

Allan Thain's

**MANAGEMENT OF
COMMUNICATIONS**

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ABOUT ALLAN THAIN

Allan is a seasoned Public Relations Specialist and runs his own Public Relations firm, A. J. Thain & Associates. He's also an acknowledged expert on the Internet, computers and software. For several years he has shared this knowledge with listeners as host of C-FAX Online and The TechTalkZone heard on various Radio Stations and along the Net. He's been a Government Advertising and Communications Director and continues to advise senior level politicians on media strategies and issues management. Allan is an award winning radio and television copywriter and producer.

ABOUT THE MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

Many communications managers have come up through the ranks. They are writers, designers, media relations and audio-visual specialists or former journalists who, because they have been successful in their specialized fields, have been asked to take on the broad responsibilities of planning and managing complete communications programs.

This guide has been designed to help these people – those who have recently or may soon be called on to accept broader managerial responsibilities.

Its content does not dwell on communications theory, but on the systematic steps and approaches the communications manager must take to design and carry out practical, professional and effective communications activities.

We believe it will be of great value as a practical reference source that communication managers can use regularly in the course of their daily work.

It is yours....for the better “Management of Communications”.

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1. THE TECHNIQUE OF PLANNING

This planning technique is designed to be adapted to any communications problem. The professional communications manager takes a systematic approach to every problem, no matter how small, and steps through each phase of the process.

RESEARCH is an attitude and a function. It means listening carefully and defining the problem precisely before you plan.

Set out the situation that creates the need for the activity.

Give a clear, concise, complete definition of the problem.

Study the background and history of the problem

Be clear on the causes of the problem.

Study any precedents in your organization or elsewhere.

Discover any relevant policy guidelines in your organization.

Read the relevant literature.

Review previous media coverage.

Canvass your entire organization from executive to field for views, intelligence.

Consider formal research – opinion survey or focus group.

Identify supporters and opponents inside and outside your organization.

Refine your definition of the problem – clearly, concisely, completely.

PLANNING: Based on your research, define your objective, set out and weigh the alternatives and select one.

Establish your objective – clearly, concisely, completely.

Set out the criteria that indicate success in meeting the objective.

Identify, specifically your target group (s).

Define the message you want to communicate.

Identify constraints you must work within – budget, policy guidelines, time, traditions, etc.

PLANNING (cont'd):

Set out the alternative ways of communicating the message to the target group within the constraints.

For each one – identify the benefits, the risks, the downstream consequences, and the cost.

Select one of the alternatives.

Based on the alternative selected, develop a tactical plan, specifying media to be used and creative approaches.

Develop a budget for your plan.

Bring the plan and budget to executives for approval and support.

MANAGING: Use the resources you have, most efficiently, to achieve the desired result.

Put someone in charge – give that person the responsibility **and the authority** to do the job.

With the project manager, identify the resources needed.

Look for resources first inside your shop.

If they are not there, go outside for PR firms, advertising agencies, writers, designers, etc.

Set an agreed timetable for the project manager.

Establish regular reporting dates and keep to them.

Make sure the reports include budget status.

Leave the manager alone to run the project.

But, be available to lead, discuss, comment, suggest and support.

If reports and progress are not satisfactory, reinforce or replace the manager.

Keep your supporters, inside and outside the organization, informed and on side.

Keep an eye on your opponents and move to neutralize them.

EVALUATION: Review what you did objectively and learn from it.

Get out the criteria for success you set at the beginning.

Gather the data you need to decide how you did against each criterion.

Informal: Internal discussions
Reports from field offices
Interviews with executive
Interviews with outside experts
Review media coverage

Formal: Evaluation built into plan
Gather data by random survey or by survey of experts

Measure data against criteria.

Use inside group or outside experts to evaluate success.

Draw a conclusion – Repeat the project
Revise the plan
Reject it as a failure

Draw up a report on the project. If it is successful, use it to tell top management how well you did.

If not successful??

2. ADVERTISING

THE AGENCY

How to Choose One:

1. Decide what you need from the agency
2. Get a preliminary list from ad campaigns you like and business associates.
3. Find out what services they offer – research, media, creative, marketing, PR, website design
4. Ask for their client list: are they a general agency or do they specialize in an area that does (or does not) relate to you? Do they have experience in businesses or services similar to yours? Do they already have clients that conflict?
5. Check their clients for comments
6. Do you get along with their management? You have to be able to talk to them and be understood.
7. Will you have direct access to their creative and media people? It is the people on your account that count; not the name on the door.
8. All agencies charge the standard 15% on media billing, but what is their policy on charging for the other services.
9. Run competition among the top three or four acceptable agencies. Pay them between \$2500 and \$5000 for their sales pitch – and keep the ideas.
10. Remember you want those most of all for their CREATIVE GENIUS and next for the MEDIA PLANNING. All the rest is HOUSEKEEPING.

THE AGENCY (cont'd)

How to Use One:

1. Before you call the agency, define clearly what you want to say and the target group.
2. It is the agency's job to come up with a creative and media plan to achieve what you want. It is your job to tell them what you want.
3. Bring the agency in early and let them do their job. Do not be the creative director.
4. Research is expensive! But ad campaigns are more expensive. It is better to test your campaign first.
5. Because ad campaigns are expensive, your senior people should talk to the agency.
6. Insist on talking directly to their creative people, so they will get the feel for their need.
7. The creative idea is the key – get that first and the rest will follow.
8. Do not settle for the dull and the ordinary. Push until you get outstanding work. If you do not, change people – or agencies.
9. Challenge the agency on its proposal and make them defend it.
10. Look for the ancillary and support ideas from the agency's marketing department.
11. Get the agency to help you sell the campaign to top management. They will want to and they will be better at it than you – but you control the presentation.
12. At the end of the campaign, get a full report from the agency, including tear sheets, tapes, etc.

CREATIVE

1. ***THE CREATIVE IDEA IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE ENTIRE AD CAMPAIGN.***
2. Spend a lot of time telling the creative people (both copy and art director) what you want. It is the most valuable time you will spend.
3. Ask them to come back with a range of ideas and to recommend one. Never accept just one idea.
4. Ask yourself first, "Does this say what I want to say to the people I want to say it to?"
5. If they have to spend a long time explaining it to you, it is the wrong campaign.
6. Is it memorable, exciting?
7. Do not bore people.
8. Do not irritate them either.
9. Do not neglect the emotions – reason is only half the person.
10. Is your story best told in words or pictures?
11. Are there any potential problems in the campaign? Will it offend people? Does it have negative connotations? Is it too close to someone else's campaign?
12. Do not be afraid to use research to test the idea.
13. If you are not happy, fight for what you want. Do not be intimidated. You are as smart as your agency.
14. Do not accept cost overruns. Get your money's worth.

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