

## Strategic Communication Planning

This is about effectively getting your story or messages out, or managing a new initiative or change in your organization.

Effective communications begins with a communications strategy. Without one, you are leaving your communications to chance. At BissettMatheson, we like strategies, and you should too. They increase the odds considerably that your communications effort will accomplish what you want it to.

Whether it's about enhancing your public profile, promoting a program, or persuading people to support your cause, let us help you by first determining what you need, then developing the right approach.

The strategy required might be very simple, or it might be complex depending on the communications challenge. If what you require is involved, we will likely recommend a two-stage approach. First, a communications audit, then your communications plan.

### > Communications audit

A communications audit is a systematic examination of the current state of your communications, both internally and externally.

- It looks at how your messages are developed, and how effectively they get to the people they are intended to reach.
- It identifies any bottlenecks or roadblocks in the way of getting the messages to their intended destination.
- It identifies what, in your communication system, is working well, and what isn't.
- Internally, it looks at both top down and bottom up communications. You'll find out, for example, to what extent people in the field are getting your messages, and whether you are getting theirs.
- It will tell you whether your communications efforts are cost-effective, or whether and where you are wasting money.

Once complete, you will have a comprehensive communications audit report that will tell you where you stand. This can be the basis for development of a customized communications plan.

### > Communications plan

This is where you really take charge of your communications. Rather than any aspect of it being left to chance, you will have a blueprint designed to make the most of your communications efforts. The plan will include objectives, methods, timelines and a system of evaluation to measure progress.

A communications plan really does make a difference.

BMC is physically located in Eastern Canada with offices in Fredericton, Saint John, and Moncton, New Brunswick.

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## Crisis Management

### Imagine the worst case scenario.

Now ask yourself, is your organization prepared to handle such a crisis? A reputation that took years to build can crumble in an instant if crisis is not handled properly.

### When a crisis strikes, you'll have two priorities:

- Bringing the crisis under control
- Dealing with key stakeholders and intense media attention

Meeting this challenge requires expertise and experience. Bissett Matheson Communications has always worked in this specialized field, and now it has taken its crisis communications to a new level through a special affiliation with one of the most respected crisis communications organizations in the world.

With a wealth of experience and training, BMC is an Eastern Canadian leader in crisis communications. BMC president Duncan Matheson has worked in crisis communications since day one, first as a journalist, then as a consultant. Senior Associate Gina Wilkins dealt with numerous institutional crises when working at UNB Saint John, including deaths of students, staff and faculty, the SARS scare and a "white powder" incident.

Both Duncan and Gina have added to their crisis communications experience with training at the Kentucky-based Institute for Crisis Management (ICM), one of North America's foremost companies in the field.

What does this ICM connection mean to BMC clients?

- First, it means that clients can be assured that when they turn to BMC, they will be dealing with people with expertise in crisis communications.
- Second, it means that, should the need arise, BMC has the resources and counsel of the Institute of Crisis Management at its clients' disposal.
- Third, BMC is the only firm in Central or Eastern Canada licensed to offer ICM's crisis management programs, including training.

## > Rebounding

Crises, whether big or small in the grand scheme of things, dramatically affect the company or group involved. The ability to rebound usually hinges on how well you communicate with shareholders, employees, customers or constituents, and with the media and the public at large.

BMC crisis communications services begin with planning and include being there for our clients when the inevitable day arrives, with counsel, hands-on assistance, and whatever else it takes.

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## Change Management & Communication

Anxiety, paranoia, fear, mistrust, depression, sustained stress.

These emotional reactions among employees can prevent necessary change in the workplace from succeeding. The ability of employees at all levels to adapt to change is vital to the kind of organizational flexibility essential in today's business world.

Consider the changes your own operation has undergone in recent years, or may be facing in the future. Perhaps it is the consolidation and reorganization of various departments and the resulting layoff of several longtime employees. Maybe it is a profitability initiative requiring tighter budgeting and improved performance. It might even be something as simple as the launch of a new employee magazine and company website, and you need to ensure everyone contributes to, and uses the new tools.

