

# Effective Communications for School Leaders

Presented by:

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## Let's get to know each other...

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<b>In Today's Session</b>	Put Communication on your Radar
	Importance of Knowing Your Audience
	How to Create a Great Communication Plan
	Controlling the Chaos & Generational Differences
	My Top Ten Tips
	Questions, Answers and Ideas

## *Today's Compass*



*N - Needs*  
*S - Suggestion*  
*E - Excites*  
*W - Worries*

## **Why Market Your School**

- Build Public Confidence.
- Political Environment Is Less Than Positive.
- Community Demographics are Changing.
- The Daily Technology Wildcard
- Presence of School Choice – FUNDING
- Staff Recruitment.
- Share School Pride and School Culture.

## Interesting Facts

For most parents a school is only as good as the teacher in front of their child.

Even people without school age children typically rank “good teachers” as the single most important indicator of a good school.

*“Who is the most credible school source for information?”*

## A Communication Plan

*Will help you.....*

- Accommodate the forces of change.
- Create a responsive, future-focused organization.
- Provide a framework through which you can coordinate other continuous improvement initiatives.

# What is the Plan?

**Research** (What information is needed?)

**Planning** (Develop your plan.)

**Implementation** (Follow your plan.)

**Evaluation** (Measure your results.)

# Example: Budget Communication Plan

- **Research** – where are we today, what are the parameters, what is likely to impact the budget, what is unknown.
- **Planning** – what process will we use to make reductions or create funds for new initiatives, how will we communicate, how will we evaluate and prioritize. Who is responsible for what, what needs to be done when, who needs the information.
- **Implement** – follow the plan and move forward.
- **Evaluate** – Bring the group together to find out what worked and what needs to be changed in the future.

# Who is the Audience?

- **Internal vs External**
  - Department to Department
- **Parents vs Non-Parents**
- **Differentiating the Medium**
- **Evaluation** – did the message get conveyed?

## Involving People Is Critical

- If you want commitment, you'll have to involve people.
- People need to be involved in decisions that affect their destiny.
- If you want people to be part of the plan, you have to make them part of the process.



## Feedback Is Important

- Provides a Snapshot in Time
  - Demographics
  - Strengths and Weaknesses
  - Perception
- Identifies Trends and Hot-button Issues
- Let's You Know "what's out there"

## Tools for Gathering Feedback

- Team/Department Meetings
- Focus Groups
- Town Hall Meeting
- Task Force
- Surveys
- Board Workshops

# Why Survey?

- Find out how well you are communicating
- Learn how people feel about specific programs
- Assess staff morale
- Find out what kids think is important
- Determine expectations
- Find out where you are with an issue

# Why Survey?

- It's easy.
- You need the information.
- Samples can give you a representative picture.
- Non-parents have opinions, too.
- It is cost effective.
- It is part of "the plan."



# *Table Work*

## Example: Redistricting

- **Research** – current enrollment, what growth/loss trends do we know, what are the building parameters, why do we need to shift the population?
- **Planning** – what process will we use to make recommendations, how will we communicate, how will we evaluate and prioritize neighborhood shifts. Who is responsible for what, what needs to be done when, who needs the information.
- **Implement** – follow the plan and move forward.
- **Evaluate** – Bring the group together to find out what worked and what needs to be changed in the future.



## Group Share

*10 Minute Break*

## The Difference Communication Can Make

- Investment in Success
- Keep the Vision and Mission of your District at the Forefront
- Relationship Building/Management = TRUST
- Image and Reputation

## Communication is the Key!

- Our job is to tell all of the stories (good and bad).
- With the correct tools, every member of your district can think (and work) like a member of your PR Team.
- The key is to create a common message and to have a consistent communication plan in place – EVERY TIME.

## Importance of Communication



CREATING  
AMBASSADORS



TELL YOUR  
STORY FIRST



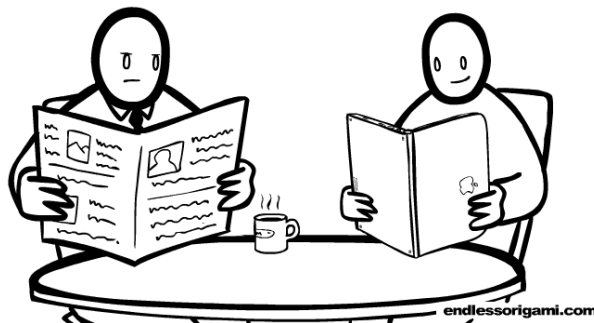
LISTEN, LISTEN,  
LISTEN

# Important Tips

- Let's Share the Good News
- Reporting Progress Continually (nobody likes surprises!)
- Using Mediums that Work
- Always Explain the "Why" (*Why there is testing, Why there is homework, Why a Field Trip is planned*)

# Media: It's a New Day

SOMETIMES I LIKE TO REMIND MY PARENTS JUST HOW OLD THEY ARE



# Media Differences

## Broadcast Media

- Sound bites
- Visual; cameras see everything
- Catches flaws, magnifies mistakes

## Print Media

- Key messages; elaboration
- Charts, graphs, pictures
- Can go back with more/revised

**Social Media.... Well, this one is tricky!**

# Handling today's media... anyone with a phone!

- Stay with facts and do not speculate.
- Know the main points you want to share.
- Be a credible, reliable source - or find one!
- Rehearse potentially tough questions.
- Own it - if it requires accountability do it immediately.
- If it is an unfolding issue - be sure to set next update time.

