Aurora Parking &Mobility Enterprise

July 2015 • Final

Marketing and Education

Includes a review of best practices for marketing, education, and community outreach efforts needed to support the ongoing implementation and management of the Parking and Mobility Program. This section includes recommendations for outreach and communications, as well as specific targeted actions for promoting the program.

AURORA

Marketing
and Education

Contents

Marketing and Education

A critical element of developing a successful parking and mobility management plan is clear and concise communication with various user groups, coupled with proactive and authentic stakeholder engagement. For the City of Aurora Parking and Mobility Enterprise Business System, intentional and targeted outreach to the Aurora community was designed to provide both City of Aurora staff and the consultant team with valuable insight into the real and perceived parking and transportation challenges that residents and visitors face when visiting Aurora's diverse neighborhoods and business districts.

The following document outlines the community engagement activities conducted as part of the parking management plan, as well as a Marketing, Strategic Communications, and Community Education Plan to support implementation of the plan's recommendations. The Marketing and Education Plan explores traditional and non-traditional marketing channels, education/engagement strategies, and communication vehicles specifically identified to keep the community informed and engaged during a time of growth and development in Aurora. The Marketing and Education Plan also identifies target audiences for marketing, messaging, and media relations strategies that support the City's ultimate goal of increasing ease of use and customer understanding of the City of Aurora's parking and mobility offerings.

The goal of this chapter is to provide the City with a specific roadmap for continuing the outreach efforts that were started as part of the Business Plan development process, and to guide the new Parking & Mobility Manager and outsourced staff team as they work to inform and engage members of the Aurora community throughout implementation of the Business Plan's broader recommendations.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

As part of the development of the Parking and Mobility Business Plan, a targeted series of public meetings were held with key internal (i.e., City leadership, management, and staff) and external stakeholder (i.e., residents and business owners) groups. The goal of this limited public outreach effort was to:

» Educate the community about why it is important to manage parking
» Listen to feedback about existing parking and mobility issues around light rail stations, and in key neighborhoods and business districts
» Engage stakeholders on the ground floor
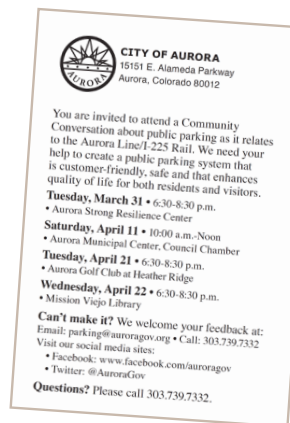
As part of this Business Plan project, limited stakeholder engagement was conducted by the Kimley-Horn team in partnership with City staff. Outreach activities from January to April 2015 included the following:

» Four "Community Conversations" held during March and April 2015 at:
  » Aurora Strong Resilience Center (March 31)
  » Aurora City Council Chambers (April 11)
  » Aurora Golf Club at Heather Ridge (April 21)
  » Mission Viejo Library (April 22)

» Five "Station Area" Meetings held February through April 2015 at:
  » Fitzsimons-Colfax medical campus (February 12)
  » Florida Avenue Station (February 13 and April 1)
  » Iliff Avenue Station (April 21 and June 2015)

» Additionally, frequent presentations and updates were provided from February through April 2015 to:
  » City of Aurora core project team
  » City Council
  » City management
  » City staff

The main goal of the stakeholder engagement process was to provide community members with an opportunity to share their experiences, perceptions, ideas, and concerns related to parking and mobility in neighborhoods and commercial district areas around existing and future Aurora Line/I-225 Line light rail stations.

Notes taken at the "Community Conversations" highlighted the following key themes:

» Residents are concerned about how possible overflow from light rail stations will impact parking in their neighborhoods. The possibility of commuters parking in residential areas all day and taking up on-street spaces was the top concern raised throughout all four meetings. Residents would like to ensure that there is a parking management solution ready and in place before opening day.

» There is anxiety and uncertainty about whether the new Iliff Garage will be big enough to accommodate demand. Community members are well aware that the Nine Mile Garage is always full and have concerns that the new Iliff Garage will see the same sort of demand on opening day, thus pushing commuters out into surrounding neighborhoods.

» There is significant concern about traffic safety, especially for elderly and disabled residents. Residents are already experiencing a moderate amount of "cut through" traffic in their neighborhoods, especially the Heather Gardens and Steeple Run neighborhoods. Residents would like the City to consider the increased traffic impacts to neighborhoods that the opening of the new light rail stations will bring.

» Community members are interested in station amenities, specifically station design aesthetics, safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists, and the presence of restroom facilities. Several community members mentioned the importance of creating station "amenities" that included pedestrian walkways, good lighting, enhanced design aesthetics, and if possible, restroom facilities.

» Residents are curious to know if the City will charge to park at the Iliff Garage on opening day. While the implementation of paid parking was mentioned a few times throughout the Community Conversations, surprisingly, it was not the most frequently mentioned topic. Stakeholders were mostly curious about policy recommendations on paid parking at the stations and also about how much, if any, they would have to pay for a neighborhood permit for themselves and their guests.

The City of Aurora's Neighborhood Liaison, Public Works, and Planning teams should be commended for their role in helping coordinate and facilitate the Community Conversations. Having a representative from both the Neighborhood and Public Works teams at each meeting was vitally important as citizens asked a diverse range of questions that touched on a variety of topics from traffic patterns to pedestrian safety. As detailed later in this Marketing and Education chapter, the continuation of public outreach efforts will be an important part of successfully implementing the overall Parking and Mobility Enterprise Business Plan. It is recommended that this work continues to be done collaboratively between relevant City teams to ensure that citizen questions can be addressed in a timely and accurate manner. Additionally, it is strongly recommended that consideration be given to the inclusion of a representative from RTD at future public outreach meetings, where possible.

MARKETING, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION, AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Regardless of whether an organization is budgeting for dollars, staff time, and/or scarce resources, strategic investment in marketing, communications, and public education often slides to the bottom of the priority list. However in reality, thinking strategically about these decisions can support every other aspect of a parking and mobility system's operations.

This section highlights key areas of opportunity for the City of Aurora to consider as it works to implement the Parking and Mobility Enterprise Business Plan, and it has been broken down into three categories:

» **Program Brand Development, Messaging, and Key Audiences:** Ways to build connections, pride, and ownership among staff and users

» **Media and Public Relations:** Guidance on how and when to reach out and engage the local media

» **Communication Tools and Platforms:** Strategies to build the organization's narrative via consistent and creative communication, utilizing the most effective tools

It should be noted that the new Parking & Mobility Manager has an excellent resource in the City's Communication Team. While the City's Communication Team can help guide and mentor the new manager as they go out into the community and begin to shape the community conversation on parking and mobility in Aurora, it is absolutely critical that the new manager develop their own set of strong communication and media relations skills as they will be the primary "voice" for parking and mobility in the City.

KEY DEFINITIONS

» **Brand Position:** A brand position is a simple statement that conveys the essence of an organization and provides a promise to both customers and partners about the type of environment that can be expected. It also sets the tone for the development of the actual brand, which will only resonate with patrons and investors if it reflects the true character of the organization it represents.

