

## **Communication compass for development NGOs, practical hints and tips for good and effective PR**

### **«6P for effective PR»**

In communication you should primarily think of those from whom you expect support, whether they are individual donors, sponsors or authorities. A well planned PR strategy will allow you to present your project to the public, reach out to potential donors and sponsors, and keeping them interested. With the goal of obtaining bigger support, expressed ideally in financial support. By continuously evaluating your activities you will be able to see what needs to be improved in your communication strategy. Through using this method you will be able to both reach and gain more and more contributors. When planning certainly do not forget the aforementioned common context of international development cooperation of the Czech Republic. Familiarize yourself with the “6P”, which represent the individual steps of the communication cycle and can be managed also with limited financial and personnel capacities:

1. Understand your target groups.
2. Think out the stories.
3. Get ready.
4. Draw attention.
5. Talk with your supporters.
6. Say thank you and continue together.

### **1. Understand your target group**

To understand better who you will reach when communicating your project (what kind of people), try to find answers for the following sets of questions:

1. Who are they? Where do they come from? What do they have in common? What do they like? What bothers them? What do they expect when supporting projects such as yours?
2. What is their most frequent means of communication? What media do they follow? Which information sources do they believe? What language and style do they like?

#### **How to identify answers and find tips for effectively addressing the public:**

- Watch the media, what is happening in the place you want to reach (city, county, state).
- Watch people in everyday life (cultural events, shops, restaurants).
- Consult with people outside of your field.
- If possible, collect people’s contact information so you are able to contact them again later. However,

do not address them without their previous consent.

- Define “ordinary supporter”. Based on the information you have, create an artificial profile of the person whose characteristics and interests match your findings about potential supporters. Think of this imaginary person, this so called persona in all communication of your project.
- Learn from good practice of other organizations (international as well), yet never blindly copy someone else's ideas. Think out which practices of communication towards donors caught your eye, and which could be transferred into your practice.
- Cooperate. Think about who else could support your project (other than financially or in the media). Establish contacts with municipalities, likeminded organizations, schools and likewise. This way you will be able to reach to other channels, and further share information about your project.

## 2. Think out the stories

You can express one thing in thousand different ways. Choose what you will emphasize in communication according to who you are communicating with precisely. Stay within the chosen strategy. Everytime when you communicate with the same target group, use the same language.

For example, if you want to present a project that supports the small business of African seamstresses, journalists from daily or weekly news may be interested in broader economic context of the matter. Presenting the quantifying of how the new job helps the family budgets of the chosen seamstresses, but also how much money the International Development Cooperation of the Czech Republic invests in such projects and the results. The more exact numbers, the better. On the contrary, to present the same project on a fashion blog, you will need information about what the seamstresses sew, who wears it, how you can apply it to our fashion and the like.

If possible, try to make the hero of the story the one from whom you expect support. Specifically, this means to introduce changes or other positive benefits, which can be achieved thanks to support from the public with whom you communicate.

## 3. Get ready

The most important thing in public relations (and marketing in general) is to know how to “sell yourself”. Be self-confident and professional. If you do not have a person with the background in public relations or marketing in your team, get one. This could be an external worker, or train someone from the team, even if you do not have a project that needs to be communicated to the public at the moment.

**Bases of your communication with the public are:**

**People** – Your employees should keep in mind that when they talk about their job, they take part in creating the reputation of the organization. Therefore, it is obvious that all your employees should know at least basic principles, mission and goals of your organization regardless of whether their job description officially includes communication with the public.

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**Websites** – Websites must be transparent, clear, updated regularly and targeted on the user. If possible, do not rely on “a friend who knows a bit about programming”. Find someone who is able to create nice and functional websites and has a portfolio which shows that. If you do not have budget for creating website, try to get it as a sponsor gift. Priority must be given to information, which is important for your potential donor.

**Social media** – Create (or refresh) your Facebook profile. Keep in mind that for effective communication in social media it is necessary to update the profile regularly (a few times a week or even a day) and react promptly to the activities of your fans. A profile on Twitter can be suitable for reaching specific target groups. For more information on social media see the chapter about the specifics of communication channels.

**Visual and content identity** – Make sure that you use the same visual elements and the same basic message on all promotion materials (websites, business cards, flyers).

## 4. Draw attention

Build a community of supporters and be professional when communicating with the media.

### A) Building a Community of Supporters

When you communicate with the public without the use of mass media, follow the principle of simplicity. Your goal is to draw attention to specific individuals and turn them into both your supporters and promoters of your ideas to other people.

What can help you when building the community of supporters:

**Social media** – In the Czech Republic it would be mostly Facebook. You can either communicate on facebook profile of your organization or set up a new profile for a specific project (then it is good to name it so it refers to the core of your “story”, e.g. “Show what you have for your breakfast” and the like).

#### *Practical examples:*

- Facebook page of Médecins Sans Frontières - MSF ([www.facebook.com/lekaribezhranic](http://www.facebook.com/lekaribezhranic)) – updated regularly, photos, specific and actual stories with over ten thousand followers.
- Ušili to na nás ([www.facebook.com/usilitonanas](http://www.facebook.com/usilitonanas)) – facebook page of organization NaZemi connected to campaign about labor conditions in the garnet industry.

