

Communication Strategy

Page 1 of 5

Issue: 3



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Introduction

SIRM recognises that one of the key performance areas of any successful institution is the ability to communicate effectively within the institution as well as outside in the community within which the institutions functions.

Communication is essential to ensure that stakeholders are provided mechanisms for consultation and input into strategies or processes that affect their own activities, as well as in obtaining shared understanding and awareness.

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to effectively enhance awareness and understanding of events, policies, issues, and developments by members of SIRM community - employees, students and external stakeholders.

This strategy is intended to be a document that can and will be altered as circumstances change and as strategies, goals, and objectives are achieved.

Scope

The primary target audiences of this strategy were identified by the management in order to effectively enhance awareness and understanding of events, policies, issues, and developments by members of the SIRM community.

These audiences are prioritized as follows:

- Employees – All employees of SIRM community, including management, administration, faculty and professional staff
- Students – All students enrolled in SIRM
- External stakeholders

Strategies

The following strategies are identified to meet the strategic goals:

1. To implement a communication system that provides guidance to SIRM community in terms of understanding what internal messages are and how to deliver those messages.
 - Develop communication system for events, policies, issues and developments for the following levels of communication:
 - Level 1 – Public Safety Announcements
Such announcements are of the highest priority and include but are not limited to urgent security matters, such as bomb or terrorist threats, cyber threats, health and safety, natural disaster alerts, and impending severe weather conditions. They might also include policy changes that are time-critical. The time sensitivity associated with these announcements often necessitates immediate communication.
 - Level 2 – SIRM Policies & Policy Changes
Such announcements are of high importance, as they affect large numbers of SIRM community. Key here is the fact that immediate notification is most often not required (though in some instances it may be). Communication can occur in a planned manner, even if that means hours or days. Such announcements can include but aren't limited to SIRM policies, regulations, and rules that need to be communicated. Such policy announcements are generally delivered by senior administrators.
 - Level 3 – Events
Such announcements are generally those non-academic and/or academic events that can be planned well in advance and include but are not limited to SIRM functions such as alumni events, graduation ceremonies, seminars, conferences, workshops, concerts, sport events, dinners, and so forth (under certain circumstances immediate notification may be required).
 - Level 4 – News
Such announcements are generally related to news, past, present or future, that deals with events, policies, issues, and developments by or related to members of SIRM community. Such news includes but is not limited to SIRM functions such as alumni events, graduation ceremonies, seminars, conferences, workshops, concerts, sport events, dinners, and so forth. Under certain circumstances immediate

Communication Strategy

Page 2 of 5

Issue: 3



Issue Date: January 2022

Review Date: January 2023

notification may be required and may be of high importance, such as announcements related to serious injury or death of SIRM personnel or student(s). In such cases, these news items would be classified as Level 1 communication.

- Develop communication procedures to support the successful dissemination of the various communications to identified target audiences.
2. Identify systematic vehicles of communication in order to provide reliable sources of communication so that internal audience are aware of events, policies, issues, and developments with SIRM community. Attaining this goal will provide members of SIRM community with the greatest opportunity to be actively engaged in the life of SIRM.
- Develop a list of communication vehicles for dissemination of internal messages. Implement “required” and “optional” labels for identified systematic vehicles of communication.
 - Required Vehicles:
 - Newsletter for employees
 - Central calendar
 - SIRM website News section
 - Newsletter for students
 - All SIRM email lists
- Optional Vehicles - It is recommended that Student Support implement an e-letter on a weekly basis, which would not only enhance and highlight student news and events, but it would additionally serve to better market student life at SIRM.
3. Enhance communications at and between all levels of SIRM community by informing and educating members about the strategy. Critical to achieving success here is ensuring that all members of SIRM community understand that they are communicators on a daily basis.
- Develop presentation to be delivered to key SIRM management outlining the strategy
 - Deliver presentation to all departments of SIRM
 - Develop communication plan to inform SIRM community management of systematic vehicles identified and employed to enhance awareness and understanding of events, policies and developments by members of SIRM community.
4. Utilise quantitative/qualitative methods to measure the effectiveness of the communication strategy, employing outcome goals to estimate effectiveness.
- Develop survey mechanism to measure attitudes and opinions of employees regarding SIRM internal communications to determine their sources of information and their informational preferences and needs and fine tune the communications strategy according to findings after a one-year period
 - Develop set of outcome goals as a baseline for measuring effectiveness of internal communications:
 - Enhance the sense of community among employees and students by better informing SIRM community of events, policies, issues, and developments so that they are provided with an opportunity to be wholly engaged in SIRM life.
 - Break down feelings of we - they between SIRM management, administration, staff, and faculty by developing and encouraging open communications principles.
 - Enhance pride among SIRM employees and staff by better informing them of noteworthy accomplishments on a regular basis.
 - Increase awareness of events, policies, issues, and developments by SIRM community by deploying a modern media-style approach to internal communication.
 - Enhance the understanding by community members of the critical role they play in contributing to the information flow as it relates to developing and sustaining messages related to events, policies, issues, and developments that impact SIRM community.

Strategic Communication Plan: Principles

This strategic plan is based on communications principles that offer the greatest likelihood of success, given the nature and scope of the environment in which SIRM community operates and functions. These principles state that proactive

Communication Strategy

Page 3 of 5

Issue: 3



Issue Date: January 2022

Review Date: January 2023

communication is more effective than reactive, that open communication is more effective than closed communication, and that decentralised systems coupled with centralised distribution methods best complement open systems of communication. This plan employs systematic, centralised communication vehicles that allow the disparate departments and units within SIRM community to contribute to the information flow.