» **Messaging:** A messaging strategy is the foundation for all of an organization's marketing efforts. Put simply, a messaging strategy tells the key audiences why they should visit your organization, what they will find when they do, and why they should care. For a brand to resonate with its customers and partners, the messaging strategy needs to inspire confidence that the organization understands its patrons and partners' needs, and has something relevant and unique to offer.

» **Vision:** This statement should be very aspirational and speak to the organization's ultimate point of success.

» **Mission:** This statement defines what an organization is, why it exists, and its reason for being.

Program Brand Development, Messaging, and Key Audiences

Intentional promotion and positioning of the City of Aurora's parking and mobility service offerings will provide opportunities for increased user recognition and engagement, as well as increased understanding about existing and future service areas.

Organizational Brand

An organizational brand goes beyond an organization's name, logo, and visual identity. A brand represents an unspoken promise, or commitment—of quality, value, professionalism, and financial stewardship—about the consistent experience patrons can expect when interacting with the City of Aurora's Parking and Mobility Program. Over time, a brand becomes synonymous with an organization. When patrons see an organization's signage, communication pieces, or uniforms, an emotional connection is created that evokes the memories and feelings that a person associates with a particular organization.

Branding creates value and starts with truth. It identifies shared values and areas of expertise. For example, what community needs **are** and **are not** being met by the organization? What story is your current brand telling about the organization? What story do you want to tell? Your organizational brand provides the foundation for the creation of content and tone for marketing efforts, customer relations efforts, and organizational culture.

The Kimley-Horn team observed that the City of Aurora has invested a great deal in creating a unique, recognizable, and vibrant City brand. Similar to the careful curation of the City's brand, the parking and mobility enterprise also needs a brand identity that is clear, consistent, and that starts the interaction with a parking patron—whether online or on the street—in a positive manner. This concept is further explored in the Branding and Wayfinding document of the Business Plan.

Messaging

Messaging provides the foundation for creating content and tone for marketing, advertising, and outreach efforts.

The three key elements to effective brand messaging include:

» **Consistency:** Keeping similar tone/feeling when communicating to your audience

» **Frequency:** The driving force—keeping the message in front of the audience as often as possible—and not just focusing on providing "must have" information about construction, special events, and programs, but updates that reinforce the goals of the organization and remind users of the bigger picture.

» **Anchoring:** Messaging that provides a compelling call to action. Memorable, high-impact language and visual presentation that talks to the patron, not at the patron

Messaging for Aurora's new parking and mobility enterprise should focus heavily on how the new Parking and Mobility Program will work to align parking and mobility policies and activities with the community's strategic development and growth goals. It should also focus on reinforcing the City's "Core 4 Values" of integrity, respect, professionalism, and customer service. During public outreach, the following statement was used to explain the purpose of the Business Plan project in a manner that is simple, easy to understand, and that supports the City's brand position:

"To create a public parking and mobility management system that is customer-friendly, safe and that enhances quality of life for Aurora residents and visitors."

To further strengthen and support the City's new brand position, as outlined in The "A" Book, it will be important for both the new Parking & Mobility Manager and the contracted staff to carefully consider both the tone of their messaging and how various messages will be perceived by the general public. In an arena as technical and complicated as parking and mobility management, it is often easy to get caught up in creating messages that try to convey too much information, often in a way that is full of jargon or technical instructions. The City's Communication Team will be an excellent resource for the new Parking & Mobility Manager and other outsourced communication staff members to ensure that any messaging that goes out to the general public is both informative and supportive of the City's broader value proposition.

Target Audiences

A successful Marketing and Education plan starts with identification of the primary and secondary audiences. While every unique communication effort does not have to be tailored to meet a specific audience's needs, it is important to keep in mind that communication—especially during tense or challenging times—is not always a "one-size-fits-all" solution. Audience identification can help the City of Aurora know when additional communication or explanation of a situation might be needed. It also helps prevent overwhelming customers with irrelevant or too much communication, and can assist with making choices about which communication tools will be most effective for a particular audience.

Eight key "target groups" have been outlined in the "A Book," along with messages about Aurora's attributes ("A Book," page 21) that resonate most with those particular groups, including:

- » Developers
- » Realtors
- » Millennial professionals
- » Those relocating to the Metro area
- » Anchutz, Buckley, and other large corporate employees
- » Aurora residents
- » Metro non-residents
- » Metro business community

The following list provides a great backdrop for identification of the new parking and mobility system's primary and secondary audiences.

PRIMARY AUDIENCES

- » **Frequent Patrons:** This audience includes daily commuters and regular patrons of businesses, organizations, and entities that will interact with the City of Aurora's public parking and mobility system at least once per week. These customers are more informed about parking policies and regulation than the average parker; however, they may be more resistant to future changes because they have an established routine.

- » **Visitors, New and Future Patrons:** This audience includes existing moderate to infrequent users and future potential users. This audience also includes suburban and rural residents who travel "to the city" for special events or meetings. This is a more challenging group to reach because of their infrequent use of the system; however, they are also likely to complain the loudest when they have a negative parking experience.

- » **Business and Property Owners, Merchants:** This audience segment is highly engaged which can provide both a challenge and opportunity. On one hand, they are very knowledgeable and are connected to larger groups of stakeholders or customers. On the other hand, these groups often lack knowledge about professional parking management policies and can become quickly frustrated with the slow pace of the public sector. The City of Aurora has an active, engaged, and professional partner in the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, Transportation Committee. Leveraging this relationship will be vital as the City works to spread information about how parking will be managed in the future.

- » **Neighborhoods Immediately Adjacent to the Aurora/I-225 Line:** Aurora has a number of well-organized neighborhoods that have strong and vocal leadership. Several of these groups indicated a desire and willingness to participate in creating parking and mobility management policies for their neighborhood areas. As these groups are often "life-lines" to larger resident groups and can heavily sway public opinion, the City should continue their ongoing outreach efforts with a special focus on keeping this audience engaged and informed.

- » **Medical Campuses:** The Fitzsimons campus, which includes the Anchutz Medical Campus and the Fitzsimons Life Sciences District, is one of the City's key stakeholders and top employers. While largely self-contained, the campus has and will continue to have a significant impact on Aurora's economy, as well as adjacent neighborhoods and developments. As part of the Business Plan project, limited outreach was conducted at the Fitzsimons campus. This effort should be continued as opening day of the Aurora/I-225 line approaches to ensure that employees and decision makers for the campus are informed and educated about the new line.

» **RTD:** The Regional Transportation District (RTD) will be one of the most significant stakeholder partners that the new City of Aurora Parking & Mobility Manager will have. However, RTD is not only a partner—they are a key audience group—and careful consideration should be given to how messages are shared with RTD. It will be important to partner with RTD on creating joint messaging, as appropriate; however, it is just an important that the Parking and Mobility Program retain their own messaging and identity to avoid patron confusion.