**E-mailing** – Collect email addresses of your supporters and keep them regularly updated. Set up the frequency of e-mailing based on how often you’ll be able to provide new information that is in the same time interesting for your supporters. An e-mail address is considered personal data; hence you need to have the consent of its owner to receive information about your activities.

#### *Practical examples:*

The association Tady není developerovo (This place is not for developers) was organising a petition for

the preservation of Nákladové nádraží Žižkov (Žižkov freight station) as a cultural monument. Then the association used the contacts from the petition and send to the signatories information such as about co-organized conference Pražská nádraží nevyužitá (a conference about Prague railway stations which are no longer in use but could be)

**Websites** – Place on your website appropriately calls for participation (e.g. subscribe to the newsletter, add your facebook page to the favourites, etc.). Update your website regularly and continue to provide information about things which could be of interest to your followers.

***Practical examples:***

Website of the Czech branch of Amnesty International complies well with the above mentioned characteristics.

**Flyers, publications** – Find opportunities where you can communicate directly with your sympathizers and supporters (e.g. festivals and other cultural events) and distribute your promotional materials, or send them by mail. Also from these the addressed ones should clearly understand what is their role and what will they get from such activity.

***Practical examples:***

- Rozvojevka (People in Need) has been touring Czech festivals already for five years with its stall.
- The organization NaZemi, based on their previous experience from festivals, wanted to prepare something interactive that catches people's eye and presents specific problem in a fun way. Therefore, they were touring festivals with so-called screaming booth, through which people could shout to the world what they think about large multinational companies. Based on a positive response they installed the booth also at events in Brno and Prague, and gained also media attention. Equipment which is installed inside the booth displays the volume of scream and at the same time takes a picture of the person. Organization NaZemi then placed the pictures on their website, which draw attention of many new fans and supporters. The photo-petition was subsequently handed over to representatives of certain companies.

**People** – Motivate your employees to let their surrounding know about their job and projects of your organisation. Generally speaking, to motivate your employees, it is necessary to be a good employer who respects the different needs of employees and their right to balance professional and personal life.

## **B) Communication Through (Mass) Media**

When communicating through the media the connection between you and potential donors is journalists and reporters. They often have a clear view on what is interesting for readers (listeners, and viewers) of their media. In addition, there are other people such as editors, head editors and others, who decide on what will be published or broadcasted. They follow a certain line set by the character and owner of the media. Usually you are not able to communicate with these people directly. Look at your project realistically through journalistic eyes and offer to the media such topics that are interesting for them, so they will also find them attractive for their readers.

Be active and do not expect that the media will contact you. Communicate with journalists not only through

press releases, but build a closer relationship with the contacts that are important for you.

Be creative. Think about how to interconnect your topic to make it interesting for a specific media outlet and be creative when communicating these topics.

Be original, be unique. Try to present your topic on interesting, and almost exclusive information.

Provide the journalist with maximum service. The time that is devoted to media coverage of your topic is yours, not the journalist's. Depending on the type of media, prepare ready-to-go texts, sufficient number of good quality photographs (including legend), or video footage. Be clear about who will present your project on the radio or television and make sure that this person is capable to describe the project in an understandable way to the broad public

## **5. Talk with your supporters**

Talking means continuous communication with donors and partners. You need support continuously. If it is to be a financial support, it is a long-term thing. It is important to make your supporters feel part of the whole process. In doing this they will have a sense of ownership of the project and will promote it further through their own channels and will be willing to support again (more). In communication, do not forget also about non-financial partners you have gained. Be open-minded and ready to share your project with others.

### **What can help you in continuous communication:**

- E-mailing, Facebook, website
- Media – Communicate to journalists the continuous process of your project. Choose the right level to prevent them thinking your communication is “spam”.
- Events for donors and partners – Organize trips, picnics, presentations, or an exhibition (according to your budget and timeframe), invite your donors and partners and talk to them directly.
- Personalized letter – From time to time send a personalized letter to a significant (company) contributors and inform them how you use their donation, including appropriate photographs. If up to date, attach your organization's annual report or similar related documentation.

## **6. Say thank you and continue together**

Giving thanks for support is also a marketing tool. A well written thank-you letter (whether it is automatically generated by the system after receipt of payment, or you write it in person), or thank you statement on the website should reaffirm supporters about the benefit of their contribution and invoke their desire to participate again and more, e.g. as a volunteer or as a contributor to another project. Do not forget about the visibility of your supporters and all those who somehow make your work possible in your promotional materials.

Two principles to follow when thanking:

1. When you are writing to your supporters, make them to be the heroes. Remember the story that helped you get the supporters. In a thank-you letter make them be one of the heroes of this story.
  2. Try to make the best out of your donors. Make them be your medium. Offer them appropriate ways of
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sharing the information about your project further – e.g. by sharing on facebook.

***Summary:** „6P” helps to continuously build a good name of your organization and supports fundraising. Try to take it into account when planning communication activities and continually return to them. They will help you orientate yourself even in the moments when you feel uncertain about your communication progress. You can compare your steps with the steps described in “6P” and see if you did not forget something important. Once further factors enter into you communication objectives, such as an effort to change public attitudes on an issue, it is necessary to plan your communication campaign with regard to other factors described in the following chapters of this publication.*



*This text is an extract of a publication. The original document is available [here](#).*

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