

switchasia



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RAISE AWARENESS & DRIVE ENGAGEMENT

Communicating *effectively* about Sustainable
Consumption and Production (SCP)

WHO WE ARE

SWITCH-Asia was launched in 2007 as part of the European Union's priority to support the transition of Asian countries to a low-carbon, resource-efficient and circular economy while promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns (SCP) within Asia along with greener supply chains between Asia and Europe. The programme currently covers 24 countries.

Through our experience we have learned that a better understanding of the environmental and social impacts of products and services is needed right now if we want to reverse environmental degradation in Asia and Europe. In times of growing concern about global warming, environmental deterioration, pollution, deforestation, and resource depletion, communicating effectively and raising awareness about the importance of SCP and sustainable living remain challenging tasks – and not just in Asia, but globally. This practical guide has been designed to overcome some of the challenges we encounter when communicating sustainability.

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KEY INSIGHTS



Zinaida Fadeeva

Team Leader, SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility

Understanding the art and science of communication means moving away from the kind of untargeted formulas resembling information ‘dispatches’ and sound-bites that only create an illusion of ‘engagement’ while draining resources. Using language and concepts that partners and stakeholders will not understand, giving them arguments that do not relate to their context or culture, or setting up fora that they will never visit, turn communication into a one-way path to failure. The communication we are seeking to establish will help to co-create new knowledge and actions in locally relevant and culturally appropriate ways, so that our messages will be as sustainable and enduring as the changes we want to achieve.



Arab Hoballah

Senior Systems and Sustainability Expert
Executive Director, SEED
Ex-Chief, SCP, UNEP

Policies and incentives require relevant pro-active communication to increase understanding and implementation – in other words, sticks and carrots will remain on the shelf if not preceded by, and accompanied with and followed up with tambourines, that is, communication that explains situations and induces action. Well-defined, contextualised and targeted communication on SCP provides the knowledge needed and helps move away from green- and net-zero-washing. It is a cornerstone for responsible action, a gamechanger in the transition to sustainability.

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01

A ROADMAP FOR
STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
PLANNING

A ROADMAP FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLANNING

How can you improve the ability of your organisation, programme or project to be heard on the issues that matter?

Sustainable development practitioners are increasingly aware that communication means so much more than transmitting and exchanging information from one person to another. Promoting social change and co-creating meaning and knowledge are the real targets of successful communications.

This short guide is designed to help you create a clear, effective, targeted, and achievable *communication plan* following six key steps:

- 1.** Right now, investigate and assess who you are, where you are, what you want and how you will get there

- 2.** Set specific, measurable objectives

- 3.** Identify all target audiences

- 4.** Create compelling key messages

- 5.** Identify strategies and channels to transmit your messages

- 6.** Execute your plan, then track your progress

WHY SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATIONS?

How we talk about environmental and sustainability issues affects how people grasp problems and solutions alike – and it's what drives effective action.

Because **sustainability** has become a major problem today, governments, businesses, scientists, non-profit organisations (NGOs), financial institutions and individuals are increasingly understanding that unless the message makes sustainability completely clear to all audiences, nothing is going to change.

Extensive research and lessons learned from the implementation of SWITCH-Asia's Communication Strategy in 24 countries in Asia have shown that organisations and stakeholders involved in Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) are also recognising that **the media channel IS the message**, and that having an online presence is essential in order to:

Establish the authority and legitimacy of organisations, programmes, projects at local, national and transnational levels.

Strengthen the identity recognition ('branding') of one's organisation, programme, project, initiative or event, and boost visibility across media channels and platforms.

Ensure credibility and gain trust for mobilising resources, spearheading fundraising activities, requesting donations, and launching calls to action for specific causes.

Build and strengthen communities of like-minded actors and stakeholders invested in finding sustainable solutions and innovative answers.

Design and construct partnerships and networks for initiating conversations with community members, scientists, government representatives, businesses,

organisations, institutions, in addition to gaining supporters and allies for one's cause, exchanging knowledge and services and reaching targeted beneficiaries.

Mobilise advocacy efforts and promote awareness by using social media platforms to express political opinions, actively encourage policymakers to pay attention to global environmental and sustainability issues, influence policy decisions, and strengthen collective and participatory action.

Communicate and share experience and best practices, and transform the clichés into accurate, factual speech, by telling human-interest stories that audiences can easily relate to and switching the discourse from apocalyptic and 'green-washing' statements to the real, positive and empowering narratives of those who are already championing social change. Stories are powerful tools that move people to take action.

Yet, as findings from [The Global NGO Technology Report](#) (2019) show, while nine out of ten non-profit organisations around the world are regularly using communication tools and social media to reach their supporters and donors, most of them have no formal written communication plan or social media strategies in place.

THE CHALLENGE

Communication without a plan leads to limited outreach and missed opportunities. Strategically elaborated communication leads to increased knowledge and greater impact, and more chance of solid results.

A large majority of the world's population is still struggling to understand sustainability and environmental issues along with the available solutions already at hand. While many claim to want a sustainable world, not enough people, organisations or even governments have yet to buy into sustainability, missing the big picture of a 'system approach' while focusing on topical local concerns. Could communication be part of the problem?

The SWITCH-Asia experience has identified several trends in communicating about SCP and Sustainability.

LANGUAGE

Academics, scientists, engineers, sustainability professionals, and policymakers in both Asia and Europe still too often communicate about SCP using complex technical jargon and terminology that only insiders can comprehend. This then leads to too many one-sided messages resulting in reduced audience engagement. As Joe E. Heimlich, Co-Director for the COSI Centre for Research and Evaluation explains, 'Jargon can be a tool, a weapon, a wall, and/or a bridge. Jargon is important shorthand within a field, but that language can be used to keep others out, or to shut others down' ('Communication Fundamentals', [*American Association for the Advancement of Science*](#)).

Evidence-based scientific research is critical to advancing sustainable development. But to ensure any outreach at all, research must be presented as simple and tangible, and it must be widely shared across multiple media channels. **Successful public engagement with science is built on accurate, clear, concise and jargon-free communications.**

Scientists and SCP practitioners have an unprecedented choice of outlets to directly communicate with their target audiences. News and specialised science journals, social media, podcasts, images, videos, graphics, oral presentations during events are among the many available options. At SWITCH-Asia we have learned that **when strong relationships and knowledge exchanges between sustainability professionals and communication specialists are formed, more successful and effective communication efforts have been spearheaded.**

MEANING

The term 'sustainability' has been overused and over-simplified to the point of losing all meaning. Organisations, businesses, brands, influencers, the media, marketing and public relations specialists often fail to communicate accurately and responsibly about SCP due to limited knowledge about the subject, lack of research and facts-checking, and green-washing practices deliberately misleading consumers about organisations' environmental performance or the environmental benefits of products and services (***sustainability sells!***). Even though sustainability has become a household word, we cannot assume that all audiences understand the term in the same way. **Continuous explanation and clarification are required to ensure that people really understand SCP and related sustainability theme issues.**