A proactive against reactive approach provides SIRM community the opportunity to implement communications channels and tools that SIRM community can effectively rely upon to disseminate news related to events, issues, and developments that impact the members therein. Moreover, it ensures that events, issues, and developments are communicated in advance using formally identified channels of communication so that, first, members of the community can be actively engaged in the life of SIRM, and second, they understand the formal structure identified to communicate.

Layering an open communications approach on top of this provides means for the disparate departments and units within SIRM community to contribute to the information flow. A fundamental characteristic of successful communication suggests that information needs to be shared throughout an organisation. An open system will allow information to be shared top-down, laterally, and bottom-up. Such a system necessitates that members of SIRM understand that each plays a role in disseminating events, policies, issues, and developments that affect others in SIRM community. A decentralised communications system best complements open communications. This is attributable to the fact that the best source of information is likely the individuals that compose the greater SIRM community, whether that person is a senior or midlevel manager, administrator, faculty member, or staff member. To ensure that information is communicated, however, this plan provides a centralised vehicle that collects and disseminates the information provided by the disparate departments and units that compose SIRM community. It is of critical importance that members of SIRM community are equipped to successfully engage this centralised vehicle, and this plan addresses this point.

Of additional importance is the fact that this plan embraces technology as its primary means of delivering SIRM's messages. This makes sense for two reasons:

- 1) The various new media employed best allow for systematic delivery of communication characterised by a proactive, open, and decentralised model; and
- 2) This plan allows SIRM to leverage existing resources.

Strategic Communication Plan: Challenges

The following is a list of identified challenges to implementing this plan. This plan offers an opportunity to positively enhance communications to the end of meeting the identified strategic goal. It represents a different and more effective way of communicating to members of SIRM community. These challenges can be overcome by management's continued support for bold initiatives that seek to effect positive change across SIRM.

Challenge 1: this plan represents a change in culture, a different way of communicating. It requires complete support and agreement from senior management.

Challenge 2: some identified channels of communication do not yet exist (e.g., enhanced student e-letter), require further development, or currently need overhaul. To effectively meet the strategic goal, different ways of communicating have been proposed with the idea that successful communication can be achieved not by employing the current set of tools available to disseminate information but by employing a set of tools and strategies that can best achieve the strategic goal identified. Management's support for such tools and strategies is critical.

Challenge 3: resources are limited and those responsible for allocating resources will need to refocus priorities to ensure that the resources required to implement this plan are available to meet and achieve the strategic goal.

Challenge 4: This plan's reliance on new media builds upon a previous directive identified by the principal, which articulates that the web should be a priority for all departments and units. Many of the required channels of systematic communication identified in this plan meet this directive.

Support for the plan sends a clear signal to all members of SIRM community that SIRM web presence plays a primary role in how SIRM communicates, not only internally but also externally. Additionally, support of this plan allows electronic communications

Communication Strategy

Page 4 of 5

Issue: 3



Issue Date: January 2022

Review Date: January 2023

to further be leveraged with other strategic external groups who either visit SIRM on the web to find information or by developing targeted communications in the present (e.g., the alumni connections) or that could be developed in the future such as an electronic form that promotes SIRM in terms of public outreach and community involvement. For this to occur departments and units must identify human resources that will be delegated with posting news and events for their particular area(s). Such goals are achievable in the future only if a foundation is in place to support further development. This plan provides that foundation. This plan or any communications plan cannot be successful without personnel formally delegated with such responsibility.

Strategic Communication Plan: Optional Communication Vehicles

This is not an exhaustive listing of optional communication vehicles. This representative list is provided in order to create awareness of the various vehicles beyond the required vehicles of communication that will allow various divisions, units, etc., to build an effective communications mix in order to expand and/or reinforce awareness of messages:

- SIRM Website
- SIRM Moodle
- Letters
- Newsletters
- Flyers
- Brochures
- Posters, banners, similar media
- Electronic boards, messaging and communication software
- Multimedia presentations
- Face-to-face small meetings
- Off site meetings, retreats, and events
- On-site events, speeches, training sessions
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Youtube
- Various other social media

Communication Strategy

Page 5 of 5
Issue: 3



SCHOOL OF INFORMATION
RISK MANAGEMENT

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Communication Plan Implementation Matrix – Employee

Purpose	Audience	Frequency	Accountability
Level 1 – Public Safety/ Crisis Announcements	Employees	Immediate notification required	Principal / Senior Management
Level 2 – SIRM Policies & Policy Changes	Employees	Immediate notification generally not required	Management or designee responsible for communicating the administrative directives
Level 3 - Events	Employees	Immediate notification generally not required	Department, unit responsible for the event
Level 4 – News	Employees	Immediate notification generally not required	Department, unit to which the news item relates

Communication Plan Implementation Matrix – Students

Purpose	Audience	Frequency	Accountability
Level 1 – Public Safety/ Crisis Announcements	Students	Immediate notification required	Registrar / Student Support or designee
Level 2 – SIRM Policies & Policy Changes	Students	Immediate notification generally not required	Registrar / Student Support or designee
Level 3 - Events	Students	Immediate notification generally not required	Department, unit, student group responsible for the event
Level 4 – News	Students	Immediate notification generally not required	Department, unit, student group to which the news item relates