## Using Social Media

- Tell your own story
- Pictures make it real
- Gives parents and the community an “inside” look at our schools, classrooms and kids
- Real time – yet can be scheduled
- It’s where today’s families get their “news”

## Helpful Social Media Tips

- Post behavior expectations/rules of engagement on your platform profile
- “Please call or email with questions or concerns about our school district.”
- When someone is rude, use the *Rule of Three*
- Provide training for staff who monitor social media channels

# So Much to Do... So Little Time

*HOW TO MANAGE THE CHAOS  
through Communication*

## Setting Priorities

- Setting priorities is priority #1
  - Looking ahead and being future-focused.
  - Prioritizing Communication - who needs to know; how to share, when to share, etc.
  - Write the WHY!

## Visibility is part of the Plan

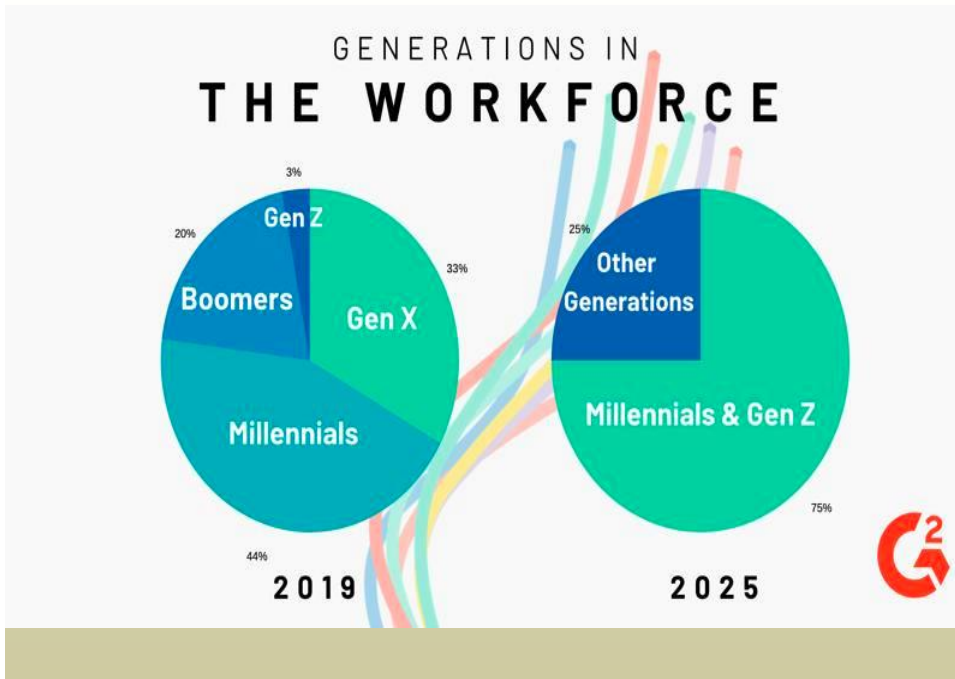
- Get out of the office!
- Establish visibility with team.
- Get “birds eye view” of day-to-day needs and challenges.
- Attending necessary and meaningful meetings and events.
- Roll up your sleeves and join in on a project or social event.

## Delegate - Share Responsibility

- Establishing roles, responsibilities and clear expectations
- Know strengths and weaknesses of staff and use them!
- Establishing culture of respect, appreciation, rewards/recognition
- Empowerment and trust

# Workplace Generations

*Uh-oh we don't all think alike!*



Traditionalists: 75+

Baby Boomers: 60-75

Generation X: 42-59

Millennials: 24-42ish

Generation Z: 23U

## Generation X

- New generations of leaders, and the most educated.
- Goal oriented
- Thrive on Independence
- Big Question: WHY

# Millennials

- A challenge
- Give them the problem, let them figure it out.
- Provide Feedback
- If things aren't FUN, they won't stay.

# Building a Thriving Environment for All

- Have Empathy
- Be a Good Communicator
- Develop Common Language
- Have Patience
- Provide Positive Feedback
- Be Relatable
- Be Approachable
- Build Relationships

## Managing Email Effectively

- Use built-in tools to manage the inbox
- Checking email at set times - finding balance is key!
- Setting team habits - and communicating them.
- Email is not private - not owned by any employee.
- If you wouldn't say it to their face with Grandma in the room, don't send it!

## Work Smarter Not Harder

- Don't reinvent the wheel.
- Are there resources and tools available to help me achieve the goal.
- Involve others - especially those in the "know."
- Make Communication a priority



**What is happening in the  
next 3 months  
that needs a  
Communication Plan?**

*Self Reflection and Planning*

**Table Share  
& Break**

# The Relationship Between Customer Service & Communication

Frogs are lucky. They get to  
eat what bugs them.