Only through skilled and thoughtful change management can companies expect important changes to be accepted, embraced and successfully imbedded in the organization. Two elements are necessary for this to happen—change leadership and change communication.

Bissett Matheson has a trained and experienced change communication expert in Senior Associate Sharon Pond. She received training while working with a leading global company that was among the first to recognize the importance of managing change as it impacts employees who ultimately determine whether the change will succeed. She went on to be a lead player in the company's change management team.

Bissett Matheson can help your business or organization learn how to plan for change—large or small—so that you earn the all-important trust and buy-in of your employees.

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## Media and Public Relations

First of all, understand that media relations and public relations are related, but are not the same thing.

Media Relations is about having and building upon strong relationships with editors and reporters, based on mutual respect. The BissettMatheson team has strong credibility in this area, with more than 60 years, collectively, of actual journalism experience among our group. So, when a client has a newsworthy story or view to get out there, we have the connections and ability to help make that happen.

Public Relations is broader. It is an ongoing effort to create and maintain the image you want the public to have of your company or organization. This includes how the media perceives you, but the emergence of social media has changed the Public Relations landscape considerably, to the point where building a positive public image is now more of a blend of traditional and new media. Research shows that the public, including those important to you, will now go to your website or other social media to learn about your company or organization, as well as relying on traditional media. For you, that's as much an opportunity as a challenge.

At BissettMatheson, we know that social media is a force to be embraced, but also we have been around long enough to understand that social media isn't the be all or end all, and that traditional media still matters. It's about finding the proper balance, and we can help with that.

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## Advocacy Campaigns

If you have spent any time on our website, you have probably gathered that we are strong believers in a strategic approach to communications. Nowhere is a careful strategy more important than in an advocacy campaign.

Over our years in business, we have designed and implemented several advocacy campaigns; we can tell you from our experience, as well as the experience of many others, that such campaigns often demand a number of coordinated efforts, working simultaneously.

They are similar to many other public relations campaigns, except that they are solely aimed at influencing public policy. In other words, getting the government to do, or not do, or stop doing something. Inevitably, an advocacy campaign requires bringing several elements together—research, planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the advocacy effort. In our experience, it's often about identifying and building alliances with people and groups who share the desired result, and in the end, it's about persuading the government that what we want is also what they should want.

### > Bissett Matheson Case Studies:

#### Drugs for rheumatoid arthritis

**The Challenge:**

Many New Brunswickers with rheumatoid arthritis were suffering because the drugs they were taking weren't working. Other drugs did exist, and while they were extremely effective, they were also quite costly, and the government's drug plan didn't cover them.

**The Approach:**

Our advocacy campaign was aimed at getting these medications added to the list of drugs the government plan covers.

The campaign strategy was to take a dual tack—financial and humanitarian. On the financial side, we produced figures to show that while the drugs were expensive, the cost was reasonable when compared with the cost of not providing them—including the ineffective drugs, more hospital stays, more operations, lost productivity and increased social assistance. On the humanitarian side, we focused on the difference in quality of life with and without the medications.

We also recruited people and organizations that we felt would be sympathetic to our cause and willing to weigh in on the issue.

With no budget for an advertising campaign, we used the most effective communications vehicles available, from letters to the editor to meetings with government. This was before the onset of the power of social media. If it were today, social media would play a prominent part in such a campaign.

The campaign was successful, as the government of the day announced that the drugs in question would be covered.

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## Refurbishment of Point Lepreau

### **The Challenge:**

The Point Lepreau nuclear generating station was in need of refurbishment. The government decision was to either approve this significant expense or mothball the facility. IBEW, which represents the NB Power employees at Point Lepreau, were concerned that a decision against refurbishment would leave many of their people unemployed.

### **The Approach:**

Our advocacy campaign was aimed at convincing the government of the day that refurbishment was the better option.

The campaign strategy was diversified and complex. The first step was extensive research to determine the public attitude toward refurbishment and what our key messages should be.

