



COMMUNICATION PLAN SUMMARY

March 28, 2001

Introduction

This document is a summary of the 124 page Communication Plan, including appendices, that was commissioned by the Vancouver Park Board from Optimum Public Relations. The full plan can be viewed on the Park Board public web site at www.parks.vancouver.bc.ca under “What’s New” *At the meeting of March 26th, 2001* or for staff on the Intranet site iwww.parks.city.vancouver.bc.ca . If you would like a hard copy of the unabridged plan, please contact **Brenda Greenwood at 257-8453**.

Background

In 1997 a general survey conducted for the Park Board concluded that the awareness of the Board's mandate and goals among the residents of Vancouver should be improved. Staff had also been concerned about internal communications amongst employees whose numbers and work places had been changed substantially over the past several decades. It was approved by the Board that a consultant be retained for the express purpose of developing a Communication Plan to guide the Park Board through the next three to five years. With the implementation of *New Directions* in full swing, the timing was appropriate to review and improve the ways in which we publicly position ourselves while communicating with the residents of Vancouver. It was decided that the audit would target all of the various Park Board audiences including the general public, stakeholders and staff. At the end of this process, staff would have a plan aimed at improved internal and external communication that will heighten awareness of the Board's activities, mandate, roles and services.

The results of this research led to the consultant's recommendations for the Park Board's strategic communication approach received by the Park Board on March 26, 2001. Following a consultative process with staff and stakeholders to identify communication priorities, an implementation plan will be prepared for the Park Board's consideration sometime in the autumn.

Time Line

January	2000	Park Board hires Optimum Public Relations
September	2000	Consultant delivers draft findings to SMT
February	2001	Park Board reviews draft report
March	2001	Park Board receives the Consultant's report
May/June	2001	Feedback from Staff and Stakeholders
July/August	2001	Development of Implementation Plan
September	2001	Board Report re: Implementation Plan

What the Research Involved

The consultant's research was undertaken over a seven month period and involved the following:

- Park Board-wide employee survey (1600) with 550 returned;
- 20 "one-on-one" interviews;
- 6 Focus Group Triads (included representatives from communication associations, sports groups, lease holders, City of Vancouver staff, multi-cultural groups and tourism);
- Analysis of 5 Public Opinion Surveys;
- Analysis of Print Media (268 stories);
- Park Board Publications Audit; and
- Public Omnibus Survey of 500 adults.

Research Findings and Analysis

a. Omnibus Survey of 500 Adults

Findings:

- 51% of respondents were not aware of the full scope of our organization;
- 90% of respondents reported that the Park Board is doing a satisfactory, very good or excellent job; and
- 25% of respondents reported that our organization is doing a poor job of communicating its roles and responsibilities. 24% felt that we are doing a good or excellent job.

b. Employee Survey (1600 distributed, 555 completed, 34% response)

Findings:

- significant differences in demographic profile of full-time, part-time and seasonal staff;
- all staff communicates with the public on a regular basis;
- communication between staff and their managers is easy and effective but not across districts/services;
- staff do not believe that there are effective mechanisms in place to ensure that their feedback and input is considered; and
- staff believe the public do not have adequate information about the Park Board.

c. One-on-One Interviews ([18], focus groups [6], surveys of Community Recreation Coordinators and VanDusen Staff)

Findings:

- our organization enjoys very high awareness and consideration, but stakeholders do not perceive the totality of the Park Board's programs/services;
- our organization is perceived as a large, institutional organization, whose activities are driven by political nature;
- stakeholders believe that the Park Board is fulfilling its mandate admirably, given the political context;
- stakeholders reported that clear, regular, open communication was critical, but lacking; and
- the Park Board staff do not adequately reflect the City's cultural and linguistic diversity.

d. Analysis of Surveys***Findings:***

- residents not aware of our organization's role and function;
- residents viewed Park and Recreation programs as secondary to their priority needs and demands from the government; and
- residents who do not make use of the Park Board's programs do so for reasons other than a lack of awareness or visibility.

e. Analysis of Print Media Content (358 newspaper editions)***Findings:***

- significant media scrutiny and interest in Park Board issues;
- predominantly negative and political orientation of coverage; and
- coverage did not reflect proactive efforts.

f. Publication Audit (145 Community Centre brochures, posters, programs, flyers, etc.)***Findings:***

- bright and informative;
- inconsistency in representation of our organization;
- little or no recognition of the Park Board as an entity; and
- very little effort is made to address the Park Board's advocacy goals.

