

# Developing a Corporate Communications Strategy on a shoe-string budget

*“All too often, companies take employees — the lifeblood of every organization — for granted, and the hype surrounding their leaders overshadows the work that employees do. Together, employees have the power to find innovative solutions to the many problems we face... ...Let's not fool ourselves; employees are at the core of every game-changing idea. They have built yesterday and today, and undoubtedly, they are going to fashion tomorrow.”*

Vineet Nayar (India based CEO)

# Today's Session

## Part 1

- Developing a Corporate Communications Strategy

## Part 2

- Implementing the Strategy
- Outcomes and Products
- Customer Service

# A bit about me

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# Why do you need a communications strategy?

- To publicize your municipality's achievements
- To inform citizens of initiatives and services
- To launch a new program
- To manage an issue
- To manage a crisis
- To build support for a new by-law or regulation
- What else?

# What will it cost?

\$50,000

\$5,000

or \$0

# Do it yourself

- Build a Team – goals, approach, feedback
- Inventory and assessment
- Surveys
- Media interviews
- Refine goals
- Shopping list of actions and tools
- Professional help to evaluate, organize refine and present to Council

# Do it yourself - cont'd

- Organize actions into categories
- Establish time-lines and costs

# Council Approval

- Include options for implementation
- Phase in slowly with existing staff
- Faster implementation with dedicated resources



# Main Components of Strategy

- Goals
- Situational Analysis
- Policy Statement
- Desired Outcomes
- Coordination
- Review
- Strategies/Actions (13)
- Actions/Activities (31)

## **A. Ratepayers/Citizens**

**Action A1: Establish an email subscription list for distribution of timely information.**

**Action A2: Undertake regular consultation with ratepayers.**

**Action A3: Ensure proactive communication on major initiatives and issues, with clear, timely and accurate information.**

**Action A4: Develop and Implement a Customer Service Protocol.**

**Action A5: Enhance the website to improve interaction with the community.**

## **B. Media**

**Action B1: Develop and Implement a media relations policy to be supplemented with training in media relations.**

## **C. Council and Staff**

- Action C1:** Recognize the importance of internal communications as a priority with a focus on breaking down the silos and physical barriers through the implementation of an internal communications plan.
- Action C2:** Staff be provided with training in communications skills (verbal and written), customer service, and conflict resolution/crisis management
- Action C3:** A clear protocol for staff communications with Councillors be developed to ensure Councillors are kept informed.
- Action C4:** A process be implemented for structured training and orientation for new employees be implemented.

# Sample page

## B. Media

**Action B1: Develop and Implement a media relations policy to be supplemented with training in media relations.**

Activities	Responsibility		New Resources \$ and /or staff	Timing to Start	
	Primary	Support		2010	Refer to 2011
Develop media relations policy	Clerk/IO			X	
Implement media relations policy	Clerk/IO SMT	All Staff		X	
Create media relations training program that ensures key staff and Mayor is provided with the necessary tools to interact with the media	Clerk/IO		X		X
Develop advertising policy	Clerk/IO	Purchasing			X

# Questions – Part 1

# What Next ? - Implementation

Products and Outcomes ... including  
Customer Service Excellence Strategy

# Customer Service Excellence Strategy

- Build a Team of Stars – assess strengths and weaknesses, training needs and approaches, ambassadors and provide guidance and feedback
- Good Internal Communications key
- Surveys
- Departmental/work unit meetings
- Refine goals and develop actions

# Customer Service cont'd

- Main components of CSE Strategy:
  - Purpose
  - Situational Analysis: challenges and opportunities
  - Goals (7)
  - Understanding who our customers are
  - Actions (32)
  - Roles
  - Measurement



# Goals

- **To provide facilitated, accessible, and visible customer service at the County.**
- **To develop and implement consistent customer service standards that are relevant to both employees and the public.**
- **To support employees in the delivery of customer service excellence with necessary tools, training and development.**
- **To recognize and encourage the exceptional delivery of customer service through internal incentive programs.**
- **To enhance accessibility to County services by improving information and services available on the County website.**
- **To improve employee readiness and awareness by maintaining proactive internal communications.**
- **To improve organizational transparency and accountability by establishing and maintaining ongoing dialogue with County customers.**

# Sample Page

Goal # 1: To provide facilitated, accessible, and visible customer service at the County.					
	Action	Details	Lead	Implementation	\$
1.1	Central Reception Function	Act as centralized contact point to receive, distribute, and track inquiries, and provide general info to the public. Ensure follow through of internal and external inquiries. <i>Item 3.8 in ICS</i>	Clerk/IO, CCO, CCSC	Underway.	\$
1.2	Inquiry Tracking Mechanism & process	Distribute inquiries to the appropriate individual, with the ability to track inquiries to insure resolution, avoid duplication of effort across the org. Develop associated policy/procedure for use. <i>Item 3.7 in ICS</i>	CCO, Clerk/IO	2013/2014	\$
1.3	Improved Phone System and Protocol	Review phone system to support a centralized reception function. Support with an inquiry distribution protocol to be understood by all staff. Detail how services can be provided by phone at alternate locations if necessary. Develop associated policy/procedure.	IT & CCSC	2013	\$
1.4	Improved Internal and External Signage	Assess existing internal and external signage at all County properties for accuracy, realignment implications, and consistent visual identity. Consider installing new digital signs for the public. Complete directory system (parking, directions, etc.). Updated phone numbers on buildings for emergencies, etc.).	Facilities Manager, with support from CCO	2013/2014	\$
1.5	Improve phone book presence	Review current phone book presence and attempt to have all County numbers to be listed in one place in a 'Municipal Directory' format.	CCO	2013/2014	
1.6	Assess Point of Sale issues and cash handling process	Assess and improve point of sale/cash handling process for County services that deal with community sales and vendors (Marinas, Launches, Community Centres). Ensure remote debit and credit card services are consistently available. Coin operations, safe practices for storing cash. Improve availability of payments by credit card and prepare for e-commerce.	Commissioners and Finance	Underway.	\$
1.7	Self Service Kiosks at Community Centres	Once online County services are in place, establish self-service kiosks at Community Centres for individuals without computer/internet access in their homes.	IT	TBD	\$

# Customer Service cont'd

- Resources
- Products and Outcomes –
- Customer Service Tool Kit
  - Staff directory (who does what)
  - Vacation Calendar
  - Complaint Action Tracking System
  - FAQs
  - Customer Service Protocols
  - Training (HR)

# Other Outcomes of Corporate Communications Plan

- Internal Communications Strategy
- Social Media Policy ( team)
- Advertising Policy – templates, oversight
- Website renewal and content management – (team)
- Branding and Visual Identity (team)
- Citizen Engagement (team)
- Media Relations Policy
- More...

**It's All Scalable**

# Lesson's Learned

*“All too often, companies take employees — the lifeblood of every organization — for granted, and the hype surrounding their leaders overshadows the work that employees do. **Together, employees have the power to find innovative solutions to the many problems we face... ..Let's not fool ourselves; employees are at the core of every game-changing idea.** They have built yesterday and today, and undoubtedly, they are going to fashion tomorrow.”*

Vineet Nayar (India based CEO)

# More Information

- Ashley Stewart, Corporate Communications Officer, County of Prince Edward
- Karen Wilkinson, Customer Service Coordinator, County of Prince Edward

# Questions