The campaign included pulling together other stakeholders who shared our client's objective, initiating and maintaining a strong media presence, developing an advertising component, and ramping up a concerted lobby effort supported by a speaking tour around the province, meetings with government, rallies and a strong and active website with all aspects strategically timed for maximum effect.

In the end, the government announced that Point Lepreau's refurbishment would go ahead.

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## Speech Writing

“Good enough” won’t cut it when it comes to speeches. BissettMatheson can help you capture your “voice” in a memorable and effective way so that your audience leaves with clear messages and good things to say about your presentation.

*Four score and seven years ago....  
Ask not what your country can do for you....  
We will fight them on the beeches....  
I have a dream....*

A good speech has power. It can inspire. It connects you with your audience on an emotional level. It can change how people think. It can move listeners to action.

You may not have to move a nation with your next speech, but you’ll want to move somebody to do something, even if it is just to think.

If you want, or need to knock your next speech out of the park, the communications experts at BissettMatheson can help.

### > Experienced speech writers

We have been writing speeches since the early 90’s and have written keynote addresses for Premiers, Lieutenant-Governors, numerous government ministers, university presidents, CEOs of international companies, and even a Governor-General.

Our approach to researching and writing a speech is strategic, and it works:

- We get a feel for the person we are writing for; we find his or her voice. This means making his or her personality come through by writing in a style that matches it.
- We research the audience so we know how to frame messages that will resonate with your particular group.
- If media will be attending the speech, we plant sound bites—crisply worded, specific messages that help ensure the media coverage will be what you want it to be.

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## Media and Communications Training

Hands-on workshops that will give you the skills and confidence to deal with the media, or any public audience effectively.

### > What you will learn

- How the media works and what reporters are really looking for
- The 3 Keys to successful media interviews
- How to effectively handle the toughest questions you will be asked
- The 10 commandments for dealing with the media
- How the skills learned are transferable to non-media situations.

### > Why BissettMatheson for your media training?

In a word, our experience. We have been providing media training for 20 years, throughout Atlantic Canada and as far afield as Chicago and North Carolina.

Over that time, hundreds of CEOs, politicians, emergency responders, company spokespersons, educators, social leaders, not-for-profit managers and others have benefitted from our media training workshops.

In formal evaluations, our workshops have consistently scored better than nine out of 10 for participant satisfaction. We believe there are three specific reasons for this:

- Credibility of the facilitators: Duncan Matheson (English facilitator) spent 20 years in the media prior to developing this media training program and tweaking it over the past 20 years. Benoit Duguay (French facilitator) spent nearly 30 years with Radio Canada.
- Relevance of the content: Bissett Matheson doesn't do a generic workshop—nothing off-the-shelf. Every workshop is researched so content, including role play scenarios, is realistic and relevant to the participant's day-to-day responsibilities.
- The hands-on approach: Lots of on- and off-camera exercises, playback and constructive criticism.

### > What past participants say about our media training

"I especially liked the relaxed interaction of the group. It was a very informative course. The communication level was bang on."

*Sgt. Dan Goodwin, RCMP*

"The content is solid; Duncan's experience and relating of stories is invaluable."

*Bob Manning, past chair, Saint John Board of Trade*

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"Really liked the role playing in front of a camera with tough interview questions, followed up by a review of individual performance."

*Tim Vickers, Exec. Dir. ACAC*

"The pace – information – video –examples – all covered exactly what we were looking for."

*Mary Arsenault, Queen's Health Region, Charlottetown, PEI*

"It was informative, low stress for such a high stress task, and fun."

*Angela MacDonald, PEI Teachers' Federation*

"Duncan's ability as both a presenter and a reporter is great. In role play situations he was as hard-nosed and persistent as ever. In presentations he was informative and sensitive to participant's needs."

*Coleen Ramsay, School District 6 (Rothesay)*

"It was one of the best 2 day workshops I have ever been involved in."

*Doug Bobbitt, Principal, Sussex Middle School*

"I now have confidence that I will get my message across as I intended and will not feel stumped by tough questions. I also now understand how the media works and how to build a relationship with them."