SECONDARY AUDIENCES
» Non-adjacent neighborhoods
» Arapahoe, Adams, and Douglas counties
» Private parking operators
» Adjacent cities and counties
» Media

It might be helpful to think about how each of these pieces—organizational mission, vision, audiences, and messaging—all fit together to create one cohesive brand position:

BRAND POSITION:

To (Target Audiences):

We are (Unique Identifier):

That (provides "X" to the audience):

By (details that support "X"):

VISION:
» How would you define your ultimate point of success?
» What umbrella task/goal do you possess that will be worked on indefinitely?

MISSION:
» What will you do to continuously work toward your vision?
» What markets are you serving and what benefit do you offer them by working toward your vision?

Questions to identify key words in a statement that presents the means in which your organization will work toward the vision:

1. What perceptions, habits, or beliefs do we need to work on or develop in order to grow?
2. What are we "selling?"
3. Who do we benefit?
4. What's in our toolbox (i.e., what resources do we provide)?

Media and Public Relations

The importance of a well thought out public relations plan cannot be overstated because, in the absence of information, the general public will make up their own answers and/or rumors will be given more "legs" than when an organization is proactively pushing out their desired message.

Communicating about parking requires both technical savvy and an understanding of the often-intense emotions that are experienced when dealing with parking concerns and issues. Relationship and trust building can be slow; however, these strategic first steps can be taken to begin developing productive relationships with the general public and the media:

- » **Form strong reciprocal relationships with local media: This is especially important during times of** crisis and should include local and regional media outlets.
- » **Be out in front of stories:** In the months leading up to opening day, the new Parking & Mobility Manager, Core City Project Team, and City Communications staff should meet regularly to discuss potential public relations issues and make a joint and informed decision about what communication is needed and the best angle to take. These meetings will likely need to happen more frequently (weekly or bi-monthly) while the Parking & Mobility Manager gets acclimated to their new role.
- » **Develop a Crisis Communication Plan:** It is absolutely critical to have a written Crisis Communication Plan in place and know the chain of command protocols for addressing the issue publicly before control of messaging is lost. Please note that any plan should be vetted by and complement the City's overall Crisis Management Plan. (See Appendix A for a Sample Crisis Communication Plan Outline)
- » **Feed information to media:** This might appear to run counter to the operating norm for many parking systems who try to fly under the media's radar, but it is particularly effective when a crisis hits and you want to be one of the first calls the media makes.
- » **Increase communication during times of transition:** People and organizations often stop communicating during times of transition (i.e., construction, program building, and implementation of new technologies) because they feel that they "are not there yet" and need to have everything completed before bringing their constituencies along. This is exactly the opposite of what should be done; parking and transportation changes and/or "inconveniences" can lead to intense frustration and fuel complaint volumes. During times of transition, communication should be:
  - » Clear and understandable
  - » Tailored to your key audiences
  - » Repetitive and simple
- » **Media Relations Planning:** The organization should have an established media relations strategy that includes local, regional, and national media connections. Strategies should be built on a foundation of trust, reciprocity, and transparency. It is recommended that the new Parking & Mobility Manager develop a Media Relations Strategy in partnership with City of Aurora Communications staff. At a minimum, this strategy should:
  - » Include a comprehensive list of local, regional, and national media contacts that is reviewed for accuracy at least quarterly.
  - » Include specific sub-sections outlining approved policies and procedures for addressing re-occurring annual, seasonal, campaign, and event-specific communications functions (i.e., special events, service disruption, and construction).

> » Align with the City of Aurora's overall strategic goals and integrate with the City's larger communication and media engagement policies.
> » Identify one or more designated spokespeople who have specific experience and/or have received training on how to communicate effectively with the media.

Suggested documentation includes:

- » Up-to-date media list
- » Names and titles of designated media spokespeople
- » Documentation of media/public relations training program for all designated spokespeople
- » Develop a process for keeping records of past media relations campaigns and/or notification materials and documentation (i.e., press releases, collateral material, and talking points).

Communication Tools and Platforms

It is important to identify and utilize a variety of mediums when communicating with current and future parking customers. As the new Parking & Mobility Manager, staff, and City core team prepare for the opening of the Aurora/I-225 Line in 2016, there needs to be a steady and well thought-out plan for communicating with Aurora's diverse residents and frequent visitors. Whether the message is informational (e.g. details on construction efforts for the new Iliff Garage) or educational (e.g. rolling out new parking management policies, programs, and technologies), the key is to communicate early, often, and in ways that your messages will be heard.

When identifying the communication tools and platforms that will work best for the City of Aurora's new Parking and Mobility Enterprise System, the following items should be considered:

Web Presence

Parking and mobility information should have a prominent and easily navigable place on the City of Aurora's website initially, with a plan to transition the site into a standalone URL like www.parkaurora.com as the enterprise grows. The City's parking and mobility web presence should be a one-stop shop for all critical information about parking services and policies in the City of Aurora.

When getting started, a few key tips should be considered:

- » The web pages should be well-managed with a plan to keep content fresh and new. Users returning to the site and finding nothing new are likely to stop utilizing it as a resource. Important news should be more prominently listed on the home page.
- » The web page should have a balanced mixture of written content and visual imagery. Parking websites often tend to have a lot of regulatory text with little imagery, videos, or other multi-media content.
- » The page should be reviewed to ensure accessibility for those with visual impairments.
- » The page should be mobile-optimized to allow easy access from mobile devices like cell phones and tablets.
- » Look into using Google Analytics (or a similar tool) to track where the website is receiving the most traffic and actively move those items to the home page (this will be discussed later in the Metrics section).
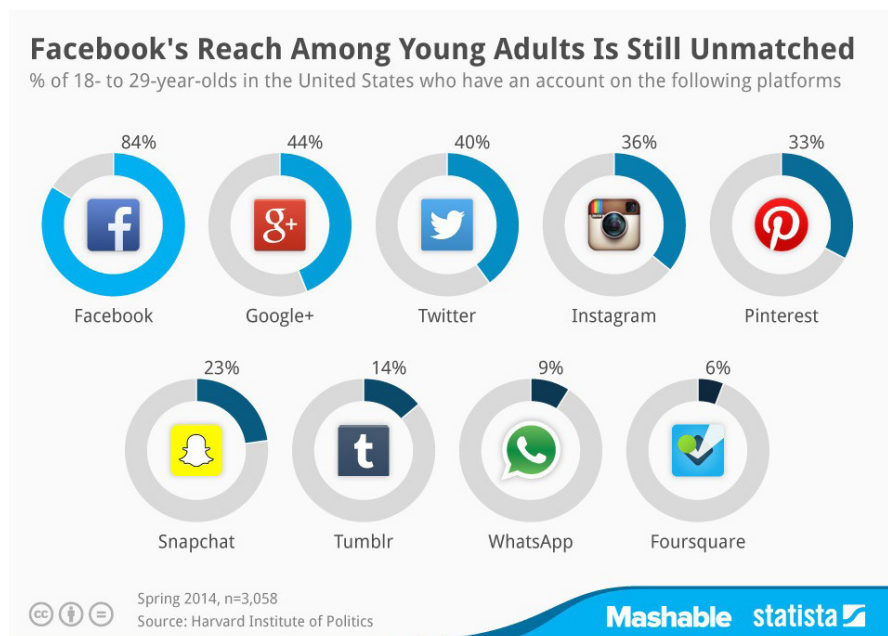
[2] 2012 International Building Code

"MUST HAVE" ONLINE RESOURCES:

» Basic parking information, location, and directions

» Mission, Vision, and Values of the organization, and a summary of work underway to achieve those goals

» Detailed information about service and programmatic offerings

» Comprehensive calendar of events and opportunities for target market audience engagement with the organization

» Links to social media

» Special event information, including event-related street closures, special event parking rates, and links to legitimate private event parking operators

» Contact form

» Emergency phone number and contact information that is answered 24/7

» Section with professional pictures of staff, leadership, and front-line parking staff

» The ability to pay citations, purchase permits, and cancel permits

» Important news, including construction-related street/lane closures, temporarily reserved parking areas, special event parking information, and meters that are hooded or out of service, etc.

