Modules for training science shops' staff

Communication and Public Awareness

SciShops

ENHANCING THE RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE EXPANSION OF THE SCIENCE SHOP ECOSYSTEM IN EUROPE

Structure of the presentation

1. Why Communicate/Disseminate?
2. Creating a Communications/Dissemination Strategy
3. Objectives
4. Stakeholders
5. Targeted messages
6. Channels
7. Planning communications activities
8. Evaluation
9. Roles division for Communications and Dissemination activities

1. Why Communicate/Disseminate? (1)

The importance of communicating Science Shops' projects and results

Two broad objectives:

- Communicating to raise awareness of a Science Shop;

- Disseminating the outcomes of a community-based research project

1. Why Communicate/Disseminate? (2)

The importance of communicating Science Shops' projects and results

Obligation to communicate:

- building public trust in science

Promoting the Science Shop:

- services of the Science Shop, new research requests

Staff recruitment

Multiplication of impact:

- policy-making processes, funding for local initiatives…

Reputation building

Inspiration for others:

- More democratic and open use of science
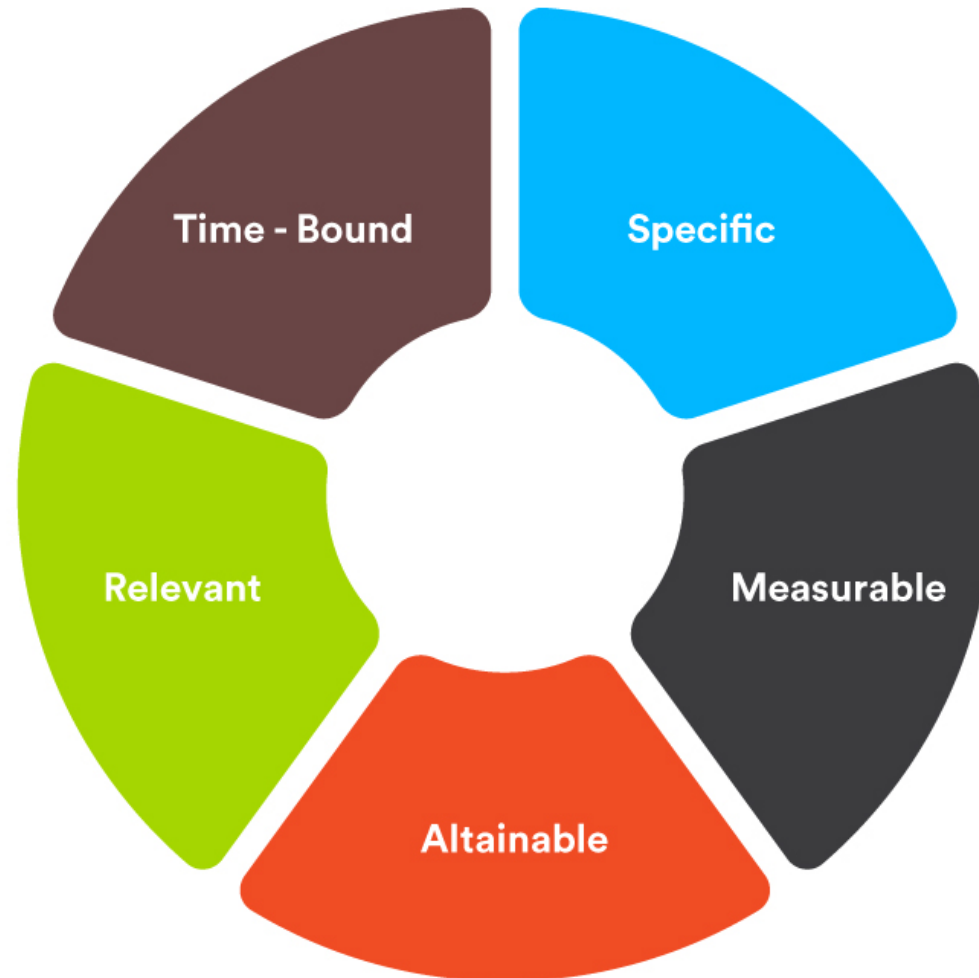
2. Creating a Communications Strategy

Why have a strategy?

- Optimise resourses, costs and time
- Increase likelihood of success and effectiveness of communication efforts
- Might be a requirement in some projects

A communications strategy should be developed during the early stages of a project's development in order to achieve the best results

Creating a Communications/Dissemination Strategy

3. Communication objectives (2)

Creating a Communications/Dissemination Strategy

Examples of SMART objectives:

- **Dissemination of results**> Raise awareness of the results of a research project > three articles in three different scientific publications within a year after the end of the project.

