

# “How to Create Corporate Communications That Gets Results”

**Research shows that a large percentage of corporate communications campaigns don't get results.**

**Yet, Stefano Boscutti has created successful corporate communications for Ford, Shell, Orica, Qantas and others.**

**There's no magic formula. Each corporate communications campaign must grow out of a different corporate situation and objective. And we've found out a great deal about what makes a corporate communications campaign succeed.**

**Here are 27 of the things we've learned.**

- 1. Know the limitations.** Optimism is key to many a success. But *blind* optimism (as David Ogilvy reminds us) is simply a form of blindness. So before you begin, you should know what corporate communications cannot achieve.
  - It cannot gloss over a poor record or a weak competitive position.
  - It cannot boost your share price overnight (although it can create awareness of your company's performance).
  - It cannot turn the tide of unfavourable public opinion in the short term.
- 2. Understand the possibilities.** Properly used, corporate communications is a powerful tool. It can:
  - Build awareness of a company.
  - Impress investors and analysts.
  - Motivate employees and attract new talent.
  - Influence public opinion.
  - Strengthen stakeholder relationships.
  - Inform legislators.
  - Enhance reputation in local communities.
- 3. Boil down your objectives.** Many corporate communications campaigns reflect a long list of objectives. In trying to do too many things, they accomplish nothing. Simplify. Decide on the *one* idea you want to get across. Research can help point the way. Look before you leap.
- 4. Establish a realistic budget.** Experience has taught us that the most effective way to set a budget for corporate communications is by task analysis: *How much will it cost to achieve a specific goal with a specific audience?* One corporate communications campaign may need only \$250,000 to achieve its goals, another \$25 million. Your budget will vary with the difficulty of the task and with the size and makeup of your audience.  
  
**How to build a corporate image**  
  
The most common task of corporate communications is to build and improve a company's image. Most companies are handicapped by invisibility and remoteness. Research shows that people who feel they know a company well are five times more likely to regard the company favourably than people who have little familiarity. Successful corporate communications grow out of what a company does. But how do you make the personality, policies and products of the company better known? All the more reason to follow these hints:
  - 5. Agonise over positioning.** It's the most important element of any corporate communications campaign. For example,

Qantas is positioned as the spirit of Australia, not just another airline. Nike positions itself as the inspiration for the athlete inside everyone, not just another athletic wear company. *How do you want your company known?* The answer to this question becomes your positioning.

**6. Make sure your positioning reflects reality.** Positioning must be based on a realistic assessment of your company's strengths and weaknesses. If you concoct your positioning at a keyboard and apply it arbitrarily, your communications will lack the ring of truth. (Facebook, take note.)

**7. Be consistent.** Corporate communications are almost always a long-term proposition. If you regularly change campaigns, you end up confusing your audience. Every piece of corporate communications should contribute to the complex symbol which is the company's image.

## How to gain credibility

Too much corporate communications fall on deaf ears because people don't believe it. They don't trust its source. Here are some ways to build credibility:

**8. Spotlight your company's products.** Products are tangible. People can see them, hold them and form opinions. Research shows that if people think highly of a company's products or services, they're more likely to think highly of the company itself. Apple's corporate communications provide helpful advice on how to use the company's products, online and through practical educational sessions inside their Apple Stores.

**9. Use employees or customers.** People are more likely to trust - and listen to - a human being than a faceless corporation. SBS printed each employee's candid story on the back of their business card to give credence and strengthen its positioning of seven billion stories and counting.

**10. Give facts, shun generalities.** You cannot build trust and credibility with empty phrases, vague claims or pious preaching. Hard facts not only make communications more believable but more readable as well.

## How to attract awareness

All too frequently, corporate communications are effectively invisible. It's boring, impersonal and cold - and the readership scores are embarrassing. But there are ways to overcome this:

**11. Find a big idea.** Big ideas aren't easy to come by. A big idea jolts your audience out of its indifference. When you find a big idea, stick with it. Few corporate communications campaigns are continued long enough to have a chance to succeed. It takes at least two years before corporate communications start to pay off.

**12. Demand informative copy.** Most people seem to have an insatiable appetite for useful information - a great opportunity when you create corporate communications. Do more than promise service, provide service with a series of helpful guides. Genuinely helping people will help improve your image. (Australian banks, take note.)

**13. Dare to use television.** There is a popular notion that TV is too expensive

and wastes money on people not in the target audience. Not true - *if* you use TV selectively. And if you're willing to trade a bit of inefficiency for greater impact. The most efficient and effective of corporate communications dollars involves a media mix of TV and print. TV's impact creates awareness of your message quickly. Print follows up with the specifics.