» Links to relevant transit information, including RTD bus routes, FasTracks information, construction updates, etc.

» Information for cyclists

A few examples of parking programs that have a clean, well-branded, and user-friendly web presence include: EasyPark, Vancouver, BC (**www.easypark.ca**); LexPark, Lexington, VA (**www.lexpark.org**); and Park Cedar Rapids (**www.parkcedarrapids.com**).

Social/New Media Tools

Social media has changed the way people communicate, how stories are told, and how information gets distributed. However, as many industries are noticing, social/new media strategies are only as effective as the consistency of the staff, intern, or volunteer time that is spent to maintain them. The effective use of social media means making a commitment to keeping it updated with fresh content. The most successful parking programs and organizations using social media are creative in their messaging and approach, using the site not just for information, but for contests and fun interactions as well. Social media gives the brand a personable and down to earth accessibility that gives a user a continuous reason to keep coming back.

Facebook's Reach Among Young Adults Is Still Unmatched
% of 18- to 29-year-olds in the United States who have an account on the following platforms

84%	44%	40%	36%	33%
Facebook	Google+	Twitter	Instagram	Pinterest

23%	14%	9%	6%
Snapchat	Tumblr	WhatsApp	Foursquare

Spring 2014, n=3,058
Source: Harvard Institute of Politics

Mashable　statista

The City of Aurora already uses a variety of well-trafficked social media sites to connect with residents and visitors including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. As the City considers the many community education and communication tools that will be part of the new parking and mobility enterprise' "toolbox," social media should be a strong contender. All the social/new media tools should ultimately tie back and feed live updates to the parking department's web page.

The opening of the new Aurora/I-225 Line, coupled with Aurora's more affordably priced housing stock, is likely to attract the interest of members of the highly-connected Millennial generation. According to a 2014 study of Americans aged 18-24[1], "more than half of Millennials said they would consider moving to another city if it had more and better options for getting around, while 66% said that access to high quality transportation was one of the top three criteria they [weighed] when deciding where to live." These audiences are likely already on social media and will come to expect that they will be able to follow, tweet, post, or tag a picture as part of their basic customer service interaction with the new parking enterprise.

City and Outsourced Staff Resources

The important role that staff play in representing and promoting an organization's brand cannot be overstated. While management-level employees like the new Parking & Mobility Manager will have a highly visible and public-facing role, it is the front-line staff—enforcement officers (Parking Ambassadors), maintenance, and customer service/administrative professionals—that will have the most frequent, and likely most impactful interactions with customers.

As succinctly explained in The "A Book," "Each of us has a chance to make an impact." While the City of Aurora is likely to outsource the majority of its staff positions to an outside vendor, those employees should be thoroughly trained to "sound," "act," and "look" like City of Aurora employees. Just as it is very important that City of Aurora Parking and Mobility Enterprise staff receive the necessary conflict resolution and customer service training to effectively communicate and serve parking patrons, the importance of non-verbal and secondary messages should also be considered. These can included, but are not limited, to:

» **Uniforms:** Traditionally, enforcement officers have worn uniforms that resembled those of law enforcement, with badges and other equipment that can create a more intimidating look for an employee. Those organizations that follow best practice are putting enforcement staff or Parking Ambassadors (PAs) in more casual, yet professional, attire with neat, well-branded polo shirts and slacks or shorts. Additionally, the PAs are given backpacks or shoulder bags with maps, umbrellas, coupons, and other customer-friendly items.

» **Transportation:** While it is not always possible (depending on the size of the area that an employee covers or for specific job functions like maintenance) it is often helpful to remove PAs from their vehicles, putting them on foot or bike so that they can more easily interact with parking patrons and answer questions.

» **Office Layout:** Similar to law enforcement approach to uniforms, many parking offices are set up with no waiting or seating area, bars, or thick glass on windows and no décor, which can unintentionally create a combative environment that can put a parking patron on edge. It is important to balance the understandable need to protect the safety of staff members with the environment that is being created for patrons who are looking for help, support, and answers to questions.

[1] *The Rockefeller Group and Transportation for America Study, released on April 22, 2014. Study conducted by Global Strategy Group. www.rockefellerfoundation.org/newsroom/access-public-transportation-top.*

Signage and Wayfinding

Signage and other physical wayfinding and gateway elements can often be a patron's first source of interaction with the parking enterprise. Well-branded signage can help alleviate anxiety that a parking patron might feel when approaching a new lot or facility. While this important topic is outlined in more detail in the Branding and Wayfinding Chapter, it was important to mention it in the Marketing and Education Chapter as well because it is an integral part of the overall experience.

Additional Outreach Channels and Tools

Based on feedback from the City's Core Project team, City staff, and residents, the following existing channels of communication were identified as helpful resources for sending out information (i.e., meeting notifications, construction updates):

- » **Nextdoor (www.nextdoor.com)**
- » **Neighborhood Association bulletins**
- » **Aurora Sentinel**
- » **Aurora Channel 8**
- » **KWIT 90 KOJI (www.kwit.org)**
- » **Library bulletins**
- » **City of Aurora Facebook**
- » **City of Aurora Twitter**

In addition to using these proven channels, the following additional strategies are recommended for consideration:

- » **Utility Bill Survey:** The utility bill is a powerful tool because it is likely to reach a far larger audience than can be reached by other, often online-only, tools. Utility bill inserts can provide link information and QR codes, and can list other ways that residents can provide feedback (i.e., upcoming meeting dates, phone numbers, or email information).
- » **Opt-in Text Message System:** For those community members who are faced with "email overload" or who choose not to have a smart phone, offering an opt-in text messaging system is a good option. A text message number would be provided to community members interested in receiving text messages about upcoming meetings, construction updates, or programs that might impact their neighborhood. This system can be relatively inexpensive and easy to manage. Normal text messaging rates for those who opt-in do still apply.
- » **Police Department Neighborhood Watch**
- » **Public School Communication**
- » **Original Aurora Elementary School "Coffee Klatches"**
- » **Parking and Mobility Enterprise Email Update:** Similar to the "construction updates" list serve that RTD currently has for FasTracks, a parking and mobility email list serve could provide regular updates for patrons in advance of the line opening in 2016. It could link to other resources (i.e., FasTracks email update) and could also drive traffic to various informational pieces on the City's website (i.e., development updates). While the City of Aurora has a more general email update listed in its website, this update should be focused on parking and mobility issues.