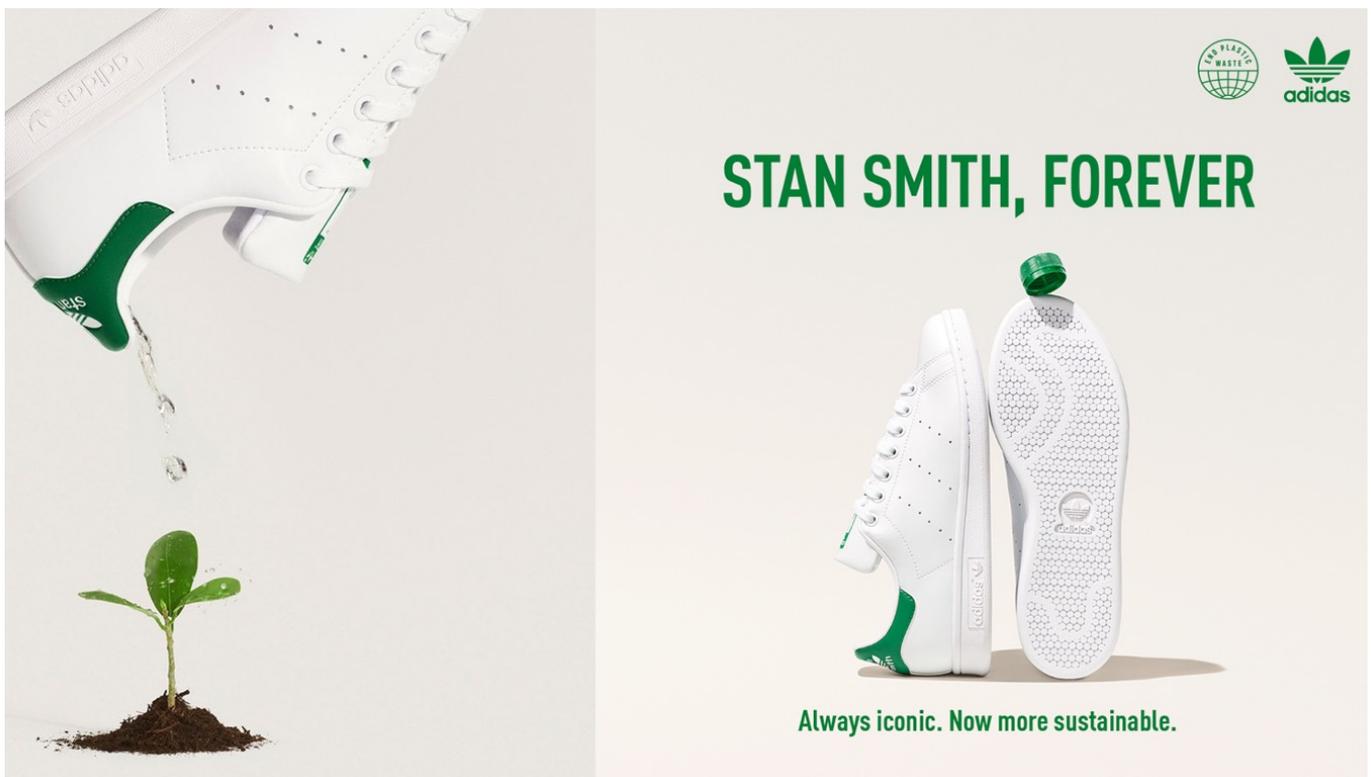


Figure 1: Adidas Stan Smith advertisement ([adidas group, 2021](#))

AESTHETICS

Visualizing sustainability is a challenging task simply because sustainability is an abstract idea that is difficult to visually represent. The current outdated images of **stock sustainability** (see Figure 2 – two hands cupped around plants and trees, green lightbulbs, wind turbines, water drops, globes, polar bears on melting ice, eco-friendly shopping tags, handshakes – among many other examples – all rely on irrelevant clichés that do not relate to people. Thus it is difficult for people to engage with and take action on the sustainability issues that matter, or even be motivated to change their own personal behaviour.



Figure 2: Free stock sustainability visuals

Promoting available alternatives to harmful production and consumption practices, or suggesting direct interventions that people can easily identify with and engage in have proven to be simple yet successful behaviour-change communication strategies. Creativity is essential, and design must be taken into consideration from the start of all SCP projects.



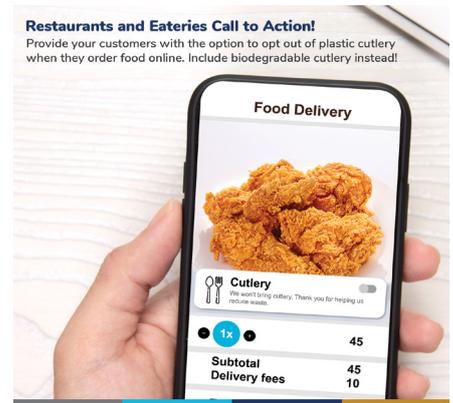
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Figure 3: SWITCH-Asia social media campaign visuals (2020-2021)

CULTURE

Sustainability, commonly defined as **meeting our needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs** (cf. United Nations Brundtland Commission, 1978), is a holistic approach to development in its broadest sense, that in addition to natural resources, also takes into consideration social and economic resources, as well as concerns for social equity, human rights and economic development.

Culture and language deeply influence how sustainability issues are viewed and approached in different contexts and situations. Since sustainability may mean different things to different people, **there cannot be a one-size fits all approach to communicating about sustainability**. The numerous traditional philosophies of sustainable living and balanced coexistence that are woven into the fabrics of Asian cultures and societies, for example [Sejahtera](#) in Malaysia, [Mottainai](#) in Japan, and the [Sufficiency Economy](#) in Thailand, just to name a few, clearly illustrate this principle.

Respect for cultural diversity and local traditions, along with an intercultural understanding of people's values, attitudes, behaviours and lifestyles are critical for effective SCP communication. Producing content in local languages and promoting accurate and positive representations of the people that will be the most affected by sustainability work ensures credibility, authenticity and audience engagement.

INTERCONNECTEDNESS

All too often sustainability issues are framed and communicated in silos. Economics, for example, is discussed as an isolated topic, with no mention of its interdependence and relevance with environmental and social issues. Moreover, communicators often fail to acknowledge that economic issues also relate to health, education, sustainable management of resources, poverty reduction and people's well-being. This 'unholistic' kind of thinking has resulted in limited coverage of sustainable development issues in the mass media.

A system-thinking holistic approach to sustainable development, one which enables us to achieve a given goal by fostering synergies while anticipating and mitigating conflicts between drivers and actors, and between goals and intervention strategies, is **essential to understanding sustainability challenges and successfully planning and implementing solutions in an integrated manner**. In applying systems analysis, the understanding of sustainability is enhanced, and this will lead to better communications and thus to an increase in public awareness of both the issues at stake and the available solutions.

THE PRIORITY

The problems of information overload in making your voice heard are many, but their solution is simple – your story, told by you.

Andrew Stanton, Filmmaker

Our increased exposure to media content on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, web pages, TV, radio and billboards (among others) means that today, the average person with access to technology and the Internet encounters an estimated 6–10 thousand ads per day ([PPC Protect, 2021](#)). And it is expected that these numbers will even increase exponentially with the growth of advertising across all media.

In this context of information overload, effective communications planning can help **target the right messages to the right audiences at the right time**, making a difference between a message with impact – and all the ones that will get ignored, or lost.

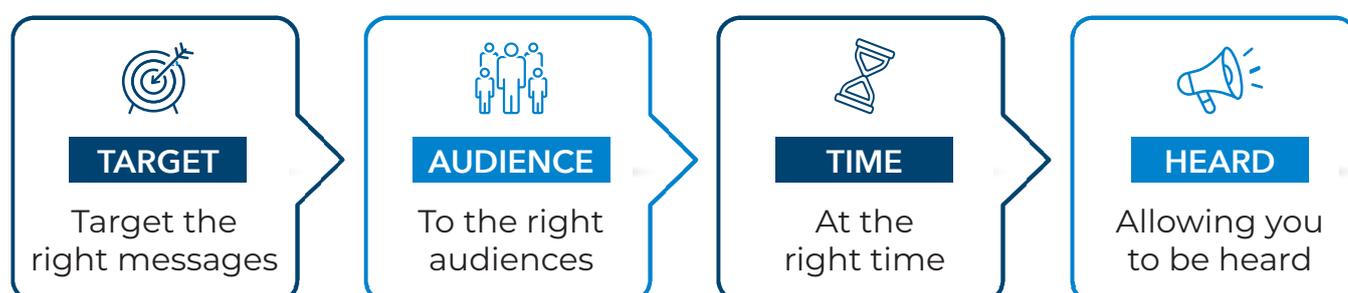


Figure 4: Effective communication planning

A good communication plan, elaborated in consultation with all the team members and departments in your organisation, also helps ensure that your communication efforts are aligned with your organisation, programme, or project's **vision and mission**, so that your activities can be designed to support and strengthen that vision and mission, rather than overlook or even undermine them.

