

Non-Profit Communications Must-Haves: Clarity. Creativity. Consistency.

By Amber Davidson, EQUIP Communications Director



I suppose it's no surprise that working for EQUIP, an organization founded by John C. Maxwell, I see Communications through leadership lenses. After all, as Dr. Maxwell says, "Everything rises and falls on leadership." As I work at EQUIP, I desire to apply these principles we teach in my area of responsibility and stewardship. One of the lessons we teach is called "I Have a Dream" - it's about vision (how it comes about, how to follow through and how to cast vision). The tips on casting vision are the main tenants I seek for our team to employ in the communications activities of EQUIP. I would like to cover these three areas in detail and follow with a summary of a few other practical items that are also critical in this all-important area of communications.

1) See it clearly.

What is the vision of your organization? What are you trying to do every day? What is the passion God has given you in your current role? What difference are you making in the world? Why should others be involved?

These are all questions that reveal what you see and *why* you are

doing what you are doing. If you see your vision clearly, it will go a long way in order for you to help others see your vision clearly.

2) Show it creatively.

How can you show people your vision in a way they can grasp it with all their senses? What can

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you do that is different than how you have ever done it? Do you open yourself up to listen to the ideas of the people around you (some people might surprise you when given the opportunity!)? How can you spread your message and be even more creative when dollars are tight?

It's easy to think that creativity is a luxury. It's a must! When you are busy and when you seem to have the least resources; pay even closer attention to not short-cut creativity. Slow down and think. Get the right people in the room. Take 10 minutes around the table. When it's a bigger project or a change in the season of the vision-

take time alone or take an hour around the table. Ask good questions. Be willing to try new ideas. You might be surprised.

3) Say it constantly.

How many sermons do you remember...REALLY remember? What is the slogan of Nike? Do you feel like you've said the same thing a thousand times? What message about your organization do you want potential donors and partners to hear? Can your constituency articulate your vision just as well as you can?

At EQUIP we often remind ourselves that everyone else doesn't live and breathe our vision every day like we do. They can't always remember every detail of the ins and outs of what we do. I know you sometimes feel like you say the same things over and over again and are tempted to "change-it-up" but it is so important to keep hammering away at the same message to drive it home. Yes, we can say the same things in different ways- but we must stay true to the message and keeping it consistent. Humans are habitual. Think about when you hear a great communicator and how many times they repeat the same basic idea in order to get it into your head. Think about parenting and

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how many times you have to say the same things to your kids for it to become innate to them. Every major brand has to do this- and so do ministries.

Conclusion:

Intertwined with these three keys for casting vision are a few other best practices for ministry communications. I believe one of the most important and easy to do is to be careful of your ministry “lingo.” Remember that there are (hopefully) always new people being introduced to your ministry and they don’t know your catch phrases. They need a key with definitions. They don’t know what the letters stand for and they need you to spell it out.

Then, of course, it never hurts to be concise. The shorter you can say it- usually the better. In this world of media saturation, it’s harder and harder to keep people’s attention. Of course there are times that a longer message is quite suitable, but in general- where we can say it shorter, we will have an audience with more people.

These are just a few things that I have learned and am always learning at another level! I try to keep these in mind in

Communications at EQUIP and I hope they are an encouragement to you. Remember, it’s all God’s anyway and He is the great Communicator. Ask Him to give you creative ideas. Seek Him daily in making wise decisions. Honor Him with excellence. When you have too much on your plate, kindly call out to Him that He has a problem and declare that it belongs to Him and you need His help. Keep asking Him to work in your heart and the hearts of those on whom the message will fall. Pray for the seeds of communication you are planting to take root.