

MINISTRY OF FINANCE / REVENUE: **DURHAM COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP**

SITUATION

During an 8 month contract filling a secondment as a Senior Communications Advisor in the CIO Office, Ministry of Revenue (MOR), I was assigned the Communication Lead to the Durham College Partnership (DCP) Pilot Project. The DCP was a CIO-lead initiative whose mandate was to establish engagement channel opportunities between local community educational facilities (ie: local colleges) and the OPS that supported cross-ministry and Ontario government objectives while providing a proactive solution to the aging OPS population and in particular – IT resource staff, as identified by HROntario. The pilot project with Durham College was wrapping up its first year and planned to seek a 1-year extension to further establish the program while it developed a solid framework that could be leveraged across the greater OPS.

ANALYSIS

Project documentation, research, survey results, benefits and achievements to date were gathered and set the foundation for the development of a new communication strategy that leveraged these accomplishments to date while enabling project expansion and growth for a subsequent year. The new plan would be developed and then pitched to the Stakeholders for approval. A Communication Plan framework was developed, listing all available communication tools, (staff/technical) resources and available communication channels/products, to be used as a baseline for developing the detailed Communication Strategy. Brainstorming and information sharing meetings with the project manager and IT management were held to clearly identifying target audiences, ideal communication products, hooks and tactics that crossed one or more audience groups. Proposed new communication channels (ie: video, podcast, social media) would be used to create a strong campaign that focused on the underlying benefits and offered targeted marketing strategies to student prospects, increased program awareness and employee engagement throughout the ministry, and aligned to the overall strategic objectives of the MOR, HROntario and The Office of the Premier.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The Strategic Communications Plan would take a strong branding approach. Using a standard Communication Plan Framework, the Communication Lead facilitated brainstorming sessions with the Project Manager to define target markets and refine the Communication strategy to meet the changing needs of all stakeholders and interest groups while it aligned to the overall corporate goals. A detailed Strategic Communication Plan evolved that included new and existing marketing tactics to: brand the program, promote benefits, inform and update stakeholders, enhance the program, and further engage both staff and the community. Proposed branding tactics included a tag line, web presence (consistent with MOR and OPS look & feel), social media engagement, and others. To gain buy-in and raise awareness for the student target market, the Comms Lead managed the development of a promotional video, produced in-house, that was co-written and featured the students themselves to lend authenticity and appeal to their peers.

The Communication Lead presented an outline and facilitated a story boarding exercise with the PM and students to define the script for the new promo video. The “Top 10 Reasons to Work in the OPS” video would be presented from the student’s perspective, to be used in stakeholder presentations, on

internal and external websites, college forums, job fairs, and social media platforms that target this genre – including YouTube. The topics included in the students top 10 list, derived from focus group analysis and student surveys would focus on: breaking stereotypes of working for government, promoting staff engagement and other factors identified by students that would appeal to them when seeking employment opportunities in IT. Once roles were defined and cast, the students were provided with an outline of the top 10 list they would use to write a simple, conversational script around. The intent behind having the students write the script was to gain their involvement and buy-in. As well, it was agreed that a video from the students' own perspective and in their words would better appeal to other students, one of the primary target markets. A subsequent meeting, lead by the Comms Lead was used to film the voice-overs and various B-role scenarios to be used throughout the video. The Communications Lead filmed the footage and then developed the video using available tools on hand.

Other clearly defined tactics included strategically using various existing and new communiqué (newsletters, email, memo, IT Express, website, intranet) to drive staff participation while aligning with the deliverables and milestones of the DCP project plan.

Role of the Senior Strategic Communication Lead included:

- Developing a Communication Plan Framework and subsequent Detailed Strategic Communication Plan that identified target audiences, key messages, timing of distribution, communication vehicles and channels, communiqué products, timelines for delivery, that was approved by the Project Manager and CIO and Stakeholders
- Leveraged existing communication channels, such as email, voice mail, meetings, newsletters and PowerPoint presentations to delivery key messages that increased staff participation
- Proposed new communication tactics including videos, podcasts, website, social media
- Leveraged existing communications channel, ie: on the Intranet to publish articles, complete with quotes, interviews and photos of both the work and the staff involved in the project and a full-page article in the client-facing quarterly newsletter.
- Produced communiqué – newsletters, web announcements, blogs, video, and more, using on-hand tools and technology
- Incorporated this strategy into the overall IS Strategy Communication Plan for the Central Agencies I&IT Cluster

RESULTS

- The Durham College Partnership Program successfully received funding for an additional year
- A full 1-year, detailed Strategic Communication Plan was developed that aligned with the program, corporate and OPS goals
- The student video was shown at various management meeting forums and at Showcase 2010
- Involvement with other MOR staff in producing the video heightened awareness of the program
- The OCCIO highly commended the video and requested that it be posted on YouTube for mass external exposure and promotion of the program
- The video was also accepted by Durham College to be featured on the school's intranet
- Staff engagement and recognition increased more than double after the newsletter article and call to action web articles