02

LET'S GET STARTED:
STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
PLANNING

LET'S GET STARTED: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLANNING

1. RESEARCH AND BRANDING

The indispensable first step in developing an effective communication plan is to understand **who** you are, **where** you are right now, **what** you want and **how** you plan to get there.

Do you already have communication activities in place? Is your branding and identity well-recognised by your audience(s)? Are your publications and reports noticed, read and given value? Is your website attractive, user-friendly, and equipped with good search functions? Do audiences engage with your social media content?

Simple preliminary research can help you answer all these questions. It will also guide you in designing your communication plan in an informed manner, reducing the risks of losing time and money.

KNOW YOURSELF

Building a brand means knowing your story and building and sharing that story.

Tamara McCleary, Thulium LLC

Many non-profits are increasingly consulting marketing and communication experts to build a strong and recognisable brand and identity for their organisation, programme or project. However, while the majority strive to achieve a consistent look, only a few organisations use **Brand Style Guides** to help maintain consistency in their visual and written communications.

LOGO AND BRAND

Your identity starts with the name of your organisation, programme or project, and is a key component of your brand. It includes the images, symbols, words and colours that identify who you are.

LOGO = YOUR GRAPHIC IDENTITY

Together with other visuals, it reinforces your brand.

BRAND = WHO YOU ARE

It is the essence of your organisation, programme or project.

The most important elements of your visual and graphic identity are your **logo** and the **logotype** (see Fig 5).



Figure 5: SWITCH-Asia Sustainable and Equitable Shrimp Production and Value Chain Development in Vietnam (SusV) Project Logo

Your graphic identity has to work across all your communication channels and materials, everything from invitations to publications, roll-up banners, brochures, flyers, videos, website and social media, etc. (see the example below).

■ *Ask yourself:*

- Are my logo and logotype distinctive, easy-to-remember, unique?
- Are they consistently used in relation to each another?
- Are they simple, and can they be adapted for multiple uses?

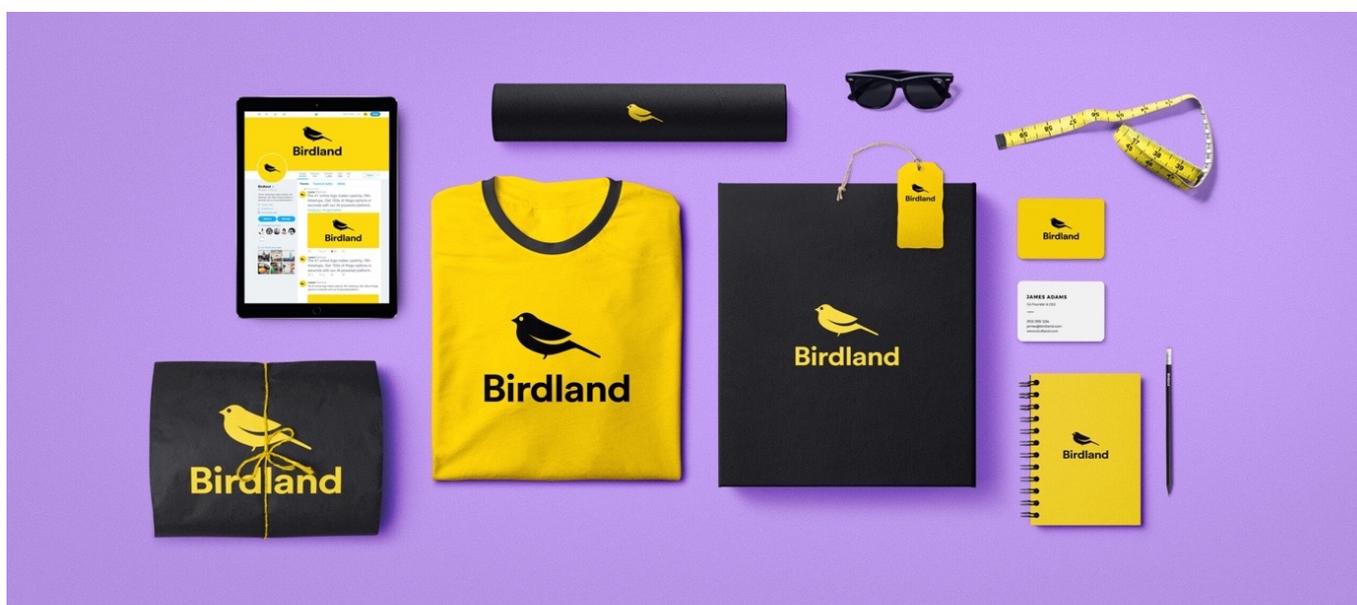


Figure 6: Consistent Birdland Branding featured in Looka (2021)

Remember that a good brand presence is defined by the *repetition* of the same logo, fonts, colours, and images used consistently across all your communications (see Fig. 6).



Figure 7: GlobalGiving Brand Guide 2021

What does a Brand Style Guide look like?

Brand Style Guides help maintain consistency in an organization's visual and written communications.

Key elements of Style Guides usually include:

1. Your Branding and Identity (Vision, Mission, Values)
2. Your Logo and how it is used
3. The Colours that identify who you are
4. Typography/Fonts used in your communications
5. Guidance on Imagery and Photographic choices

The Brand Style Guide from **GlobalGiving** (Fig. 7) is a good reference to follow when developing your own Style Guide. Click [here](#) to view the example.

2. YOUR COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

The trouble with not having a goal is that you can spend your life running up and down the field and never score.

Bill Copeland, Poet and Historian

Your organisation, project or programme's vision and mission, and the preliminary research you have conducted, are the starting points for identifying your communication objectives. In a successful communication plan, the overall **organisational** objectives and the **communication** objectives are aligned and mutually reinforcing.

■ ***Ask yourself and brainstorm in writing:***

WHAT

ARE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES?

HOW

CAN YOUR COMMUNICATION EFFORTS HELP MEET THESE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES?

When articulating your objectives, make sure you think

SMARTER

SPECIFIC

What do you want to accomplish? Why is this objective important? Who is involved? Where is the objective located? Which resources are involved?

MEASURABLE

How much? How many? What are the benchmarks/milestones? How will I know when the objective has been reached?

ACHIEVABLE

How can you accomplish the goal? How realistic is the objective? Do you need human and financial resources, and can you afford them?

RELEVANT

Is this objective worthwhile and valuable? Is the time right? Does it match other relevant objectives? Is it applicable to the current socio-economic, political and cultural environment?

TIMELY

When will this objective be achieved? What can you do today? What can you do three weeks from now? Six months from now? A year from now?

EVALUATED

Set a process with benchmarks in advance, and consider risk factors and potential challenges.

REVIEWED

Assess along the way, review and re-adjust your approach.

Setting SMARTER objectives allows you to clarify your ideas, organise them in a consistent manner, focus your efforts, use your time and resources productively, and increase your ability to achieve what you want.

3. IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

If your target audience isn't listening is not their fault, it's yours.

Seth Godin, Author and former Business Executive

Your audience is made up of the people you want to inform, transform or motivate to act. No matter what form your communication takes, as a communicator you must directly address audience expectations, or else anticipate little engagement in or action on your projects.

■ ***To target your audience you must know:***

WHO

YOUR AUDIENCE IS

WHAT

THEY CARE ABOUT

WHAT

THEY THINK OF YOUR ORGANISATION

WHAT

TYPE OF CONTENT THEY EXPECT

WHAT

INFORMATION MEANS AND CHANNELS THEY USE

HOW

YOU ARE GOING TO GET YOUR MESSAGES OUT TO **THEM**

Every organisation has both *internal* and *external* audiences.

INTERNAL AUDIENCE

The people within your organisation who will be affected by, and can influence, your message.

EXTERNAL AUDIENCE

The *primary* audience whose knowledge, attitudes and behaviour you seek to change or influence in order to meet your goals and communication objectives.

