



1998-99 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

“An employee [or volunteer] without information cannot take responsibility. With information, he cannot avoid taking it.”

Megatrends 2000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OPPORTUNITY

Nowhere in any organization's existence is communications with internal audiences more vital than it is during a complex reorganization. The uncertainty created by the action itself, and the activities leading up to the announcement of the reorganization, leave many employees and volunteers feeling unsure about the Association's intent, future actions and commitment. The delay between the first public announcement of the reorganization and final approval by all governing bodies only serves to deepen mistrust, speculation and uncertainty. The first years following the initial reorganization prolong much of this anxiety, because of changes still taking place and people adjusting to new ways of conducting business. An aggressive, proactive effort to communicate with all constituents serves to quiet the rumor mill and enhance the possibility that the new organization will be embraced at all levels. New leadership, new direction and new commitment provide an unparalleled opportunity for the entire organization.

FOCUS

The major focus of internal communications activities will be to ensure that all people in the organization have the information they need about the organization and its strategies to successfully implement those strategies. It makes no sense to have concrete strategies and measurable objectives unless all players in the Association understand what we are trying to accomplish, how we plan to get there, and what their role is in meeting our objectives. They must understand that ADA has an emerging vision of itself and where it is heading. An informed population will recognize the Association's commitment to improved communication, morale and productivity.

COMMUNICATION PHILOSOPHY

The key to the success of this plan is a nationwide emphasis on information sharing—clear, consistent and open two-way communication. Open communication will build leadership's credibility within the organization. This requires a positive attitude toward communicating and a verbalized position from the volunteer leadership, the CEO and all senior managers. They must understand and emphasize that information about the organization's vision is just as important to our audiences as are specific business objectives.

Communications must be viewed as a strategic partner in every aspect of the organization. Before plans are finalized they must be evaluated based on their predicted impact on the people who must execute them. Just as policies are evaluated for legal compliance and technical soundness, so must they be reviewed for communications impact. What will be the reaction in the field? How must this new initiative be positioned in terms of what it will do for the Association? We must strive to communicate the benefits of the initiative to the organization if we hope for an acceptable level of compliance. We must do everything possible to get volunteers and staff to embrace each change we make.

PURPOSE

This plan is based on messages developed around certain business objectives. It is therefore results-driven rather than media-driven. The focus is on identifying business strategies and developing messages around those strategies, which will ensure the highest level of understanding and productivity. The overriding purpose of internal communications is to create an atmosphere within the organization that recognizes we all need information about each and every aspect of the Association in order to fully embrace the plans, initiatives, programs and policies that will move us ahead.

The purpose of this plan is to provide direction for all internal communications at ADA. This plan delineates philosophies, strategies and objectives in line with the business objectives of the ADA and provides for measurement of the results.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Director of Internal Communications, working with senior management, will identify those issues that directly support the company's strategic objectives and develop key messages around those objectives. These messages will be targeted at appropriate volunteers and staff through various available media (newsletters, Intranet, face-to-face meetings). Additionally, we will create and operate feedback channels to aid in identifying those issues that our internal audiences want resolved or addressed in future communications. This plan is designed for implementation during the period July 1, 1998 through June 30, 1999 and will be evaluated throughout the year.

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS AS A FUNCTION OF LEADERSHIP

A necessary component for the success of any communications plan is the role of the organization's leadership in setting the tone and expectations for open, honest and direct two-way communication. The Chair of the Board, President, President, HC&E and the CEO must all take the lead in demonstrating ADA's commitment to informing, enlightening and empowering volunteers and staff. They must play an active and regular part in supporting, and participating in, message development, refinement and dissemination. Likewise, all senior managers and anyone in a supervisory position should consider communications to be an important component of their regular duties and responsibilities. The CEO must make it clear to all management that this type of behavior is a requirement, not an option.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP/CEO PARTICIPATION

The senior officers and CEO will participate in determining topics to be covered in the various media and in refining/editing messages to ensure they are consistent with ADA's objectives and strategies. They will participate in the communications process through editorials, interviews, face-to-face meetings with volunteers and staff and other communications activities as deemed appropriate to each situation. They will encourage others to actively participate in the internal communications process by contributing ideas, lessons learned, concepts and articles to the various internal communications media.

