Is the objective realistic considering your current audience and capacity?</td>
<td>Choose meaningful objectives. Are they directly related to your goals?</td>
<td>Decide the time period that is most useful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Defined messages and activities

**Statement of Purpose**

**Goal**

**Objective**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>What they need to know</th>
<th>Key Comms Messages</th>
<th>Methods/ channel</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Responsible party</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


Final messages and activities

Statement of Purpose

Goal #1: Nonprofits are adept at describing their work through a framework such as Theory of Change

Objective #1: By the end of the year, increase by 50% the focus of messages to be on TOC and similar frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>What they need to know</th>
<th>Key Comms Messages</th>
<th>Methods/ channel</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Responsible party</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofits</td>
<td>- TOCs are useful</td>
<td>- We are reliable</td>
<td>- Newsletter</td>
<td>- Newsletter article on TOC every month</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>#TOC articles posted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- We have tools to help</td>
<td>and provide useful</td>
<td>- Twitter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># opens to TOC resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions to consider

Defining audience:

- Whose knowledge, attitudes and behavior must be changed in order to meet our goal?
- Who is affected if we succeed in this goal?
- Who else might be able to influence the primary audience?

Defining messages:

- What do they need to know?
- What is the basic message we need to get across?

Defining methods:

- What types of media does this audience prefer?
- Are there existing forums we can tap into?
- What additional materials could be created?

Ensuring success:

- What are some indicators or specific measures to show we are making progress towards our goals?
10. Implement!

Visit us @ Booth #7!
Resources

1. Research Project template
2. Communications Plan template
3. Data Placemat template
4. Questions to Consider handout

Find these at http://bit.ly/Eval18Niche
Questions?

Alissa Marchant, MSW
Associate
amarchant@innonet.org
@WheresMAlissa