*Judy Hache, SIDA/AIDS Moncton*

"Very informative on how to improve your skills when dealing with the media. I highly recommend this workshop"

*Miguel LeBlanc, RSW, Executive Director, New Brunswick Association of Social Workers*

"Excellent preparation for interacting with the media. The skills learned are definitely transferable to other settings."

*Tina Kennah, Administrative Director, River Valley Health*

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## Focus Group Research

### > If you want to know how many, do a survey; if you want to know why, focus test.

If you were preparing to introduce a new product, service or campaign, wouldn't it be handy to see what people think before you do a major unveiling?

If you need to get a handle on how people perceive your organization or institution, wouldn't some honest feedback be helpful?

That's what you get from a focus group—honest, sometimes painfully frank opinion.

Focus groups can often provide a depth of understanding that surveys simply cannot match. Focus group research examines why people respond as they do. In short, if you want to know how many, do a survey, but if you want to know why, focus test.

### > Our approach

We have been doing focus research since the early 90's. Our approach begins with careful recruiting to ensure we get the proper mix of focus participants, based on specific criteria to be representative of your target market (i.e. age, education level, income, rural/urban, male/female, and anything specific to the subject matter). Then we develop moderator's notes to ensure all relevant areas are explored with the participants. The third step is the expertise of the moderators, whose experience and training ensures the best possible information is derived from the session.

#### **Some of the topics for which Bissett Matheson Communications has recruited, prepared and moderated focus groups include:**

- Seniors' housing
- Downtown shopping
- Morale (within a specific policing sector)
- Employee incentive programs
- Funeral homes
- Nuclear power
- Video gaming
- Pay equity
- Workplace bullying

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## Workshops

Aside from the Media Training and Crisis Communications courses which BissettMatheson has been delivering since the early 90s, the firm has had great success with several other workshops it has developed over the years.

Call BissettMatheson today for further information on any of these interactive workshops.

### > Writing News Releases

The place of the news release in generating publicity has shifted in recent years. It remains a fundamental vehicle in dealing with the media but it is no longer the best choice in every circumstance. However, when they are appropriate it's more important than ever that they are written properly, so in BissettMatheson's Writing News Releases, you'll learn an excellent step-by-step approach to doing that. And you'll learn why, when and how to issue a news release, but also how to tell when a different approach would be a better idea, what that approach should be, and how to do it. This workshop really is about much more than writing.

### > Effective Lobbying

Over the years lobbying has developed a tainted or sleazy reputation. The way some practise it, it may be less than honourable, but that's not the norm. Lobbying is a legitimate function within our democratic system. In our Effective Lobbying workshop, you'll learn that lobbying is serious business not partisan politics. You will learn the four tracks of lobbying, the most common mistake made in lobbying, and the 11 steps to a solid, strategic lobbying effort.

### > Improving Your Corporate Image

Do you envy those people or companies that seem to get all the attention as if they are the only people who are good at what they do? Did you ever consider that this isn't just good luck on their part? In BissettMatheson's Improving Your Corporate Image workshop, you'll learn the importance and benefits of a positive corporate image, the steps to developing and nurturing a positive image, how to position yourself in the media, and the benefits of adopting a proactive media policy. In short, we'll show you how to get your share of that positive attention.

### > Making Effective Presentations

Making presentations regardless of the topic, and regardless of whether it is a PowerPoint presentation or a speech, is a performance and has to be approached and presented as one. In this workshop you'll learn the eight steps to preparing an effective presentation, and tips on everything from body language to gaining buy-in from the audience. Note that this is a workshop on content and presentation skills, not on the use of presentations technology.

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## > Communication, Social Interaction and Interviewing

This is a specialized course we offer with the assistance of Cpl. Mark Lord of the Fredericton Police Force and one of the foremost experts in the skill of interviewing for the purposes of determining whether the subject is being truthful. Mark has lectured all over the world on this topic and has used his special skills to help agencies ranging from the FBI and the Canadian, U.S. and Australian Military, to police forces throughout North America and Europe and the Canadian Bar Association. This workshop will be of particular interest to clients who have a particular interest in knowing whether people they talk to are being truthful.

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