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GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION: A JOURNEY AND NOT A DESTINATION

It is indisputable that communication is a fundamental need of all citizens as it enables them to play an active role in improving their lives. For this reason, government communicates continuously with all its stakeholders and so the assertion that government communication is a journey, and not a destination.

Communicators are faced daily with a myriad of challenges and opportunities. Recognising that government communication is but a step in this journey of working with the public will assist communicators to empower and capacitate citizens through communicating important messages on the implementation of government's Programme of Action.

Each moment on this journey presents government communicators with an opportunity to change perceptions and ensure that the work of government remains a public activity. Continuous communication needs a comprehensive analysis of the situation and effective planning. Lack of planning can result in a seemingly never-ending circle where all communication efforts lead to nowhere and put government on the back foot rather than being proactive, educative and empowering and informing its intended recipients. To ensure that government communication is able to successfully complete this journey, the process requires comprehensive plans and strategies, which will result in effective, integrated and coordinated communication, ensuring that all levels of government speak with one voice. As this is a journey, government communication does not end with the formulation of plans and strategies, but is the beginning of a long process that needs comprehensive implementation to succeed.

Government communication is designed to bring together a range of skills and expertise to communicate government policies and programmes and to effectively deal with the challenges faced by government communicators. The various insights, expertise and knowledge will assist government communicators to address the challenge of understanding the complex environments in which governments operate (local and global). The assumption of the "right to know" among all stakeholders is creating ever-increasing demands for information from government and continuous engagement with the public.

Government communication should be effective and inspire change hence awareness is a necessary step. With a plan that ensures public awareness, government communication can ensure a new path that moves forward while paving the way for new experiences. It is through public awareness that government communication can continue to consciously evolve.

When a government communicator communicates on the implementation of government's programmes, past and present experiences in the environment will impact on the future outcomes of the communication efforts. The communication of new policies, programmes and initiatives into simple messages for easy access by the public remains a key factor.

Government needs to create and effectively use communication channels through which information can be shared transparently and efficiently. Modes of communication have gone through significant changes, bringing about an interlinked world.

However, technology is only an enabler and not the solution. Integration of the various new media and online tools for access to services and information are needed to engage with citizens. The development of technology is assisting in making it easier for communication messages to be shared with a wide range of audiences. The new socially informed generation also calls for two-way dialogue as governments are shifting their view of citizens as consumers, and allowing them to become contributors to the governance of the country.

The Government Communicators' Awards (GCA) will recognise those communicators who were able to use various communication elements and channels, and it will recognise and help share their good practices and case studies with other communicators. The GCA provides winners with the recognition they deserve and gives communication professionals proof and validation that their work is outstanding and highly regarded by their peers.

The GCA provides an equal chance of winning to all entrants regardless of the level of occupation or size of the department/municipality and budget. The GCA honours those entries whose ability to communicate puts them among the best in the field.



government
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