



The Nature Conservancy 
Protecting nature. Preserving life.®

Strategic Communications: A Voice for Conservation

*Speaking at the
Core of our Mission*

Prepared by the
Strategic
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Marketing Division
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INTRODUCTION

Organizational transformation

The Nature Conservancy's new conservation framework, Global Challenges, Global Solutions, is a catalyst for significant organizational transformation – from top-level goals down to the operating structure of different business functions, including communications and marketing. This transformation has major implications for the Strategic Communications team. It informs how the team adds value in support of Conservation and External Affairs programs, as well as contributes to achievement of the Conservancy's mission to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

To address these implications, Strategic Communications recently initiated a process to help determine the most pressing communications issues for the organization, as well as identify team strengths, challenges and opportunities. Grounded in research findings, Strategic Communications has refined our approach, and refocused on reaching select business (B2B) and government (B2G) groups that are at the core of the Conservancy's conservation business objectives and critical to achieving its mission. The team will also look to target key consumer audiences (B2C) as identified

GOAL

The Strategic Communications team advances the Global Challenges, Global Solutions agenda by serving as communications and subject matter experts within the Marketing division. As strategic advisors to global Conservation and External Affairs, we work with our Marketing colleagues on deliverables that move the Conservation needle – with shared accountability for the quality and success of projects.

within Conservation strategies and Marketing plans that tie back to Conservation business.

This refined agenda will focus on positioning consistently – and globally – the Conservancy's conservation business leaders, recognized science expertise, collaborative approach, and proven on-ground solutions in front of the people with the power to influence government policies, industry practices, and funding decisions at scale.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Communications strengths, challenges and opportunities

Strategic Communications used FleishmanHillard, an independent public relations firm, to conduct a detailed audit and analysis of the team's role within the organization, and its strengths and opportunities.

FleishmanHillard conducted in-depth interviews and focus group meetings with executive team members and senior global staff from Conservation, External Affairs and Marketing, and reviewed a wide variety of Strategic Communication's products.

The analysis revealed a clear consensus around the impact of the organization's evolution on the unit, the importance of communications to business success, and the role that Strategic Communications should play in support of the Conservancy's global Conservation strategies. The report also pointed to impediments – gaps between communication expectations of Conservation, Marketing and External Affairs colleagues, and the role and capacity of the unit.

With a focus on closing the gaps and advancing strengths and opportunities, Strategic Communications has developed a strategy that emphasizes audience clarity and prioritization, greater collaboration and shared accountability for communications outcomes.

The overarching goal is to foster cooperation

with our Conservation and External Affairs partners from business planning through program implementation, and working with our Marketing colleagues on deliverables that advance priority Conservation objectives — with shared accountability for the quality and success of outcomes.

In working toward this goal, Strategic Communications will employ an objective-based planning approach, focusing on the prioritized business objectives and audiences of our Conservation and External Affairs partners.

OBJECTIVES

Clear, aligned, focused

Strategic Communications will employ objective-based planning as its approach to meet Conservation and External Affairs goals. The team will lead Global Challenges, Global Solutions communications strategies and work with Marketing partners to create clear goals for targeted outreach to the influential audiences who will impact our Conservation and External Affairs business priorities.

Objective-Based Planning:

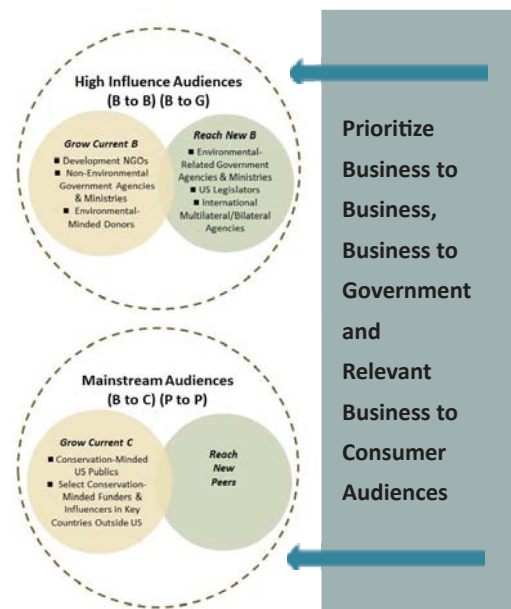
- Align strategies with Conservation and External Affairs business goals and objectives.
- Identify and focus on key target audiences – the businesses, government agencies, funding sources and public constituencies crucial to business success.
- Work with partners to identify synergies, audience overlap and cross-cutting opportunities across Conservation and External Affairs.
- Tap into the communication channels of targeted audiences.
- Understand the media habits of target audiences, and the industry associations and interest groups that intersect with the Conservancy’s priorities.
- Support Marketing division efforts to define and communicate a consistent Conservancy identity and messages across multiple channels and audiences.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Cross-cutting, prioritized, managed

Audience selection and prioritization are critical to the success of the Conservancy’s efforts and the work of Strategic Communications.

Strategic Communications will employ our objective-based planning approach to bring the Conservancy’s work to priority companies, associations, foundations, organizations, government agencies and key constituencies by: establishing peer-to-peer relationships with the communications officials of target business and government audiences; developing and placing our content with influential media, including industry and organization-specific publications; positioning our expert voices at target conferences and events; and developing communications and marketing platforms to reach shared target constituencies.



Primary Audiences

Objectives: inform, influence decisions, position for the future, build collaboration

- C-suite executives
- Policy makers and legislative influencers
- Donors/investors/foundations

- Multi-lateral organizations
- Communications and public relations officers/peers of key targets
- Partner organizations and other environmental groups
- Conservancy staff, trustees and members

Secondary Audiences

Objective: influence primary audiences, broaden support for the organization

- Members
- Potential supporters (with focus on Gen X and Gen Y, and new diverse groups)
 - “The core”: female, 40s, urban, politically active, has a global perspective. Clean air and water is top issue, but oceans, energy, development and parks are close behind; and
 - “Sympathetic sideliners”: 30s, has kids, involved in faith group, clean water is top issue, current engagement is passive, he/she is for individual action, but doesn’t know what steps to take.
- Targeted public constituencies with the ability to influence decision makers

MESSAGES

Simple, relevant, compelling

The development of specific messages requires research and analysis that is beyond the current scope of this communications plan. Solid criteria for message development are essential to advancing Conservation and External Affairs objectives:

- All new messaging should lead with values and benefits to targeted audiences and articulate what the Conservancy offers – successful and collaborative approaches, successes in the policy arena, scientific and practitioner expertise, and conservation solutions proven in real places.
- Messages should first clearly identify the Conservancy’s competitive/comparative advantages, and leadership, before highlighting generic projects or programs.

- Messages should be consistent and express straightforward ideas that are of value to the target audience.
- Review and refinement of existing message blueprints is required.



STRATEGIES

Proven, cross-cutting approaches

The Strategic Communications team will develop customized communication plans for our global Conservation and External Affairs programs and integrate those plans with two or more of the cross-cutting approaches noted below. These overarching approaches will provide consistency and will lay a solid foundation on which to build higher value, higher impact communication results.

1 – Issues Management

- Identify three near-term issues that have the greatest potential to harm the organization and, working with FleishmanHillard, assemble research reflecting audience and topic to inform decision making and position development.
- Review existing issues management topics, content and processes.
- Conduct a crisis simulation drill that will inform the development of an internal and external issues management strategy and procedure.

2 – Partnership Summit

- Convene meetings that bring together selected existing and potential funding partners and Conservation staff across Global Strategies to create strong relationships and elevate discussion of TNC cross-cutting programs and successes and shared goals, and position the Conservancy as the organization of choice for future initiatives. These Summits will strengthen existing partnerships.

