



Three Ways To Become More Strategic

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One of the most over-used words in the workplace is "strategic". But what does that actually mean in a practical sense? And more specifically, what does it mean for communication professionals?

Strategic communication focuses on analysis, integrated planning and implementation of activities that deliver business outcomes. But strategic communication doesn't just happen; it is a product of a structured planning activity that considers the internal and external environment, business needs, research, audience, stakeholders, key messages, communication channels and measurement. Do it well and your communication efforts will drive business results, build your reputation and earn you the role of trusted advisor and business partner within your organisation.

So, what practical steps can you take to become a more strategic communication professional?

1. Ensure business needs drive communication outcomes

The first and most important step to becoming more strategic is to clearly understand your organisation's needs and align your communication with its mission, vision and

values. What is the business trying to achieve? For example, if leadership visibility is a problem acknowledge that with research, facts, and data that demonstrate the issue.

This information typically exists in your organisation's strategic plans, or you might find your data in any business initiative. The second part of this important step is to match the needs of the business with the communication opportunity. How can communication make a difference? Resist the temptation to move straight to a solution. Ensure you're delivering communication that addresses the business strategy not because it's a nice thing to do.

2. Ask the right questions

Start to uncover the real business issues affecting your organisation and what keeps your internal clients awake at night. By having a conversation, you help to set the context that you are discussing business, not your communication campaign and that will help people to think of you as a partner, not a supplier.

Your questions should focus on:

- > why your client has come to you (the business issue not the tactic they may have asked for)
- > what success looks like and what people should be doing differently because of your communication

- > your audience and their habits, behaviours and demographics
- > what timeframe you have to fit this into your planning
- > the roadblocks that may prevent you from achieving expected outcomes
- > any potential financial savings
- > how your client sees themselves involved.

3. Harness information and opportunities

You need to have a robust understanding of the global communication profession, industry trends, and drivers. But an appreciation of the external context, research and trends isn't enough.

You should also:

- > incorporate internal trends in your communication work, for example, look out for the organisational issues that keep coming up and use the insights to inform your work
- > connect with your internal and external peers to discuss and share observations about the communication profession and market
- > understand and define the impact your communication has on your organisation's strategy.



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