» **Educational Materials:** As Aurora's parking and mobility enterprise matures, it will be important to consider the diversity of audiences in Aurora and offer a variety of informational pieces, both online and in more traditional formats like informational "one pagers." These documents should live online where they can be downloaded and printed at home, as well as distributed at meetings and at the future parking office. Some examples of basic informational pieces to consider developing include:

> » Parking Mobility Enterprise Overview: Include basic information like Mission, Vision, Values/Guiding Principles, contact information, website, and basic enterprise information like facility locations, pricing, and how revenues are spent.

> » Annual Report: An Annual Report provides programs with an opportunity to document and share progress made over the course of a year. Some basic items to include in the report include annual achievements, budget information, marketing and outreach efforts, priorities for the coming year, and statistics on customers served. The Annual Report can also include results from benchmarking and customer service surveys.

> » Commuter Information: As Aurora works to promote the use of other modes, it will be important to track the percentage of customers using various modes. This information can be folded into an Annual Report or presented as a stand-alone enterprise marketing piece.

» **Educational Videos:** Videos can be a powerful instructional and informational tool, especially when trying to convey often technical information about new parking technology. Videos are also a great way to include customers or other community leaders like Council members in the development of educational materials. and other media campaigns (i.e., customers/community leaders can be used to demonstrate technology in educational videos, replace stock photos on your website, and can be trained as citizen peer advocates for a particular stakeholder group.)

» **"Industry Captains"**: One of the most powerful tools that can be leveraged is the sharing of information and advocacy of an idea by peer groups. The new Parking & Mobility Manager should make one of his/her first tasks to reach out to key thought leaders in the business, residential, and community development sectors and work on getting their buy-in to act as citizen ambassadors for the new enterprise. These Industry Captains can then help broaden the reach of key messages and often their voices can carry more weight and gain more trust with peer groups than messages coming straight from the City or other public source.

Recommendations for finding the right balance and combination of communication tools is outlined in the final section, Implementation Strategies.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This final section outlines six key areas to consider when moving into implementation of the Parking and Mobility Enterprise Business Plan:

» Selecting the right communication tools
» Annual planning and budgeting
» Staffing and staff development
» Ongoing stakeholder and community outreach
» Metrics to measure success
» "Closing the communication loop"

Selecting the Right Communication Tools

As outlined in the previous section "Communication Tools and Tactics," the new Parking and Mobility Enterprise will start with a good foundation of communication strategies and channels that are currently used, promoted, and managed by the City's Communications team. The following matrix was designed to provide an overview of existing and proposed additional communication tools for the new enterprise to consider, along with information on cost implication, timing, and efficacy.

Tool	Pricing	Timing	Efficacy
Social Media	$	Ongoing	♦♦♦
Presentations to Community Groups	$	Ongoing	♦♦♦
Industry Captains	No cost to City	Fall 2015	♦♦♦♦♦
Neighborhood Association bulletins	No cost to City	Fall 2015	♦♦
Nextdoor (www.nextdoor.com)	No cost to City	Fall 2015	♦
Email Update	$	Fall 2015	♦♦♦
Public Bulletins	$	Winter 2015	♦
Utility Bill Information / News Aurora	$$	Winter 2016	♦♦♦
Text Message System	$	Winter 2016	♦♦♦
Police Dept./Neighborhood Watch	$	Winter 2016	♦♦
Public School Bulletin	$	Winter 2016	♦♦
Coffee Klatches	$	Winter 2016	♦♦♦
Educational Materials	$$ - $$$	Winter /Spring 2016	♦♦♦
Instructional Videos / Multimedia	$$$ - $$$$	Fall 2016	♦♦♦♦
News Media	$$ - $$$	Spring 2016	♦♦
Radio	$$ - $$$	Spring 2016	♦♦

Annual Planning and Budgeting

As the initial budget for the new Parking and Mobility program is created, consideration should be given to the cost associated with implementing desired marketing and community education activities. Annual planning for these activities should be developed in the latter part of the third quarter of each fiscal year. This process should be done in collaboration with the enterprise's overall strategic planning and should be designed to support the enterprise's overall organizational goals. The plan should be reviewed regularly and include reporting and evaluation metrics.

Though there is currently no dedicated funding source for the new enterprise, it is still important to create an annual marketing and communications plan so that the process becomes a regular part of annual organizational planning efforts. In Year One, the organization should focus on leveraging free and low-cost tools, thinking strategically about where any potential funds allocated to the system for marketing could be directed for the most significant return on investment.

Planning and Budget Recommendations

- » Plan is established and refined in the third and fourth quarters of the preceding fiscal year and is aligned with the organization's overall strategic goals. Plan is assessed bi-annually by the appropriate staff member, initially the new Parking & Mobility Manager.
- » Create a dedicated communications, marketing, and stakeholder engagement budget.
  - » Budget priorities are established and refined in the third and fourth quarters of the preceding fiscal year and are aligned with the organization's overall strategic goals. Budget is assessed quarterly by the appropriate staff member, initially the new Parking & Mobility Manager.
  - » Metrics are identified to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing and stakeholder engagement tactics, campaigns, and strategies. (See the "Metrics to Measure Success" section for ideas)
  - » Metrics are assessed annually. These evaluation processes are supported by appropriate written documentation.
  - » Evaluation methods should include, but are not limited to, the following: outreach to internal and external audiences through targeted surveys and/or focus groups, vendors, sponsors, partnering organizations, web, and social media analytics.

Suggested Documentation:

- » Strategic Communications, Marketing, and Stakeholder Engagement Plan
- » Process description and notes/minutes from meeting where proposed marketing and community outreach plan is reviewed and approved (at least annually)
- » Notes/minutes from meetings where marketing and community outreach budget is reviewed and discussed (at least bi-annually)
- » Process description and notes/minutes from meeting where evaluation metrics are reviewed and approved (at least annually)
- » Written documentation of evaluation metrics, processes and data

Staffing and Staff Development

While the broader Business Plan outlined important recommendations about how to initially staff the new parking enterprise, the contracted vendor that the City chooses to work with will also have recommendations about staffing and staff development. This brief section is specifically focused on staff related to marketing, strategic communications, and community education.

The new Parking and Mobility Enterprise should have a qualified individual or individuals, likely as part of the outsourced vendor's staffing, who are properly trained to provide the marketing, communication, and stakeholder outreach expertise needed to meet the organization's strategic goals and effectively serve its patrons.

Recommendations

» Job description(s) or part of existing job descriptions with specific marketing and communication duties are established and documented. They are an integral part of initial training, evaluations, and promotion opportunities.

» Position specific training is well organized, effective, and ongoing. The extent and depth of training is tailored to the skill level of the employee and should be well documented.

» Employee performance measures specific to marketing and communication are established as part of the employee onboarding process. Performance evaluations should occur regularly and be well documented.

  » Formal evaluations are performed at least once a year.

  » The evaluation process is supported by an appropriate written evaluation instrument that includes both scored criteria and relevant comments from the evaluator.

  » Evaluation criteria are specific to the marketing and communications functions and responsibilities of the employee being evaluated.