3 – Leadership Visibility

- A 360-degree effort to expand the visibility of Conservation and External Affairs leaders. This includes content development and external placement relationship development, proactive and reactive earned media, live speaking opportunities, and social media engagement to position Conservancy leaders in external channels that speak to the priority audiences needed to move business objectives. Coupled with an ongoing content pipeline and earned media tactics, we will identify live speaking opportunities to further expand and deepen visibility with target audiences.

4 – Peer-to-Peer Communications

- Engage Conservation and External Affairs priority target audiences by initiating and/or strengthening relationships with the communications executives at respective target organizations, and positioning the Conservancy in their internal/external communication channels and live events.
- Leverage partner controlled communications channels including USAID, NOAA, World Bank, NGO and industry publications.
- Relationship building with communications and public relations staff at each organization is an essential first step, followed by relevant content delivery.

5 – Speakers’ Bureau

- Develop a pilot program promoting the Conservancy’s leadership and scientists at targeted forums (where honoraria are possible) to address business-to-business and business-to-government audiences. The bureau will feature speakers who can discuss conservation, policy and business issues. This will generate

revenue, elevate profiles and visibility of the Conservancy, establish the organization as a trusted information resource for nontraditional audiences, and serve as an issues management mechanism to address controversies out front and in real time. Based on its success, the program could serve as the basis for a Conservancy-wide speakers’ bureau.

- Connect with the Conservancy’s leader development programs, including Science Communications and Global Public Relations.

6 – Policy/Advocacy Outcomes

- Support the legislative and regulatory agenda of federal funding agencies as well as legislative outcomes in Congress where there is common interest and alignment with the Conservancy’s priorities.
- Build relationships with key press officers and, working through U.S. government and international government relations, provide relevant materials on Conservancy work supported by those groups.
- Work with and support states and outreach efforts for selected Conservation priorities in the U.S. and targeted countries.

7 – Revenue-Generating Initiatives

- Working with Conservation and Marketing, develop a revenue-generating program similar to Where Does Your Water Come From? (e.g.: partner with medical R&D leader to develop a “Corals and Cancer” awareness and fundraising effort targeting medical industry).

8 – Issue and Collaboration Alignment

- Work with targeted sectors on key issues to advance the Conservancy’s position or agenda. Explore industry associations for corporate engagement potential and position Conservancy officials for speaking opportunities.

9 – Content Promotion Initiatives

- Work with Global Content Development and Brand Marketing staff to establish new content promotion partnerships in non-TNC channels (i.e., Women’s Health nature-themed issue).

IMPLEMENTATION

Comprehensive, coordinated, integrated

Strategic Communications team members were instrumental in development of this plan and will play an even greater role as it is introduced across the organization, and more specifically, to global strategy leaders.

Deliverables to include:

- Implementation timeline
- Roles and responsibilities
- Connect content
- Integration with existing Conservation and External Affairs plans
- Presentations

ASSESEMENT & METRICS

Measurable, meaningful, outcome-based

Strategic Communications will evaluate and measure our communications objectives on an annual basis. This will include, but is not limited to:

- Conduct annual audience review
- Conduct Conservation and External Affairs partner assessments
- Evaluate performance indicators

Measure impact, e.g. (not comprehensive):

- number of speaking engagements
- media coverage earned for Conservation and External Affairs leadership
- new partnerships created
- peer-to-peer relationships established
- new potential revenue channels opened

STRATEGY AT WORK

Targeted, leveraged, results-oriented

A few examples of the types of approaches Strategic Communications uses to communicate effectively and assist Global Strategies in achieving business objectives are noted below.

Leadership Visibility Initiative

Strategic Communications is leading a 360-degree effort to expand the visibility of Global Water Managing Director Giulio Boccaletti. This includes content development and external placement relationships, proactive and reactive earned media, live speaking opportunities, and social media (e.g. Twitter) engagement to position Giulio and Global Water's developing areas of focus — e.g. sustainable hydropower, protecting water for cities, etc. — in external channels that speak to the priority audiences needed to move Global Water's objectives. This spring, we featured Giulio's vision for water — Nature's Silent Currency — in the Huffington Post, and have now established an emerging content relationship for Giulio with The Guardian's Sustainable Business hub. His first piece on Business Leadership for Water Stewardship went live this week. We also worked with Giulio to convert an interview with CNBC.com into a sound bite building his "Silent Currency" message in an article on companies and water.