Abigail Knagg, age 8



## Power of Relationships



- Service is the connection you make with clients and customers.
- How we treat others affects their perceptions of our quality.
- Perception is “reality” for most.
- Without good customer service your communication plans will fail.

## Handling Complaints

- Get into the present. Focus your attention on the here and now.
- Clear your mind of any preconceived notions or assumptions about the customer or the problem.
- Open your ears and LISTEN. Don’t jump to conclusions or speak for the customer.
- Ask effective questions that focus on problem solving.

## Problem-Solving Questions

- **Ask background questions to:**
  - Understand wants and needs.
  - Evaluate for referral.
- **Ask probing questions to:**
  - Identify the real issue and best solution.
  - Gather information.
  - Determine who, what, when, where, why.
- **Ask confirmation questions to:**
  - Check understanding.
  - Obtain additional information.

## Dealing with Difficult People

## Leaving hornets in their nest is a great idea!

The best way to deal with hostility is to avoid it in the first place.

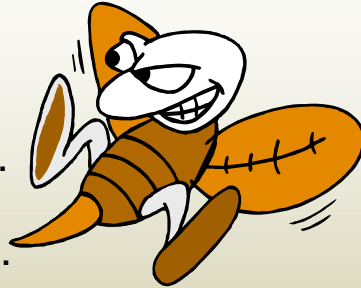


## Strategies for Keeping Hornets Happy

- Anticipate and predict problems.
- Keep your hornets busy.
- Tell hornets about potential problems in advance.
- Listen to your hornets and their friends.
- Survey your hornets for their opinion.

## Five Types of Hornets

- Hostile Hornet.
- Uninformed Hornet.
- Professional Hornet.
- Enlightened Hornet.
- Victim Hornet.



## Strategies for Putting Hornets Back into Their Nests

- Listen, listen, listen.
- Think win-win.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Stop talking as soon as you get angry.
- Separate yourself emotionally from the problem.
- Don't try to control the uncontrollable.



## Strategies for Putting Hornets Back into Their Nest

- Think before you speak.
- Realize you MIGHT be wrong!
- Thank your critics.
- Remember to laugh ... especially at yourself.



**Group  
Therapy**

# Top 10 Tips for Communicating

## Tip #1

**Stop and Think...**  
who needs to know this?

## Tip #2

**No matter where you  
are...you are  
representing the  
District.**

## Tip #3

**Admit you don't know  
everything...**  
(I won't tell your spouse.)

## Tip #4

**Realize there is a  
little truth to  
every rumor.**

## Tip #5

**Always explain  
the WHY!**

## Tip #6

**The most credible school sources are the custodians and the secretaries...make sure they know the WHY.**

## Tip #7

**Bring Negative People into the fold.**

**Tip #8**

**Walk the talk...  
and follow the plan.**

**Tip #9**

**Let others shine!**

## Tip #10

**LISTEN – two ears and one mouth, use proportionately please.**

**Can  
You  
Do  
It?**

- Research and garner data
- Make Communication a priority
- Find someone on your staff who can do this work, and make it a major part of their job.
- Make it clear that everyone has a role in communication -- Ambassadors.

## Inexpensive PR Ideas

- VIP Passes
- Senior Citizen Club
- Weekly Columns
- School Signs
- Award Applications
- Realtor Luncheon
- Internal Newsletter
- Phone tip Sheets
- Alumni Directory
- Vender Supported Opening Day Event
- Press Releases
- Volunteer "legacy" Awards
- Book Memorials

## Resources Available

- ISD/RESA Consultants
- MSPRA and NSPRA [www.mspra.org](http://www.mspra.org) and [www.nspra.org](http://www.nspra.org)
- Experts on Call
- State Organizations



[REMC.org](https://REMC.org)

## **Mission of the REMC Association**

To support constituents and improve teaching and learning statewide through future-focused collaboration, leadership and service.

- High quality training
- Rich sources of information that are offered FREE to all educators.
- ISD's and local districts are also provided effective cost savings through REMC SAVE, our statewide cooperative purchasing program.

# The REMC Association

The Regional Educational Media Center Association of Michigan is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1969.

Its members are the 28 local Regional Educational Media Centers operated through the Intermediate School District structure, that provide local programs and services.

Provides educators FREE access to classroom resources and professional learning.

Improve Learning   Empower Teachers   Promote Savings

**REMC**  
ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN

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*Improve Learning*

We improve learning by providing curriculum, lesson plans, and activities to build knowledge, teach technology skills, and be safe and secure online.

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**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**  
*Empower Teachers*

We empower teachers with free professional learning through virtual courses, face-to-face workshops, and hands-on training, all offering SCECHs.

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**REMC SAVE**  
*Provide Savings*

We provide savings through large volume contracts for a variety of educational resources, including furniture, school and office supplies, software and digital services, and technology.

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# Questions, Answers & Ideas

## Common Questions

- Handling the Media
- Working with Board Members
- Positive Partnerships
- Redistricting and Enrollment Changes
- FOIA
- Communicating School Funding
- Obtaining a survey sample
- Communication during negotiations