

COMMUNICATIONS OVERVIEW TIPS: TEN COMMANDMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

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1. *Gain Agreement.* People cannot be persuaded – they will only agree with something they already believe. You must find language and activity that draws agreement with your target audience's point of view.
2. *Stay on the Offense.* When you find yourself explaining, you're losing the communications contest. The need to explain is usually the result of not controlling the message. You want to remain on the offensive or in control of the message.
3. *Communications First.* Once a government, ministry, or parliament decides on a program or initiatives, communications must be part of the planning from the beginning of each activity rather than only brought in at the end of a process.
4. *Appearance Matters.* When communicating, it is not only what you say, but how you say it that is important. People need to see sincerity in the face and eyes. People need to hear enthusiasm, energy, or honest intent.
5. *Actions Stronger than Words.* People need to see action. People do not respond to explanations of process. Rather than press conferences to announce initiatives or release information, find an action that demonstrates the point and have the media cover the action.
6. *Choose Messengers with Care.* The messenger is as important as the message. The right messenger can make all the difference in how people accept the message.
7. *Create a Unifying Theme.* While different parts of the government will have specific messages, the people will only understand success if they hear a single theme repeated over and over again.
8. *Become a Source and Resource.* Get others used to using you as a source and resource of information. Create communications tools that provide advance information or that offer damage control when necessary.
9. *Find New Ways to Use the Media.*
Use background conversations. Try giving exclusion. Review external conditions and prepare for press opportunities to take advantage of them or to soften a potential negative.
10. *The Actions and the Public Perception Must Match.* Be careful not to create cognitive dissonance – the public image and the real person must match the public's perception.