As next steps, coupled with ongoing content pipeline and earned media tactics, we will identify 2-3 live speaking opportunities in the next 9-12 months to further expand and deepen Giulio's visibility with target audiences. A significant way to further advance this conservation and communications strategy, is to secure funding to provide resources for paid media potential — print, TV, and live — that can complement and build from earned efforts (as well as create new earned opportunities) and create higher visibility and higher impact with target audiences.

Communicating to Companies Through Their Own Channels

In FY14 Strategic Communications plans to lead and test a new approach to engage with and build the Great Rivers Partnership's relationship with a key corporate donor with the goal of: a) expanding the reach of our GRP work with a critical company audience (and, by extension, the development and infrastructure sector); b) generating the potential for participating in joint education opportunities, and c) lining up GRP for an expanded relationship with the company in the coming years.

This is a communications strategy that could

establish a replicable model for engagement with other similar donors and partners. We will do this by developing content and engagement strategies that are promoted through the company's own digital, print, social and live channels and pushed to company leadership, employees and partners.

Restoration Week

In FY13 Strategic Communications launched a new annual marketing platform that celebrates science in action, our projects and partnerships as well as establishes our leadership in marine habitat restoration through the 160 sites around the world. The platform and outreach through media and directly to specific partner/funder agencies like World Bank's Global Partnership for Oceans and NOAA established a new framing for our marine habitat restoration work including the geographic scope, scale and diversity of habitat types in which we work as well as highlight the benefits to people and nature from risk reduction to fish production. We are able to toggle between the URL Restoration Works when we are not actively promoting the week-long celebration and Restoration Week when we are.

Global Partnership for Oceans

The GMT is leading a process with the World Bank and partners to draft a habitat action plan which will influence marine habitat protection and restoration investments from the World Bank and leading foundations. Strategic Communications is at the table offering ideas to frame, introduce and support the plan by working with the WB public affairs team.

Engaging Donors to Increase Support for International Conservation

In May, Mary Laurie and Kent began discussing a project to capture the experience of the Friends of Catalytic Conservation (FCC), a very successful giving circle that pioneered a new way for high-value philanthropists to support the mission of The Nature Conservancy. The goal is to create a model/tools others can use to engage high-value donors to increase funding and further conservation work while at the same time giving philanthropists

a hands-on experience in analyzing need and collaboratively making funding decisions. Working with Kent and donors, including Roger and Margot Milliken, Mary is reviewing several approaches (Harvard Business case study or a promotional profile) and developing a communication strategy that could have institution-wide implications as a 'gold standard' for fundraising with elite supporters.

Shell/Dow/TNC Green Infrastructure White Paper

Dow, Shell, Swiss Re, Unilever and TNC recently released a collaborative white paper that found that incorporating nature into man-made infrastructure can improve business resilience—and bring additional economic, environmental and socio-political benefits.

Based on over 20 business case studies, the evaluation concluded that hybrid approaches, utilizing a combination of green and gray infrastructure, may provide an optimum solution and improve overall business resilience. The GI White Paper was published in three scientific journals.

The Caribbean Summit of Political and Business Leaders

The Summit of Caribbean Political and Business Leaders was co-hosted by Prime Minister Keith Mitchell of Grenada, Premier Orlando Smith of the British Virgin Islands, and Sir Richard Branson, the founder of Virgin Group, during May 17–18, 2013 in the British Virgin Islands.

The Summit helped raise US \$72 million in funding commitments to support marine and coastal conservation, along with commitments to take new actions and to put in place more sustainable business practices, aligning Caribbean government leaders, corporate executives and key partners to chart a course on how to achieve this vision.

The Caribbean Summit of Political & Business leaders garnered multiple syndicated stories resulting in 479 total media mentions of the event and its tie to The Nature Conservancy.