Issues and Challenges

The research indicated four major issues and challenges which are facing the Park Board in its desire to improve its communication:

1. the Park Board has limited financial resources;
2. the application of the Park Board's corporate identity/logo is applied inconsistently and confused with its partnering organizations;
3. the political nature of the Park Board can influence perceptions of the entire organization and limit the successful pursuit of its advocacy objectives and mandate; and
4. the Park Board is a large and widespread organization whose external communication is highly decentralized.

Strategic Approach

Based on the findings of the communication audit and research program, and an analysis of the Park Board's communication issues and challenges, a strategic approach to communication planning was developed to guide both internal and external practices over the next three to five years.

Key Principles

Critical to the strategic approach are two key principles of effective communication for large organizations:

1. internal ways and means must be developed to support effective communication program delivery at all levels of the organization; and
2. development of a more positive image and reputation for an organization must begin with its employees and business partners, before the perception of other external audiences can be meaningfully shaped.

Goals and Objectives

The following internal and external goals reflect extensive research with staff at the Park Board and with further guidance from the Senior Management Team. Each of the two goals should guide all communications. The Goals are followed by a number of objectives set out in order to accomplish the goals.

Communication Goal 1 - Internally Focused

To foster understanding and support for the strategic direction of the Park Board through effective two-way communication and information sharing.

Objectives to Support Goal 1

- build internal support for the current and future direction of the organization;
- reinforce and support a communication system that encourages the face-to-face delivery of relevant information through all levels of the organization;
- acknowledge the valuable role that employees play in the accomplishment of organizational goals;
- instill an attitude of cooperation and team success across the entire organization;
- develop a cooperative relationship with organizations and individuals that influence employee attitudes and morale; and
- engage employees in the development and implementation of a long-term internal communications program.

Communication Goal 2 - Externally Focused

To enhance awareness, profile and support for the Park Board, its programs and its services, among stakeholders, partners, agencies and the public, in all the city's neighbourhoods.

Objectives to Support Goal 2

- enhance the visibility of the Park Board's identity;
- enhance recognition and value of the broad range of high quality Park Board programs and services provided in neighbourhoods throughout the city;
- improve working relationships with Park Board stakeholders, partners and agencies to foster support for the Park Board within key constituencies; and
- improve customer service provided to Park Board clients, and the overall experience for users of Park Board parks, programs and facilities.



COMMUNICATION PLAN QUESTIONNAIRE

1. *Is there any communication issue or challenge that has been overlooked?*

2. *The two Key Principles are:*

- **Internal processes and systems must be developed to support effective communication program delivery at all levels of the organization.**
- **Development of a more positive image and reputation for an organization must begin with its employees and business partners, before the perceptions of other external audiences can be meaningfully shaped.**

Does one of these principles take priority over the other? Which one, if any? Why?

3. *The two main Goals are:*

- **To enhance awareness, profile and support for the Vancouver Park Board, its programs and its services, among stakeholders, partners, agencies and the public, in all the city's neighbourhoods.**
- **To foster understanding and support for the management direction of the Vancouver Park Board through effective two-way communication and information sharing.**

Does one of these goals take priority over the other? Which one, if any? Why?

4. *The Key Objectives are:*

- Enhance the visibility of the Vancouver Park Board identity.**
- Enhance recognition and value of the broad range of high quality Vancouver Park Board programs and services provided in neighbourhoods throughout the city.**
- Improve working relationships with Vancouver Park Board stakeholders, partners and agencies to foster support for the Vancouver Park Board within key constituencies.**
- Improve customer service provided to Vancouver Park Board clients, and the overall experience for users of Vancouver Park Board parks, programs and facilities.**
- Build internal support for the current and future direction of the organization.**
- Reinforce and support a cascading communications system that encourages the face-to-face delivery of relevant information through all levels of the organization.**
- Acknowledge the valuable role that employees play in the accomplishment of organizational goals.**
- Instill an attitude of cooperation and team success across the entire organization.**
- Develop a cooperative and team success across the entire organization.**
- Engage employees in the development and implementation of a long-term internal communications program.**

In what priority would you put these objectives? (Rank these objectives in importance as high, medium or low.)

Are there additional objectives you would like to see included?

5. *How will we measure the success of the Communication Plan?*