  » Evaluation documentation is produced and the evaluation interview conducted by the supervisor who is in the best position to evaluate that employee's performance.

Suggested Documentation

» Job description with specific marketing, communications, and public relations duties

» Marketing and communications training program outline, materials, and records

» Ongoing development program for marketing and communications staff member

  » Schedule and materials

  » History of participation and completion

» Marketing and communications-specific evaluation forms, criteria, and evidence of evaluation completion (annually at a minimum)

Ongoing Stakeholder and Community Outreach

The limited public outreach work that was done as part of the Parking and Mobility Enterprise Business Plan project was designed to lay the foundation for continued communication and interactions with community stakeholders. The three goals of the initial outreach include:

» Begin educating the community about why it is important to manage parking
» Listen to feedback about existing parking and mobility issues around light rail stations, and in key neighborhoods and business districts
» Engage stakeholders on the ground floor

As mentioned previously, one of the first tasks of the new Parking & Mobility Manager should be to schedule meetings with key business, and residential and community development leaders. It will be important to continue outreach to those groups over the summer and fall of 2015 while also strengthening the relationship and collaborative communication with RTD. It is also strongly recommended that the "Core City Team" who managed the development of the Business Plan and who were actively involved with outreach activities in the spring of 2015, continue to meet after delivery of this plan. This core group is an effective model of inter-departmental collaboration and communication that will help the new Parking & Mobility Manager get up to speed in his or her role more quickly, and will keep the new enterprise well-connected to other City initiatives.

The following matrix should serve as an initial guide for the Core City Team and new Parking & Mobility Manager as he/she considers outreach activities for the remainder of 2015 into early 2016.

Outreach Audience	Type	Timing	Frequency
City Council	Internal	Immediate	Every other month
City Management	Internal	Immediate	Monthly
City Staff	Internal	Immediate	Every other month
Police Department	Internal	Immediate	As needed
RTD	External	Immediate	Monthly
Neighborhood HOA's / Registered Organizations	External	/ August 2015	Quarterly / As needed / Project-based
Community & Economic Development Groups (i.e., Chamber)	External	/ August 2015	Quarterly / As needed / Project-based
Anchutz Medical Campus	External	/ August 2015	Quarterly / As needed / Project-based
Realtors	External	Fall 2015/ Winter 2016	Quarterly / As needed / Project-based
Schools	External	Fall 2015/ Winter 2016	Quarterly / As needed / Project-based

Outreach Audience	Type	Timing	Frequency
Higher Education Institutions	External	Fall 2015/ Winter 2016	Quarterly / As needed / Project-based
Non-Profit Services	External	Fall 2015/ Winter 2016	Quarterly / As needed / Project-based
Public Health Organizations	External	Fall 2015/ Winter 2016	Quarterly / As needed / Project-based
Special Taxing District Leadership (i.e., Aurora Cultural Arts District)	External	Fall 2015/ Winter 2016	Quarterly / As needed / Project-based
Churches / Religious Institutions	External	Fall 2015/ Winter 2016	Quarterly / As needed / Project-based
County leadership	External	Fall 2015/ Winter 2016	Quarterly / As Needed / Project Based
Community Advocacy Groups	External	Fall 2015/ Winter 2016	Quarterly / As Needed / Project Based

Metrics to Measure Success

Metrics and benchmarks are an important aspect of instituting any program and specific metrics should be established for each initiative embarked upon. A strategic and proactive communications and stakeholder engagement plan can lead to tremendous progress, but how does an organization truly know which tactics and campaigns are making a difference and when they have achieved "success?" The City of Aurora should consider investing in one or several of the following tools and strategies for measuring both the success of outreach campaigns and customer satisfaction:

» **Surveys:** Surveys are by far the most commonly used tool for organizations looking to track consumer and investor perceptions toward an organization or initiatives. Surveys should probe how well the organization is serving its constituents and identify what improvements and/or additional services they would like to see. The prevalence of online survey tools like SurveyMonkey make it easy to bring some of the evaluation processes in-house at significant cost savings for the parking program. However, when the program has a significant campaign, is looking to introduce a new technology, and/or would like to ensure statistical significance for survey results, outsourcing survey distribution and analysis to an established market research firm is recommended. Several types of surveys can be conducted, including but not limited to:

  » Business Owner/Operator: Determines perceptions, attitudes, and preferences related to parking, mobility, and its impacts on business operations and viability.

  » Customer Survey: Determines the parking needs and concerns of a consumer or visitor.

  » Resident Survey: Determines specific neighborhood and overflow parking concerns within the community.

» **Establish Data Benchmarks:** Benchmarking data is an excellent way to measure the success of both annual and project/initiative-specific strategic planning efforts. We recommend that the following data and indicators be benchmarked and tracked as the communication and stakeholder outreach strategy is implemented:

  » Media Impressions: Number of news clips in newspaper, magazine, television, and radio. Using advertising costs, average the value of free mentions from public relations efforts.

  » Social Media Metrics: Tracking social media analytics can be time-consuming, expensive, and/or seem like an exercise in futility but there are a few free tools that can be used to track your growing social media presence:

    · *Hootsuite:* Hootsuite is often used by organizations to manage all of their social media accounts on one platform; however, its recent partnership with Brandwatch has added the extra benefit of analytics.
    · *Twitter Analytics:* Twitter Analytics allows users to track impressions, retweets, profile visits, mentions, and increases or decreases in followers. Best of all, it is completely free.
    · Facebook Page Insights: This free tool allows page managers to "view the page's performance, learn which posts have the most engagement, and see data about when your target audiences are on Facebook" (Facebook.com; General Page Metrics)

» **Google Analytics:** Google Analytics is a free tool provided by Google that is constantly being updated and improved. It will not only show you valuable data about your website visitors, how they got there (Google search keywords, referral or direct entry), and their location, but you can also monitor and view reports on their experience on the site—where they stayed the longest, what they were looking for, where they left, etc. This tool allows you to produce a variety of reports that can be analyzed for specific online campaigns, for overall usage over periods of time, to help provide a basis for further improvements, and/or to fix functions that may not be working as intended for the end users.

"Closing the Communication Loop"

The City of Aurora leadership and staff should be commended for their commitment to including the community in the creation of the Parking and Mobility Enterprise Business Plan. What the City rightly realizes is that stakeholder engagement is a vital part of developing a successful parking and mobility management plan that supports the community's larger vision and development goals. Outreach to Aurora's diverse constituencies, while not without its challenges and varied opinions, provides important insight into the real and perceived parking challenges regularly faced by merchants, property owners, employees, residents of, and visitors to Aurora.

Community engagement efforts can also play an important role in strengthening and promoting a shared vision for the future of a community. Creating a balanced engagement strategy that both identifies the current parking and mobility landscape—in the opinion of those who participate—and starts to build a shared vision for the future, is vital to success of any planning effort long-term. A plan without a vision or shared community narrative is less likely to be successfully adopted, championed, and ultimately implemented.