You may also have a *secondary* audience. While you may not target your message directly to these individuals, they may still be interested in learning about your work, goals and activities (for instance, journalists and media professionals, the general public, other organisations with a similar mandate, potential investors, etc.).

Audience Characteristics

■ **Ask yourself and brainstorm in writing:**

- Is my primary audience national, regional, global?
- What is their demographic (gender, ethnicity, age, language, education level, income, profession)?
- What is their knowledge, attitude and behaviour concerning the issues my project is addressing?
- Who influences them the most and what would motivate them to learn, change and take action?
- How can my objectives and messages align with what matters to them?
- To which media channels are they most frequently exposed?

4. ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder engagement is an important part of your communication planning. It involves getting to know your audience and interest groups better by listening and responding to those people who may be influenced or affected by your work and activities (see Figure 8-9, p. 24-25). If planned strategically, stakeholder consultation and engagement can result in increased opportunities to collaborate on shared challenges, build trust and credibility and improve the outcomes of your project or programme.

Key stakeholder engagement tools such as *group discussions and forums*, *presentations*, *group activities*, and *shared decision-making* can both improve people's understanding about your work and also deepen your understanding and knowledge of their views and positions.

As a result, these insights will help you better shape your key messages and craft your communication strategy in line with your audience's interests, needs, values and concerns. As part of the development of any communication strategy or plan, it is essential that stakeholder analysis is carried out at an early stage.

Key questions to address in your stakeholder analysis:

WHO?

Which stakeholder groups are to be engaged?

WHY?

Why is each stakeholder participating (objectives/ interests)?

WHAT?

What is the level of stakeholder engagement at each stage of the project?

HOW?

How will stakeholders be engaged?

WHEN?

What is the timeline for engagement activities, and how will they be sequenced, including information disclosure?

RESPONSIBILITIES

- How have roles and responsibilities for conducting stakeholder engagement been distributed among project partners?
 - What role will stakeholder representatives play?
 - Are stakeholder engagement facilitators required?
-

RESOURCES

What will the stakeholder engagement plan cost and under what budget?

(In [Summary of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy for Green Climate Fund-related Activities in Sri Lanka](#) , 2021)

A meaningful stakeholder engagement is:

- **Flexible:** Adaptable and responsive to national and local conditions and activity requirements
- **Timely:** Started early enough to identify key issues and influence related decisions
- **Clear:** Information is presented in clear, accessible and culturally appropriate formats
- **Balanced:** Two-way dialogue is facilitated, and all sides are given an opportunity to listen, exchange views and have their concerns addressed
- **Inclusive:** Vulnerable groups, minorities, members of different ethnic groups, among others, may have different needs and perspectives, as well as different approaches to engaging and decision-making and their point of view is taken into consideration
- **Transparent:** Fairness and impartiality is ensured throughout the process
- **Accountable:** Documentation for all meetings to keep track of the information disclosed, the groups and individuals who have been engaged, when and where meetings took place, key issues raised, commitments and agreements, and how stakeholder concerns have been addressed

(adapted from Green Climate Fund, 2019)

Prioritising and mapping stakeholders

Stakeholder Mapping is designed to help organise people, groups and organisations according to their positions, interests, expectations, contributions and influence towards your project or programme (see Figures 8 and 9 on the next two pages).

Since not all stakeholders will always share the same concerns or perspectives, it is important to create a *prioritised list or map* that will enable you to assess each group's level or intensity of engagement (high, medium, low). When prioritising stakeholders, you can take these points into consideration::



Figure 8: Prioritising Stakeholders

Stakeholders may include:



Government agencies and policy makers



International organisations and institutions



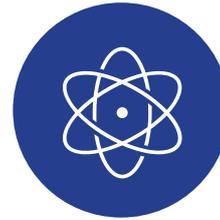
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)



Local communities



Business community, corporate partners and funding agencies



Research institutions, universities and scientific community



Opinion leaders and influencers



Sustainability Professionals



Consumers



Media organisations and institutions

Figure 9: Stakeholder mapping

Identifying your stakeholder communication approach

After having identified your stakeholders and their levels of engagement, a **stakeholder communication matrix** can be developed to help you create compelling messages to be targeted to your audience.

Stakeholder Name	Key Interests and Issues	Communication Approach	More effective communication tools and channels	Key messages needed	Actions Desired	Level of Participation
		<i>(existing communication tools and channels)</i>	<i>(what can be done differently / better?)</i>		<i>(if any)</i>	<i>(Interactive, Non-interactive/ High, Medium, Low)</i>

Table 1: Stakeholder Communication Matrix

AUDIENCES WITH AN INTEREST IN SCP

As public concern about the environment expands worldwide, many more people are showing an interest in learning about Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and related sustainability issues. Overall, we can identify two main types of potential audiences:

SPECIALISTS

Scientists, engineers, technical experts, researchers and practitioners working first-hand on sustainability issues. They will have extensive knowledge of the thematic areas your organisation is working on and can analyse your communications and data through an expert lens.

GENERALISTS

These are the people who have a broad interest in sustainability issues but who may not have the same in-depth knowledge as specialists. Generalists are interested in the bigger picture about your work rather than extensive technical details.

Note that communicating to Specialists and Generalists, as well as to other stakeholders, may require different approaches, tools and media channels, while still keeping in mind that even these audiences might not master the necessary knowledge or expertise on systems thinking or SCP-specific related issues. Hence the need for simple, clear and targeted messages.

5. CREATE COMPELLING KEY MESSAGES

THINK ISSUE, NOT PROJECT.

If you want your audience to care, you must create effective messages that will convince and induce them to think about the issues at stake, feel for them, and take action.

Now, more than ever, it has become urgent for sustainability and SCP scientists, researchers and experts to take an active role in engaging with and educating the public about what they do, why they do it and why it matters. Striking the right balance between science communication and skilful storytelling is one of the main challenges of sustainability communications.

Learning how to create compelling messages for your communications will help audiences understand the essence of the complex concepts and ideas often used to describe the nature of your work. It will at the same time help you convey the relevance of the issues at stake by bringing sustainability closer to people's daily lives.

MESSAGE OBJECTIVE

When developing your key messages, first ask yourself why you are creating them (objectives and purposes). Some messages may have multiple objectives.



Increase audience knowledge

(Inform, educated and raise awareness)



Change attitude

(Transform)