**14. Look important.** We've found that a few large space advertisements are more effective than a host of smaller ones. Large-space ads command attention and help give your message importance. And the frequency of small space is no help if your ads give you a puny image.

**15. Conquer your fear of long copy.** Research shows that readership falls off rapidly up to 50 words, but drops very little between 50 and 500 words as long as the copy is well written. (So far, you've read 1,042 words.) It follows that regardless of length, badly written copy remains unread and ineffective.

**16. Unify your effort.** Many corporations diffuse their communications efforts by running unrelated campaigns for different products and divisions. The communications appear to come from a number of small companies, rather than one large corporation. It pays to have a common thread in your communications.

## The 4 Big Don'ts of communicating with investors

**17. Don't underestimate your influence on analysts.** Few analysts and sophisticated investors will admit that communications can influence their evaluation of a company. Nothing could be further from the truth. A good corporate communications campaign can significantly improve ratings on key criteria from institutional investors.

**18. Don't assume that your record speaks for itself.** Your record explains where you've been, not where you're going. Investors also want to know why your company should *continue* to prosper.

**19. Don't presume your company will lose all credibility as soon as its earnings turn down.** A decline in earnings or other unfavourable news seldom hurts a company's credibility. Only surprises do that.

**20. Don't fear an open disclosure policy.** Your competitors read your disclosure reports. It helps to give your investors the same kind of useful information.

## How to use advocacy communications

Advocacy communications are designed to inform the public and influence opinion on a specific issue of interest to a corporation. You see it more and more as governments and groups increase their pressure on corporations. Here are some rules of thumb:

**21. Act instead of react.** Don't wait until the problem becomes acute. Prevention costs less than cure.

**22. Inform government officials.** We've found the best way to influence the opinion of elected officials is to show them what the public thinks. The opinion of one voter is worth more than 10 lobbyists.

**23. Don't talk profits.** They can be salt in an irritated public's wounds. Point to jobs, income and national prosperity instead. Appeal to the public's self-interest, not yours.

**24. Start at home.** Your employees share a vital interest in legislation which affects your industry. They can be an effective pressure group. Make sure they understand your point of view.

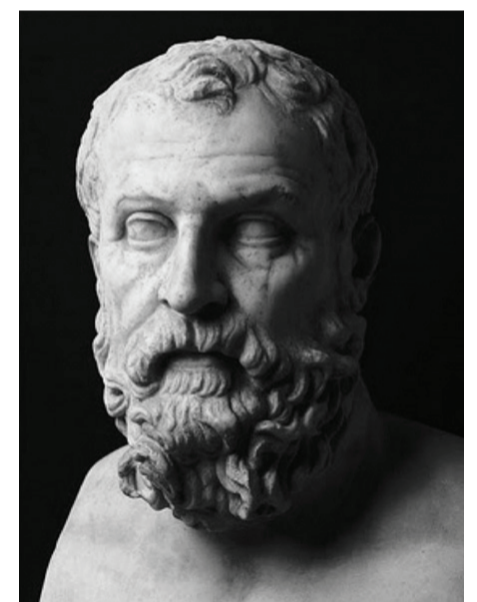
## What to do in a public relations crisis

Turning your back on a public relations crisis can be a disaster. Often it pays to face up to criticism - or even challenge it. Some guidelines:

**25. Consider making rebuttals.** If you feel the public has been misinformed by the media, say so. A factual, detailed challenge to a news report's accuracy can set the record straight. Not spin. Facts.

**26. Candour goes a long way.** If there's truth in what your critics are saying, admit it. Candour and a commitment to correcting the situation can make effective communications.

**27. Look before you leap.** There are times when there is nothing you can say without exacerbating the situation. Research can help you judge the public's mind.



*'Rules are for the obedience of fools and the guidance of wise men.'* Solon

## Invitation

We believe in knowing what rules *are* - even though we may sometimes decide to break them.

That's why Stefano Boscutti has developed specialised information on creating successful corporate communications for food products, travel destinations, financial services, media properties and other industries.

It's for the education of our art directors, designers, copywriters and other creatives. And the benefit of our clients.

## Stefano Boscutti

Want to make your corporate communications more successful? Stefano Boscutti has a comprehensive one-hour presentation on creating corporate communications that gets results. If you'd like to see it, please email [stef@boscutti.com](mailto:stef@boscutti.com)