In many communities that undertake a planning or study process like this one, communication with stakeholders about how their feedback was used to develop study or plan recommendations is often missing. After spending hours attending public meetings, taking surveys, and engaging in discussion, stakeholders

often feel disenchanted with the process because they cannot see their "fingerprints" when it comes time for recommendations on policies and programming to be made. In many communities, engagement grinds to a halt when the study is complete or the consultant leaves town, and stakeholders do not hear from the city again until it is time for a new round of public meetings.

In Aurora, where public engagement is a foundational element critical to the success of any new policy or program, it is vitally important to continue communication and education throughout implementation, giving the stakeholders and general public an avenue to give feedback that could help refine the implementation process. This process—"Closing the Communication Loop"—also helps build trust and confidence that feedback given during the public involvement process was both heard and incorporated into the final recommendations. It is the hope of the consultant team that stakeholders will see their words and thoughts reflected in the public engagement chapter of the Parking and Mobility Enterprise Business Plan. It is also strongly recommended that this report be made available to the general public using a variety of formats, including social media and through presentations to community groups.

APPENDIX A: CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

When an emergency occurs, the need to communicate is immediate. If business operations are disrupted, customers want to know how they will be impacted. Regulators may need to be notified and local government officials will want to know what is going on in their community. Employees and their families will be concerned and want information. Neighbors living near an incident may need information—especially if they, their residence, or their business could be impacted. All of these "audiences" will want information before the business has a chance to begin communicating.

An important component of an organization's planning effort is the creation of a Crisis Communications Plan. A business or organization must be able to respond promptly, accurately, and confidently during an emergency and in the hours and days that follow. Many different audiences must be reached with information specific to their interests and needs. The image of the business can be positively or negatively impacted by public perceptions of how the incident is handled.

This document provides direction for developing a Crisis Communications Plan. Understanding potential audiences is key, as each audience wants to know "how does it affect me?" Guidance for scripting messages that are specific to the interests of the audience is another element of the plan. The Contact & Information Center section explains how to use existing resources to gather and disseminate information during and following an incident.

AUDIENCES

Understanding the audiences that a business or organization needs to reach during an emergency is one of the first steps in the development of a Crisis Communications Plan. There are many potential audiences that will want information during and following an incident and each has its own information needs. The challenge is to identify potential audiences, determine their need for information, and then identify who within the business is best able to communicate with that audience.

The following is a list of audiences that a parking program should consider as they create a Crisis Communication Plan:

- » Patrons

- » Those directly impacted by the incident, and if applicable, their families

- » Parking program employees, and if applicable, their families

- » News media

- » Community stakeholders—especially those living near or directly impacted by an incident

- » Program management and other financial stakeholders

- » Government elected officials, regulators, and other authorities

- » Suppliers, if applicable

Contact Information

Contact information for each audience should be compiled and immediately accessible during an incident. Existing information such as customer, supplier, and employee contact information may be exportable from existing databases. Include as much information for each contact as possible (e.g., organization name, contact name, business telephone number, cell number, fax number, and email address). Lists should be updated regularly, secured to protect confidential information, and available to authorized users for use by members of the crisis communications team. Electronic lists can also be hosted on a secure server for remote access with a web browser. Hard copies of lists should also be available at an alternate location.

Customers

Customers are the life of a business, so contact with customers is a top priority. A Crisis Communication (business continuity) Plan should include action to redirect incoming telephone calls to a second location (if available) or to a voice message indicating that the organization is experiencing a temporary problem. This plan should also include procedures to ensure that customers are properly informed about issues that may impact them directly and indirectly.

Front-line parking staff who are normally assigned to work with customers should be assigned to communicate with customers during a crisis as well. If there are a lot of customers, then the list should be prioritized to reach the most important customers first.

Remember, in the case of a crisis: communicate early, communicate often, and communicate as honestly as possible.

Suppliers

The Crisis Communication Plan should include documented procedures for notification of suppliers, for example technology providers, other City departments who directly supply support or services to a parking program, and contracted staff, etc. The procedures should identify when and how they should be notified.

Management

Protocols for when to notify management should be clearly understood and documented. Consider events that occur on a holiday weekend or in the middle of the night. It should be clear to staff what situations require immediate notification of management regardless of the time of day. Similar protocols and procedures should be established for notification of managers, investors, and other important stakeholders. Management does not want to learn about a problem from the news media.

Government Officials and Regulators

Communications with government officials depends upon the nature and severity of the incident and protocol for notifying upper-level City management should be discussed as part of the crisis communication planning process. Businesses/organizations that fail to notify a regulator within the prescribed time risk incurring a fine. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations require notification to OSHA when there are three or more hospitalizations from an accident or if there is a fatality. Environmental regulations require notification if there is chemical spill or release that exceeds threshold quantities. Other regulators may need to be notified if there is an incident involving product tampering,

contamination, or quality. Notification requirements should be documented in the Crisis Communications Plan. A major incident in the community will capture the attention of elected officials. A senior manager should be assigned to communicate with elected officials and public safety officials.

Employees

Human Resources (HR), or another designated management-level staff person, is responsible for the day-to-day communication with employees regarding employment issues and benefits administration. HR management/designated management should assume a similar role on the crisis communications team. This designated person/people should coordinate communications with management, supervisors, employees, and families. They should also coordinate communications with those involved with the care of employees and the provision of benefits to employees and their families. Close coordination between management, the designated organizational spokesperson, public agencies, and HR is needed when managing the sensitive nature of communication related to an incident involving death or serious injury.

The Community

Parking programs and their services are very customer-oriented, so in addition to internal/organizational audience, the community at-large can become an important audience. As such, community outreach should be part of the Crisis Communications Plan. The Plan should include coordination with public safety officials to develop protocols and procedures for advising the public of any hazards and the most appropriate protective action that should be taken, if warranted.

Positioning

To decide on how you position your communication to the community at-large, it is important to step out of your role in the business/organization and put yourself in the situation of whom ever was involved in the crisis or try to view the crisis from the eye of the public. Ignoring the situation will only make things worse.

Examples of categories to consider for positioning are:

- » Human error
- » Clerical error
- » Unauthorized procedures
- » Inadequate supervision
- » Inadequate quality control
- » Misuse of confidential information
- » Errors of judgment
- » Inadequate standard operating procedures

As you are considering your "position," it is important to consider the wide range of consequences (e.g., legal, financial, public relations, and effects on administration and operations). Keep in mind that people tend to remember what they hear first and last.

News Media

If the incident is serious, then the news media will be on scene or calling to obtain details. There may be numerous requests for information from local, regional, or national media. The challenge of managing a large numbers of requests for information, interviews, and public statements can be overwhelming. Prioritization of requests for information and development of press releases and talking points can assist with the need to communicate quickly and effectively.

Develop a company policy that only authorized spokespersons are permitted to speak to the news media. Communicate the policy to all employees explaining that it is best to speak with one informed voice.

Determine in advance who will speak to the news media and prepare that spokesperson with talking points, so they can speak clearly and effectively in terms that can be easily understood.

Designated Spokesperson

One individual should be designated as the primary spokesperson to represent the company, make official statements, and answer media questions throughout the crisis. A backup to the designated spokesperson should also be identified to fill the position in the event that the primary spokesperson is unavailable.