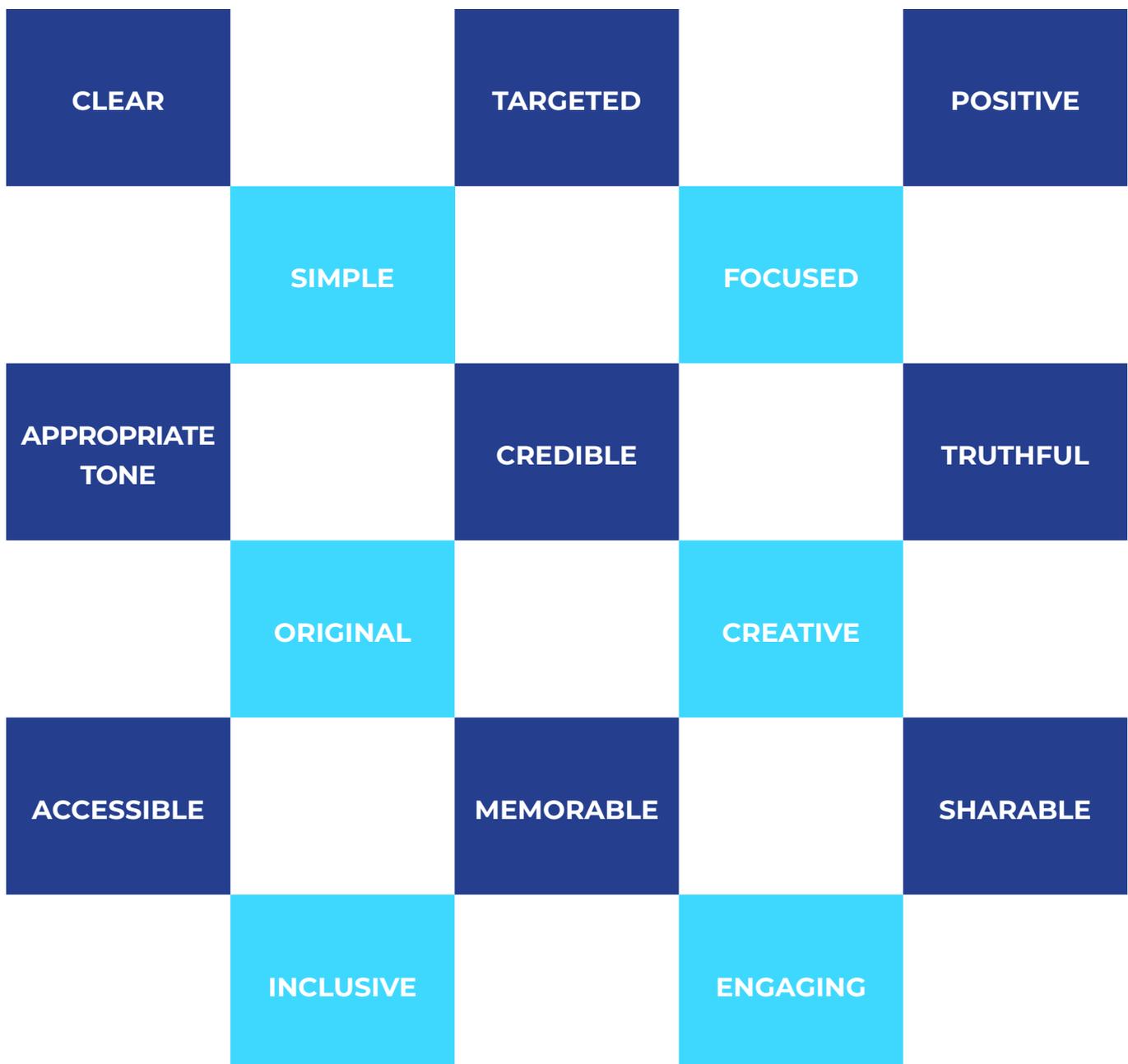
Change behaviour

(Take action)

Figure 10: Message objective

Know your content. Messages that work should resonate with your audience's values, beliefs and interests.

These are some of the characteristics that define compelling messages. *Can you add more?*



6. IDENTIFY STRATEGIES AND CHANNELS TO GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT

Some communication channels are better suited than others to deliver different types of contents.

Now that your dynamic, effective messages and content have been developed, you must strategically choose the best channels that will enable you to reach your target audience. Your communication channels may include:



Figure 11: Communication channels

The **amfori** group offers a good overview of how different communication channels can support each other in an integrated manner to deliver your contents to intended target audiences (both internal and external).

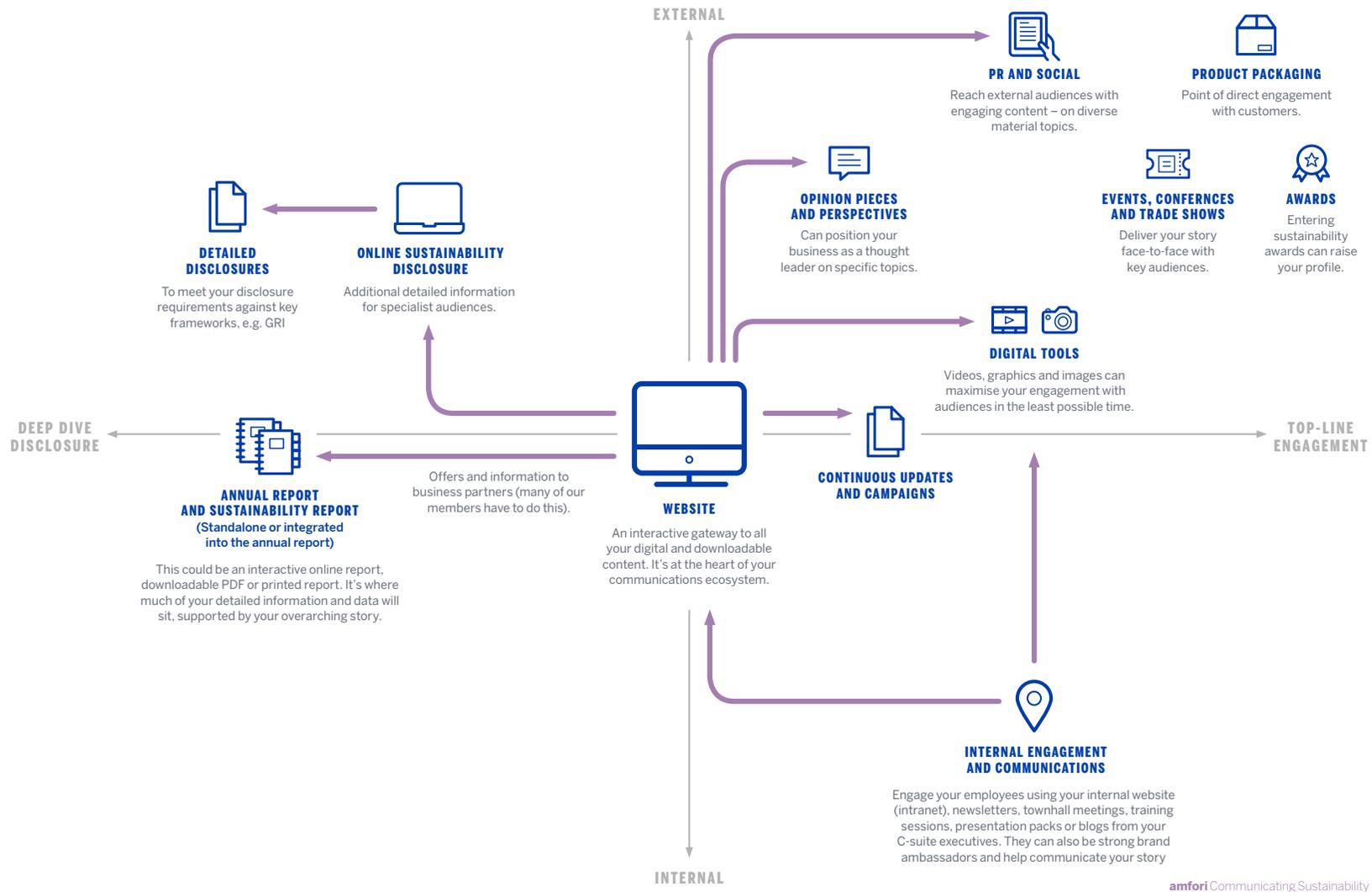


Figure 12: amfori communications (2019)

When choosing your communication channels, be sure to consider what type of contents you will need to create.

SOCIAL MEDIA

If you intend to use social media to raise awareness about the work you are doing and develop an engaged audience, you will be encouraged to

Keep It Short & Simple

Develop content that is interesting, accessible and attractive to a broad external audience.

The optimal length for a **Facebook** post is 40–50 characters. The longer the post, the shorter the engagement. A way to get around the 40-50 character limit is to consider including a compelling image, chart or short video.

A ***picture says more than a thousand words*** and on social media, people are more likely to interact with photos and videos than with text updates. Since Internet users do not read everything they see in the timeline, a relevant image or photo in high resolution will make them stop for at least a few more seconds to get a better look at your post.

Images could also be in the form of ***infographics*** or ***quotations***. The key is to bring out your creative energy and see which image will best connect with and solicit your audience.

Similarly, if you're using **Twitter**, each Tweet represents an opportunity to show your organisation's voice and strengthen the relationship with your followers. Every Tweet is limited to 280 characters or fewer — just the right size for a big idea, a headline, or a relevant observation. Tweets between 71 and 100 characters get the most engagement.