Senior staff management has a similar responsibility. Each member of the senior management team will actively support the efforts of internal communications by providing access to information deemed important to the internal audiences and by keeping the Director, Internal Communications informed of major changes, initiatives, projects and strategies that impact the organization as a whole or a major segment of the organization. This information may include, but is not limited to:

- financial trends
- project status
- major personnel changes
- restructuring
- change in policies and procedures
- changes in methods or approaches
- enhancements or changes to information technology systems
- changes in programs, events or fundraising strategies
- cost control measures
- benefits and compensation changes
- new training initiatives
- addition of new communities
- activity successes
- extraordinary individual or group efforts

Senior management will work with the internal communications staff in determining what type and level of information concerning the above topics is prudent to share with volunteers and/or staff and what is not. The underlying assumption is that anything distributed through internal media may fall into the hands of other competitive organizations.

The volunteer leaders of ADA (Executive Committee, Board of Directors, Committee Chairs and Regional Officers) should always look for ways to share information about the success of their programs and activities and to recognize their team members for their efforts.

Volunteer leaders and senior management should encourage their team members to become communications advocates within the organization, establishing and promoting two-way communications with all of their subordinates and throughout the community organizations.

This attitude towards communication encourages healthy and open dialogue between senior leadership/management and the volunteer/staff population and creates an atmosphere of trust and credibility. It helps everyone understand why decisions were made and what their impact is on the organization as a whole and on all individuals.

BACKGROUND

The following have contributed to the need for this communication plan:

- The reorganization of ADA into a community-based organization with a nationwide mission
- A reduction in governance requirements at the local level
- An increase in activities in current communities
- An attempt to increase the number of communities served
- Consolidation of administrative functions
- New procedures, policies and systems
- Change in employee benefits
- High frontline staff turnover coupled with uncertain career paths.
- A shortage of recognition for both volunteers and staff

The current environment presents an unparalleled opportunity to truly reinvent ADA and the way we communicate with our internal audiences. We must work diligently to take credit for our successes. Everything ADA does or achieves which has positive impact on the business should be communicated swiftly and completely to everyone in the organization. It is only through an aggressive information campaign that we will overcome the powers of informal communications channels, such as the “grapevine”, and continue to demonstrate the positive side of the changes we are experiencing.

CORE MESSAGES

All messages created in support of this plan will advance the Association's values, as delineated in ADA's Statement of Core Values approved by the board of directors on June 12, 1998. The key components of this statement are:

Integrity

We always try to do the right thing. We recognize our responsibility for stewardship of publicly donated dollars. We are honest and straightforward with each other.

Leadership

We commit ourselves to being the leader on issues of concern to people with diabetes. We each practice positive leadership in our area of responsibility. We promote and nurture the individual growth and career development of volunteers and staff throughout the organization.

Ownership

We accept personal accountability for our work. We seek to improve the effectiveness of the entire organization. We act as a catalyst for change. We always seek a better way to do our work. We continually seek opportunities to develop ourselves and others. We take pride in our work environment and strive to project an image of professionalism.

Partnership

We value a dynamic partnership between volunteers and staff and among individuals throughout the organization. We believe that diversity of all kinds makes us a stronger organization.

Passion For Making A Difference

We are passionate about achieving tangible results that benefit people with diabetes. We are not satisfied with the status quo and are committed to continuous improvement.

Trust

Our interactions with others are marked by mutual respect. We have confidence in each other's capabilities and intentions. We assume the best of one another.

KEY MESSAGE AREAS

Messages in the following categories are being developed. Throughout the year, these messages will be incorporated into various products produced in support of this plan.

ADVOCACY

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

COST CONTROL

DIVERSITY

INCOME DEVELOPMENT

INFORMATION

PROFESSIONAL SECTION

PUBLICATIONS

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

RESEARCH

STANDARD PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

SYSTEMS CONSOLIDATION

TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

VOLUNTEER/STAFF EMPOWERMENT