In addition to the primary spokesperson and the backup spokesperson, designate individuals who will serve as technical experts or advisors. These resources might include a financial expert, an engineer, a leader in the community, or anyone your organization deems necessary during a specific kind of crisis. This will take some brainstorming by the crisis communication team since what is needed may not always be apparent. There should be an authority or technical expert in their field who is available to supplement the knowledge of the spokesperson.

Criteria for the spokesperson, backup spokesperson, and crisis communication expert includes:

- » Comfortable in front of a television camera and with reporters
- » Preferably skilled in handling media, skilled in directing responses to another topic, skilled in identifying key points, able to speak without using jargon
- » Respectful of the role of the reporter and knowledgeable about the organization and the crisis at hand
- » Able to establish credibility with the media, able to project confidence to the audience, suitable in regard to diction, appearance, and charisma
- » Sincere, straightforward, and believable
- » Accessible to the media and to internal communications personnel who will facilitate media interviews
- » Able to remain calm in stressful situations

In addition to the designated spokesperson and backup, it can be anticipated that other parties involved in the crisis—police, fire department, health officials, etc.—will also have a spokesperson. It is important to identify that individual as early as possible so all statements and contacts with the media can be coordinated between the two individuals and their organizations/interests whenever possible.

Practicing Tough Questions

A crisis situation is always difficult when dealing with the media. Therefore, tough questions and rehearsals are necessary to help the spokesperson prepare.

It is important, at the onset of the crisis, that the spokesperson, backup, and advisors spend some time rehearsing prepared statements and answers to possible "tough" questions that may be asked by reporters. If possible, similar rehearsals should be conducted prior to each media interview, briefing, or news conference. It is also important to anticipate and practice new questions as the story evolves. It is better to over prepare than to be surprised by the depth of questioning by the media.

The designated spokesperson should prepare questions and answers for the practice sessions. These questions and answers should be for internal use only and not for distribution outside the organization. Do not volunteer information unless it is a point the organization wants to make and the question has not been asked. Do not talk off the record.

Prepared Statements

If you do not communicate immediately, you lose the best opportunity to control events. Your first news release should include, at a minimum, the who, what, when, and where of the situation.

You must give the facts that have been gathered from reliable sources and confirmed. Do not over reach and do not speculate. If you do nothing more than show concern for the public and for your employees in your first press interaction, you are already on the right track. The corollary of expressing concern and generating good will at the consumer level is securing the loyalty of your customers and employees by taking the initiative to share information with them. If your employees and customers do not feel like insiders, they are going to act like outsiders.

You must have a prepared statement on hand that can be used to make an initial general response to the media when knowledge about the crisis first becomes known on a widespread basis or by reporters. As the crisis progresses and new information and facts become available, it is also advisable to develop prepared statements to be made by the spokesperson at the onset of any media interview, briefing, or news conference. These prepared statements also can be read over the telephone to reporters who call to request information but are not represented at news conferences or briefings. The statement can also be sent by e-mail or posted on the organization's website or appropriate social media account.

Messaging

During and following an incident, each audience will seek information that is specific to them. "How does the incident affect my order, job, safety, community, etc.?" These questions need to be answered when communicating with each audience.

After identifying the audiences and the spokesperson assigned to communicate with each audience, the next step is to script messages. Writing messages during an incident can be challenging due to the pressure caused by "too much to do" and "too little time." Therefore, it is best to script message templates in advance if possible.

Pre-scripted messages should be prepared using information developed during the risk assessment. The

risk assessment process should identify scenarios that would require communications with stakeholders. There may be many different scenarios but the need for communications will relate more to the impacts or potential impacts of an incident, such as:

» Accidents that injure employees or others
» Property damage to company facilities
» Liability associated injury to or damage sustained by others
» Production or service interruptions
» Product quality issues

Messages can be pre-scripted as templates with blanks to be filled in when needed. Pre-scripted messages can be developed, approved by the management team, and stored on a remotely accessible server for quick editing and release when needed.

Another important element of the Crisis Communications Plan is the need to coordinate the release of information. When there is an emergency or a major impact on the business, there may be limited information about the incident or its potential impacts. The "story" may change many times as new information becomes available.

One of the aims of the Crisis Communication Plan is to ensure consistency of message. If you tell one audience one story and another audience a different story, it will raise questions of competency and credibility. Protocols need to be established to ensure that the core of each message is consistent while addressing the specific questions from each audience.

Another important goal of the Crisis Communications Plan is to move from reacting to the incident, to managing a strategy to overcome the incident. Management needs to develop the strategy and the crisis communications team needs to implement that strategy by allaying the concerns of each audience and positioning the organization to emerge from the incident with its reputation intact.

Communications before, during, and following an emergency are bi-directional. Stakeholders or audiences will ask questions and request information. The business will answer questions and provide information. This flow of information should be managed through a communications hub.

Contact and Information Centers form the "hub" of the Crisis Communications Plan. The centers receive requests for information from each audience and disseminate information to each audience. Employees from multiple departments may be assigned to communicate with a specific audience.

The "contact center" fields inquiries from customers, suppliers, the news media and others. The contact center should be properly equipped and staffed by personnel to answer requests for information. The staff working within the contact center should be provided with scripts and a "frequently asked questions" (FAQ) document to answer questions consistently and accurately.

The "information center" consists of existing staff and technologies (e.g., website, call center, bulletin boards, etc.) that field requests for information from customers, employees, and others during normal business hours. The information center and its technologies can be used to push information out to audiences and post information for online reading.

The crisis communications team, consisting of members of the management team, should operate in an office environment to support the contact and information centers. The goal of the crisis communications team is to gather information about the incident, including monitoring the types of questions posed to call center operators or staff in the office, emails received by customer service, social media chatter, or stories broadcast by the news media. Using this input, the crisis communications team can inform management about the issues that are being raised by stakeholders. In turn, management should provide input into the messages generated by the crisis communications team. The team can then create appropriate messages and disseminate information approved for release.

Resources for Crisis Communications

Resources should be available within the primary business site and provisions should be made to set up similar capabilities within an alternate site in case the primary site cannot be occupied. These resources could include:

» Telephones with dedicated or addressable lines for incoming calls and separate lines for outgoing calls

» Access to any electronic notification system used to inform employees

» Electronic mail (with access to "info@" inbox and ability to send messages)

» Access to company website to post updates

» Access to social media accounts

» Access to local area network, secure remote server, message template library, and printers

» Hard copies of emergency response, business continuity, and Crisis Communications Plan

» Site and building diagrams, information related to business processes and loss prevention programs (e.g., safety and health, property loss prevention, physical and information/cyber security, fleet safety, environmental management, and product quality)

» Copiers

» Forms for documenting events as they unfold

The sources for this outline were Crisis Communication Plan (www.ready.gov) and Crisis Communication Plan: A PR Blueprint (www.newsplace.org/crisis). Additional resources for Crisis Communication Strategies:

10 Steps of Crisis Communication, Jonathan Bernstein (2013)

Crisis Communications: A Primer for Teams, Al Czarnecki (2007)

You'd Better Have a Hose if You Want to Put Out the Fire: The Complete Guide to Crisis and Risk Communications, Rene A. Henry (2001)