The more a post is retweeted, the higher engagement and reach it receives. Don't forget to use relevant **hashtags** to drive traffic and connect with partners, stakeholders and related campaigns and initiatives.

THE ANATOMY OF FACEBOOK

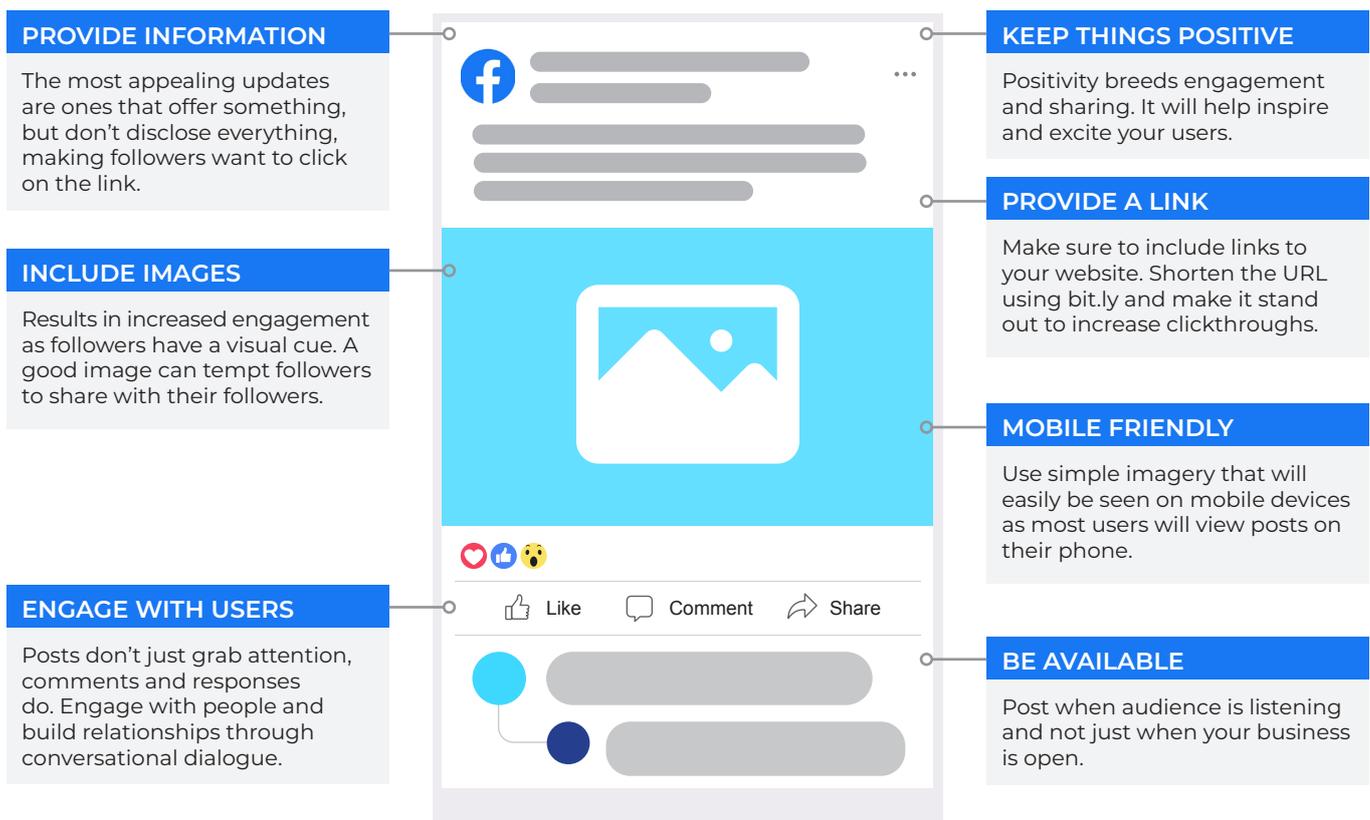


Figure 13: The Anatomy of Facebook

THE ANATOMY OF TWITTER

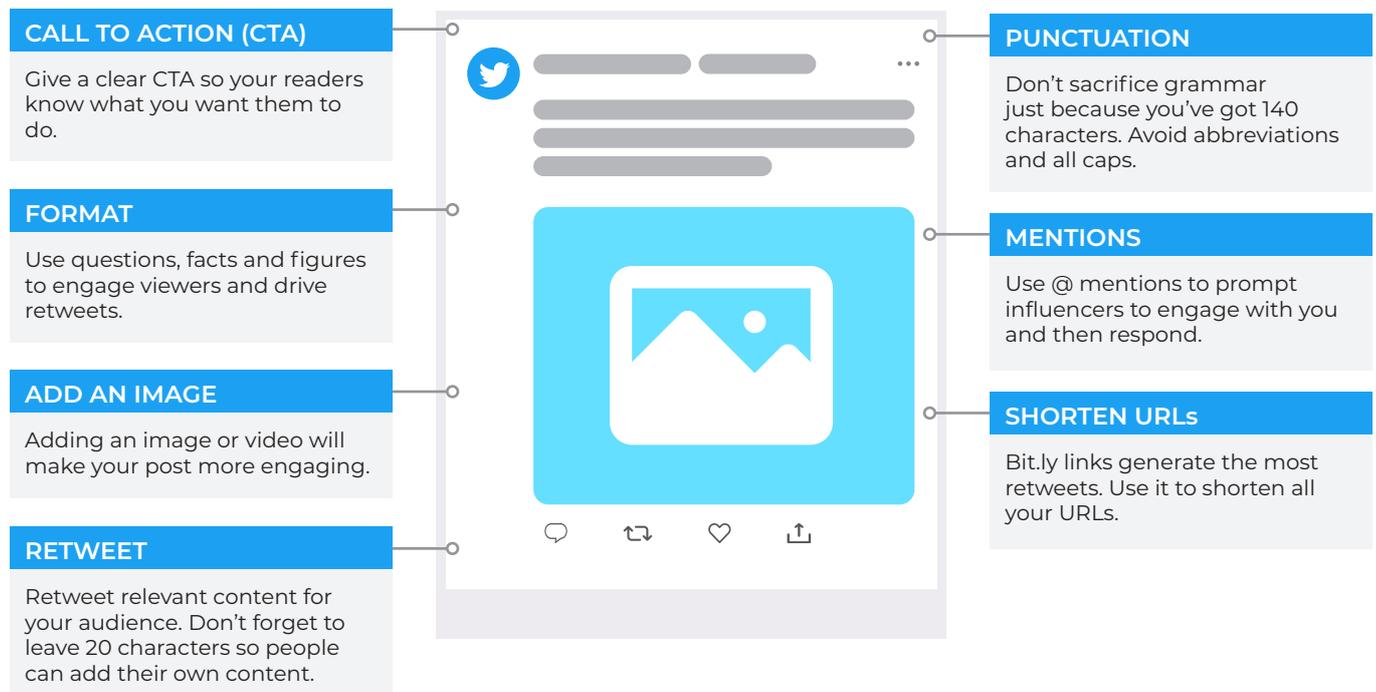


Figure 14: The Anatomy of Twitter

WEB STORIES

If instead you need to deliver **deeper insights** and **more contextual information** about your work, aimed at increasing knowledge to better inform the audience and generate action, you may want to opt for the preparation of human-interest stories, fact sheets, policy briefs, op-eds, and so on. These can be published on your website and simultaneously cross-shared and promoted on social media and in your newsletter.

When writing for the web, tell the story up front and keep it simple and objective. For it to work across all possible media platforms and devices, the story needs to be told in its essential outline in the first few paragraphs.

Guidelines

STORY WORD COUNT

Usually 300-500 words

1. Make sure the most important point is in the introduction – in **paragraph 1**. It should clearly sum up what you are going to say.
2. Check that paragraphs are **clear, balanced**, and provide **context**.
3. Keep your sentences short and limit yourself to **one main idea per paragraph**.
4. Remember that not everyone who's reading will know something about the subject. Assume that the reader has never read on your chosen topic before, therefore, **clearly explain your terms and concepts**.

