

The logo for Ad2Reno, featuring the lowercase letters 'ad' in a large, white, sans-serif font, with '2reno' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font stacked vertically to the right of 'ad'. The logo is set against a teal rectangular background with a slight drop shadow.

ad2reno

Write a Marketing Plan

Make It Happen

A large, light grey ampersand watermark is positioned on the right side of the page, partially overlapping the main text.

Ad2Reno.com

Ad2 Reno is dedicated to public service by helping non-profits thrive.

Plan to Win the Communications War

By Chris Shaffer

Ad2 Reno Treasurer & Eye-Com Corporation Marketer

Most organizations have a general idea of what they would like their marketing efforts to accomplish. But spelling out those goals and how they will do it in a marketing strategic plan can yield significantly better results and make it manageable.

Identifying goals and objectives helps prioritize efforts, and creates a means of measuring success. Having clear aims to shoot for gives staff a clear understanding of what they should be working on and what's off mission.

There are multiple ways to structure a plan, but this is a common and effective way to break down the big picture into a series of actionable steps. Typically, each objective supports the goal, each strategy supports an objective and each tactic supports a strategy. This helps to make sure your efforts are aligned with your over-arching goal(s) to help you focus on achieving it. With communications plans often covering public relations, marketing, and advertising, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed. But breaking it down into specific actions using strategies and tactics makes it much easier to chart your path forward.

The easiest way to explain Strategic Communications Planning is by comparing the way you plan to the way a military plans for war (yes, we admit it's a bit of a stretch, but trust us, communications IS a WAR).

Imagine it is December 8, 1941, the day after the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor, and you are the commanding general of the American military in charge of fighting back. To plot out the strategy, you must plan all of your goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics to combat the Axis.

★ Goal

Goals are the over-arching thing that you wish to achieve. They can be extremely broad, and are designed to give you an overall direction to head in.

Military Analogy: Defeat the Axis and end the war.

Organization Example: Be the go-to source for information about writing strategic communications campaigns.

★ Objective

Objectives are much more specific than goals. When you are writing objectives, it is important to remember that they should follow the principles of a S.M.A.R.T. goal (See side column).

Military Analogy: Take 10 miles of beaches along the coast of Nor-

Make Your Goals

SMART

Writing effective objectives will help you get results, give staff priorities and create a clear course of action to achieve your desired changes. Objectives are typically 1- to 3-year action statements. Following this goal formula will help keep your team on track and achieving.

Specific: A specific objective will easily be able to answer Who, What, When, Where and Where questions.

Measurable: Objectives must be written so that you are able to determine your progress towards the objective as time goes on.

Attainable: Objectives should be written in a way that you have to work to achieve them, but are able to accomplish given past experience, market conditions, or your expectations.

Responsible person:* Accountability motivates the person the goal is assigned to take action and get it done. Without a person leading the effort, group assignments can often fall into inactivity.

Time-Bound: Objectives need to have time restraints placed on them. This not only helps measuring progress towards the objective, but with the overall evaluation of your campaign.

* There is an ongoing debate about what the "R" in S.M.A.R.T. should stand for. "Realistic," "Results-bound," and "Relevant" are also popular choices. □

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Put Your Plan into Practice

By Kristin Larsen

Ad2 Reno Public Service Co-Director & M3 Planning Marketer/Web Designer

Knowing the way and traveling the path are two different things. Even the best strategic plan is worthless if no one follows it. An organization must execute the plan to see the benefits in the results. By regularly tracking metrics specified in the plan and reviewing results, it can be easy to keep the plan top of mind and grasp what is working, what isn't and what needs improvement.

Having an evidence-based approach to your work is the best way to drive improvement organization-wide. By enabling your team to know the plan, they will know what are your organization's top priorities, how to achieve them, what they are responsible for, and how to measure success.

It's critical to put a plan into practice and for many organizations, that's where even the best laid plans go awry. Follow these steps to keep your organization on track:

1. Track plan metrics: As specified in the side column "Make Your Goals SMART," it's important for each objective, strategy and tactic to be measurable. It's just as important to track the results for each of them, so you have a clear idea of your progress. It's a good idea to record the results weekly, monthly or quarterly depending on your business cycle. If you wait any longer than quarterly, you risk making your plan irrelevant.

2. Hold regular strategy review sessions: Having a monthly or quarterly review serves a couple of purposes.

- Firstly, by reviewing the results with your team you can celebrate successes and identify areas that need improvement. Having cold hard data also makes it easier for managers to assess performance.
- Secondly, it helps to keep the plan priorities top of mind, so each team member is focused on the parts of the plan that have been assigned to them. Together their efforts help to achieve the top level goals and objectives.
- Thirdly, before or during these meetings, give staff the opportunity to give an honest assessment of what is working and what are stumbling blocks. This makes it possible to identify solutions and new opportunities to take advantage of. When the lines of communication are open, it's easier to work as a team.

Remember, sometimes a strategic plan needs to be adjusted to reflect the new needs or abilities of the organization or department. That's fine. A strategic plan should be nimble. Just make sure to include those changes in your plan so everyone is up-to date. Identifying those needed shifts in strategy early is a benefit of having monthly or quarterly reviews. □

"Without execution, vision is just another word for hallucination"

— **Mark Hurd**

Hewlett-Packard CEO

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mandy, by no later than June 6th, 1944.

Organization Example: The marketing department is responsible for obtaining 15 new customers per month for this fiscal year. (Person in charge: Ima Tiger)

★ Strategy

Strategies are how you will achieve your objective.

Military Analogy: Use a fleet of amphibious ships to land troops on the beaches.

Organization Example: Collect contact information for 100 new sales leads and potential donors per month for this fiscal year. (Person in charge: Tom Shoes)

★ Tactic

While strategies are the thoughts and ideas that you will use to accomplish your objectives, Tactics are the actions you will use to implement your strategies.

Military Analogy: Use the 101st United States Airborne division to take out the German artillery covering the beaches of Normandy, so that the boats can land safely.

Organization Example: Use a combination of paid advertising and media relations campaigns to reach 10 percent more potential new customers each quarter. (Person in charge: Fonzie T. Bear) □