- **Dissemination of results**> Persuasion> Statement from one relevant decision-maker (politician, local administrator, private company) to improve/make a change on a situation based on the results of the research after the results are published and maximum one year later.

- **Communication of the Science Shop**> Raise awareness> Achieve 600 monthly visits to the website or 1000 subscriptions to the Science Shop's newsletter/mailing list in one year (should be realistic according to the size of the Science Shop: local/national, existing networks to invite to join the newsletter, etc.)

- **Communication of a project**> Raise awareness>Elaboration of a mailing list of interested stakeholders to send them relevant updates about the project. Target: collection of 50 emails for this mailing list by the third month of the project.

4. Stakeholders

Creating a Communications/Dissemination Strategy

A stakeholder is "an individual, group, or organisation, who may affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision, activity, or outcome of a project" (Project Management Institute, 2013).

Internal stakeholders – part of project implementation:

- Project supervisors
- Researchers
- Students
- Interns
- Volunteers

External stakeholders:

- Civil society
- Public sector
- Business sector
- General public

5. Targeted messages

Creating a Communications/Dissemination Strategy

The message should be tailored according to:

- **Audience's needs**, interests> Offering solution
- **Characteristics of the audience**: knowledge, background, language barriers, etc.
- **Characteristics of the channel**

Less is more!

6. Channels (1)

Creating a Communications/Dissemination Strategy

Online:

- Websites
- Social media
- Online publications
- Press (online)
- Blogs
- Podcasts
- Video
- Emails, newsletters, etc.

Offline:

- Press (local or national newspapers)
- Television and Radio (local or national)
- Magazines and journals
- Books and other publications
- Leaflets, brochures and printed material
- Events and Meetings

6. Channels (2)

Creating a Communications/Dissemination Strategy

Channels:

- Specialist vs. generalist
- Local vs. national vs. international

7. Communication activities (1)

Creating a Communications/Dissemination Strategy

Promoting services to community organisations and creating public awareness of the Science Shop:

- Science Shop's **website** (with enquiry form)
- Use of **social media** channels
- A **drop-in facility**
- **Presentations** at local events and conferences
- **Face-to-face meetings** with individual community organisations
- **Targeted mailings** (via post or e-mail)
- **Flyers and leaflets** to hand out
- A regular **newsletter** (to the Science Shop's mailing list)
- **Articles** in local media and/or **interviews** with the Science Shop coordinator
- **Briefing events** to which community organisations are invited
- Use of **external** networks, websites, newsletters

7. Communication activities (2)

Creating a Communications/Dissemination Strategy

Communicating results of Science Shops projects:

- Use of own and/or mother organisation's **website and social media**
- **Press releases** (distributed to relevant media) and other collaborations with the media
- Annual or other **reports** (printed or online)
- Knowledge cafés and other **public engagement events**, workshops, exhibitions
- **Scientific publications**
- **Presentations and posters** at conferences
- **Policy briefs and papers**
- Use of **Open Access/Data repositories**

Creating a Communications/Dissemination Strategy

Examples of websites:

- The Netherlands: Science Shop, Wageningen University & Research (WUR) - Science Shop site hosted on the University website: https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/science-shop.htm

- Northern Ireland: Community University Knowledge Exchange, Queen's University Belfast: https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/ScienceShop/

- Germany: District Future - Urban Lab, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology Blog: http://www.quartierzukunft.de/en/blog/

7. Communication activities (4)

Creating a Communications/Dissemination Strategy

Other examples:

Social Media: Possibility of using 'mother organisation's' channels (e.g. University Facebook/Twitter/Instagram…).

- Facebook of the Green Office of KU Leuven:
  https://www.facebook.com/pg/greenofficekuleuven/posts/

Video:

- European University Cyprus, presentation of the Science Shop
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEq1dinbyYI

Awards:

- Awards presented to students for Outstanding Community Engagement projects at a celebration to mark CARL's (Community-Academic Research Links) 50th student-community project:
  https://www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/news/carl50---celebrating-our-50th-student-community-project.html

8. Evaluation

Creating a Communications/Dissemination Strategy

Important:

- To be decided at the beginning
- Tools/mechanisms should be established to measure the completion of the objectives.
- Those can be qualitative (interviews or focus groups) or quantitative (surveys, participation records, website metrics, etc.)
- Monitoring communications activities (e.g.: Excel sheet as a Communications Monitoring Tool)

Tools:

- Tool to Evaluate Communications activities by the European Commission:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-evaluation-toolkit_en.pdf

9. Roles division for Communications and Dissemination activities

Factors affecting division of tasks:

- Budget
- Staff
- Time

Profiles:

- Employees
- Researchers
- Students
- Volunteers
- External (outsourcing communications)
- Members of the CSO

Thanks For Your Attention!