Structure

A good web news story should include:

TITLE / HEADLINE

This is the first thing that will appeal to your audience. Make it catchy and to the point. Check that the headline matches the story.

SUMMARY

This is a *single sentence* that sells the story on the website's front page. It should expand on the headline, it can reflect the story's introduction, and should summarise what the story is about. It is written in present or future tense.

THE STORY

News is a report of current events. It is often about people doing things (or sometimes not doing things). In the body of the news story you should answer the following questions:

Questions

WHO

- Are the people involved?
 - How many participants (provide numbers)?
 - How many trainers (provide names and last names)?
 - Describe target groups
-

WHAT

Happened?

WHEN

Did it happen?

WHERE

Did it take place?

Location (country, province, city, village, venue)

WHY

Did it take place?

The cause, context or reason for it to take place.

HOW

Did it happen?

Do not try to answer all questions in your opening sentence or paragraph. Try to keep your audience interested, hooked up and engaged.

Key Elements

QUOTE PEOPLE

Include one or two quotes from participants, experts, partners. Make sure you get their correct names, last names, titles.

VISUALS

The promotion of stories requires strong images and text. Pictures must match the story. You can use your Smartphone!

Include (1–3 pictures, preferably in high resolution) that include:

- Target groups and trainers, experts, partners in the field;
- Wide shot of landscape or site (SMEs, factory, outdoors, etc.);
- VIPs (politicians, mayors, local authorities, etc. – essentially anyone who is a **v**ery **i**important **p**erson).

Include a **photo caption** to provide the reader with basic information needed to understand each photograph and its relevance to the news.

HYPERLINKS

Use hyperlinks to connect your readers to other web pages that are related to your article.

7. EXECUTE YOUR PLAN AND TRACK PROGRESS

ANYTHING THAT IS MEASURED AND WATCHED, IMPROVES.

Bob Parsons, Founder, GoDaddy

To know where you are now, you need to know where you began. Track progress, assess implementation, adjust if necessary, evaluate objectively, and draw lessons for next steps.

Defining what successful communications looks like, measuring the progress of your communication plan, and foreseeing any risks and challenges that may arise on this journey (and how you intend to tackle them) are key steps towards the achievement of your communication goals and objectives.

During the implementation of your Plan, furthermore, tracking, evaluating and reviewing your progress will provide you with valuable insights on what has worked best and what could be improved and adjusted next time. Communicating your impact will also keep your supporters and partners engaged in the work you're doing.

EFFECTIVE EVALUATION

Effective evaluation requires you to:



Figure 15: Effective evaluation

Decide what to measure

How do you know if your target audience is visiting your website or just viewing one page? If your new campaign is the reason why there has been an exponential increase in your social media followers? If your programme is receiving more likes, comments, shares and mentions? How many people are reading and sharing your reports and publications?

Businesses and organisations use benchmarks and **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** to determine performance over time, see if goals are being met and analyse whether changes need to be made. KPIs also help us make more informed decisions about future spending.

When preparing your Communication Plan:

- 1. State the KPIs Objective:** Make it clear how tracking the KPI will help your organisation reach the key objectives you have identified earlier.
- 2. Name your KPI:** Decide on a metric that will help you measure if you're on track and set a timeline. For example, if your organisation is focused on raising awareness about its work on social media, you might want to make Facebook impressions (the number of times any contents from your Page or about your Page entered a person's screen) one of your KPIs.
- 3. Share the KPI:** Communicate your KPI with your team and any other stakeholders who may contribute to the achievement of your goals. This will help you set expectations and make sure everyone is on board on what you're measuring and why you're measuring it.
- 4. Define your cadence:** How often are you going to track your KPI? Weekly? Monthly? Choose the timeline that will help you best see growth patterns and developments and react quickly if anything needs to be adjusted.
- 5. Review the KPI:** In the long-run, perhaps, after a project or activity is completed, review whether your KPIs are still relevant. A new project may require different KPIs.
- 6. Ask your audience effective questions through Appreciative Inquiry:** Focusing on maximising an organisation's strengths and amplifying what is going well, appreciative inquiry is an effective approach to evaluate more directly what your audience values and appreciates the most of your communication work and efforts. Through appreciative inquiry, we can direct questions towards our strengths and positive outcomes, at the same time, envision new possibilities, innovate and come up with new solutions.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Once your communication plan has been implemented and completed, it will be useful to create an overview of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This will help you identify themes and areas to focus in your next action.

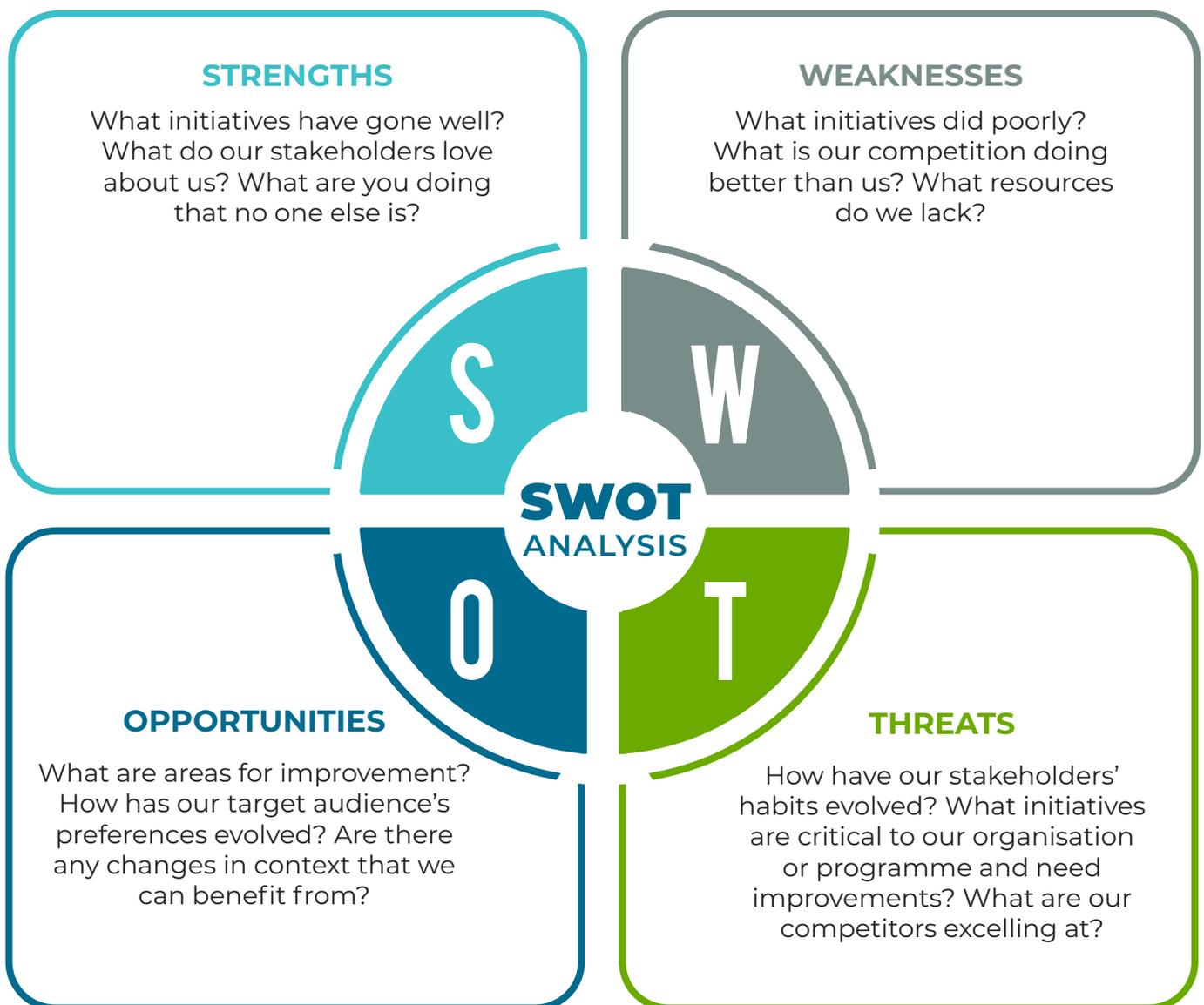


Figure 16: SWOT Analysis

Ensure that your budget matches your ambition, and vice versa.

Large, medium and small businesses understand the importance of prioritising marketing and communications in their budgets. They know that without strong communications, they will get very limited exposure and promotion, often leading to lower chances for growth and success. With in-person networking and partnership building events put on hold due to COVID-19, sustainable development actors have also gained a deeper understanding of how investing in digital communication strategies can help their organisations, programmes or projects raise awareness about the work that is being done, attract potential partners, impact fundraising, and reach and engage targeted audiences and consumers. Funding for communications should also be a key component in all grant requests.

03

HIGH-IMPACT
TEAM

HIGH-IMPACT TEAM

Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships

Michael Jordan, former professional basketball player

To be successful, digital communications demands for the collaboration of every member of your team as well as various specialists.

THE COMMUNICATION EXPERT

Is in charge of preparing and executing the communication plan, creating the contents to distribute through identified channels, and ensuring that all team members of the organisation are informed and engaged in the work. This Expert is often also responsible for stakeholder engagement and partnerships building. Through active listening and constant interactions (both online and offline), the main goal is to get to know better your audience and interest groups, and respond to their demands and information needs.

THE GRAPHIC DESIGNER OR VISUAL STORYTELLER

Works closely with the communication expert to develop visual creative concepts that can inform, inspire, and engage audiences.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TEAM

Works closely with the communication expert to create marketing and social media campaigns and strategies, including budget planning, content ideation, implementation schedules, monitoring, evaluation and data-driven analytics reports.

EDITORS

Have the responsibility to inform and educate readers. Making clear and rational editorial decisions will ensure the best selection of content that will be disseminated by an organisation or programme.

ANNEXES

PRIORITISING STAKEHOLDERS

Since not all stakeholders will always share the same concerns or perspectives, it is important to create a *prioritised list or map* that will enable you to assess each group's level or intensity of engagement (high, medium, low). When prioritising stakeholders, you can consider the following

INTEREST

Those who have identified themselves as already being interested or concerned about your activities

IMPACT

Those whose contributions significantly affect your work

INFLUENCE

Those with decision-making power who are able to help you reach your objectives and influence other stakeholders

INCLUSIVE

Those who should not be left behind in engagement and decision-making processes

EMPOWERMENT

Those who could be positively impacted if included

ADVOCATE

Those who will champion and share your cause and messages

KNOWLEDGE

Those who are knowledgeable about the issues at stake and who can help you co-create new knowledge

RESPONSIBILITY

Those to whom your organisation or programme may have a legal, operational and financial responsibility

PROXIMITY

Those with whom your organisation or programme interacts the most (internally and externally)

DEPENDENCY

Those who are directly and indirectly dependent on your proposed activities

STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

Stakeholders may include:



Government agencies and policy makers



International organisations and institutions



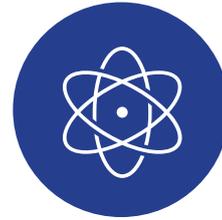
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)



Local communities



Business community, corporate partners and funding agencies



Research institutions, universities and scientific community



Opinion leaders and influencers



Sustainability Professionals



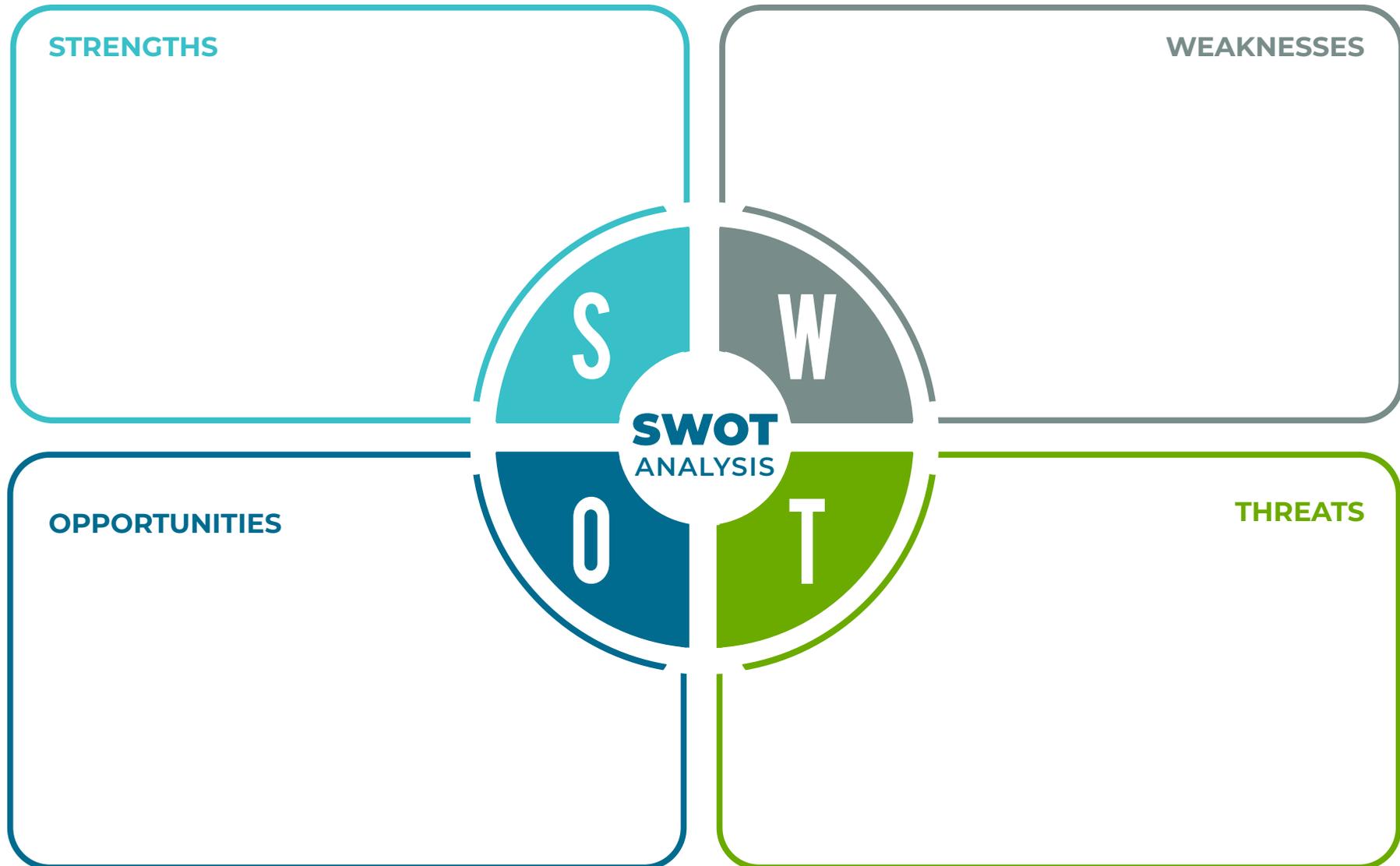
Consumers



Media organisations and institutions

SWOT ANALYSIS

Once your communication plan has been implemented and completed, it will be useful to create an overview of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This will help you identify themes and areas to focus in your next action.



COMMUNICATION PLAN TEMPLATE

PROJECT TITLE:

ORGANISATION'S MISSION AND VISION:

PREPARED BY:

DATE:

Communication Objectives	1	2	3	4	5
Target Audience/ Stakeholders					
Key Messages					
Distribution Strategies and Channels					
Available Resources, Budget, Team					
Execution / Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)					
Timeline					
Monitoring and Evaluation					
SWOT Analysis					