

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1.Preface	2
2.Introduction	4
3.Government communication in context	5
3.1 The national communication environment	5
3.2 The media environment	5
4.The Government communicators' toolkit	7
4.1 Government communication as a coordinated function	7
4.2 National government communication strategy	9
4.3 Generic framework for developing a communication strategy - a process in outline	9
4.4 Politics and a government communicator	12
4.5 Understanding government policy	14
4.6 Government communication and environmental scanning	15
4.7 Development communication	16
4.8 Marketing and Advertising	20
4.9 Managing the corporate identity of government	26
4.10 Campaign management	28
4.11 Media liaison and management	29
5. New Media and Information and Communication Technology	33
6.Addendum	34
<u>Addendum one</u>	
6.1 Generic Key Performance Areas for the Heads of Communication	34
<u>Addendum two</u>	
6.2 <i>Imbizo</i> Manual	36
<u>Addendum three</u>	
6.3 Addresses and media contacts	49

"INCREASING THE CAPACITY OF THE STATE TO MEET ITS OBLIGATIONS
TO THE CITIZENS;READY TO SERVE"



PREFACE

The new political dispensation has posed many great challenges and opportunities to both the government communication system and government communicators. The democratic breakthrough of 1994 signalled government's commitment to society; a commitment to create space for every member of society to participate in building our new democratic state, a state whose basis is the respect of human rights and human development.

It is this paradigm that compels a government communicator to view communication as a strategic element of service delivery. Because this challenge is new to all of us, it is a critical period of great learning, a challenging period.

One of the core decisions taken by Cabinet in September 2000, is that "a handbook on Government Communication will be published by the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) to entrench the new ethos and approach". This Government Communicators' Handbook is designed to assist government communicators to locate themselves in the overall government communication system in a rapidly changing working environment.

In a sense, this Handbook seeks to provide the government communicator with simple guidelines and reference tools around government communications. These guidelines include amongst others, government communication strategy, media liaison and management, campaign management, development communication, understanding of government policy, marketing and advertising, and managing the corporate identity of government.

The last three years have witnessed the dawn of many positive changes with respect to providing a professional, effective and efficient government communication service. The establishment of the GCIS has ushered in a new approach to shape the integration, coordination and improvement of government communications.

This includes among others, promoting policies and mechanisms which encourage diversity of the media; communication and information resource management; professional, effective and creative communication service; broadcast production, content development and production; distribution channels; and media placement.

Strategy and planning remain key elements for effective, integrated and coordinated government communications. The capacity to communicate with one voice is manifested in such practices as pre-Cabinet meetings, Government Communicators Forum, Media Liaison Officers Forum, Communication Clusters, post-Cabinet briefings and joint communication around programmes and campaigns undertaken collectively by some Ministries.

However, there is still a number of challenges lying ahead for government communicators and the country at large. As stated earlier, the central challenge is to infuse an appreciation of government communication as a strategic element of service delivery. Related to this is the challenge to grapple with managing public perceptions. Essentially, citizens who experience government's performance in all spheres of governance form their own perceptions about the implementation of government's programme of action.

It is within this context that government communication is based on the premise that access to development information enables people to become active and conscious participants in the complex process of social transformation.

Key among these is the commitment to intensify direct and unmediated communication with the public and professionalising all aspects of our operations with an emphasis on planning and implementation, sharpening media response mechanisms and nurturing the relationship between the media and government.

It is hoped that this Handbook will add value and further equip government communicators with requisite skills and knowledge to broadly locate themselves in the entire government communication system.

Mdu Lembede
Chief Director: Government and Media Liaison
GCIS

INTRODUCTION

This *Government Communicators' Handbook* seeks to provide government communicators in all spheres of government, with an overview of government communications environment, practical guidelines and quick references relevant to their work. It is also written with sufficient flexibility to be adapted as and when required to enable government communicators to be effective and innovative in their day-to-day work. Emphasis will be on accessible and succinct guidelines to provide the communicator with quick references, a one-stop-shop solution to challenges which transcend all government communication areas.

The Handbook covers the history, the paradigm and the political framework within which government communication in South Africa takes place. It also provides an overview of the communication structure and the role of the GCIS in coordinating government communication.

The government communicators' toolkit within the Handbook also, as its main objective, provides the communicator with simple practical guidelines relating to the challenges facing a government communicator generally, and a South African communicator in particular. The toolkit is followed by attached relevant documents significant to the work of a government communicator.

To help the communicator in a complete manner, the last section is a list of names and addresses of media companies. There is also a list of relevant websites providing quick information for communicators at work.

The Handbook contains guidelines for Communicators; it is not meant to be a formal expression of government policy on the matters under discussion.

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION IN CONTEXT

The current context of communication takes cue from the constitutional imperative of freedom of information founded on the objective to make a visible shift from the apartheid state to a truly democratic state. The free flow of information, open dialogue, openness and accountability, and media freedom are all fundamental tenets of a thriving democracy.

This compels government to ensure that it maintains a continued dialogue with the citizenry. It is this communication that guarantees an informed and appropriate response to people's needs in order to enable all South Africans to become active and conscious participants in the process of social transformation. It also ensures that government is sensitive to the needs of the people.

3.1 THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Government's Programme of Action for each year is outlined by the President in the State of the Nation Address and the Budget Speech by the Finance Minister. They both serve as agenda and tone setters for the Government's priorities that shape the content of government communication. These two developments essentially create communication opportunities and challenges to government communicators. Therefore, it becomes necessary for government communicators to regularly assess the communication environment and identify communication opportunities that may need to be exploited in order to communicate a coherent and cohesive message to the public.

South Africa has a government of the people, founded on democratic principles, and with democratic majority rule entrenched in all spheres.

There is a general optimistic national mood, with a marked acknowledgement of the democratic gains of the country's

transition. While the registered changes are irreversible, this mood exists alongside the view that there is also a sense that the historic fault-lines in our society still persist. This mood provides communication with a solid foundation, an enabling space for development communication to thrive and an exciting time and challenge for every government communicator.

The Government's Annual Programme of Action, with its purposeful character, creates a sense of a decisive shift and presents a range of challenges for government communication in that it demands government communicators to have a firm grasp of government policies and priorities which, essentially, inform the allocation of resources. This includes an objective analysis and understanding of research, media reports and commentary around the quality, pace and comprehensiveness of service delivery which shape people's attitudes and perceptions about government's commitment to improving their lives.

3.2. THE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

It is critical for a government communicator to understand that no political environment is static. For this reason, it is important for every communicator to assess the social, economic and political environment periodically. The function of government communication in the current political dispensation is founded on principles mentioned earlier, and operates within this constitutional and political framework.

While this framework remains a conducive environment for democratic consolidation, ownership and control of the media remain issues which need special attention. These are central challenges that the Media Diversity and Development Agency (MDDA) will address in terms of creating an enabling environment for a multiplicity of voices and diversity of opinions to

flourish. So, while government communicators' function or must function within this paradigm, transformation of the newsrooms may not happen at a pace consistent with this democratic paradigm.

The year 1994 was the beginning of irreversible steps in ensuring media freedom. While, generally, the media agenda has been in some respects consistent with the positive national mood, it has tended to be more narrowly negative and heavily weighted towards an oppositional perspective. To a greater extent, this has been a manifestation of a mindset rather than judgement based on concrete issues.

In the event where the relationship between government and the media has been strained at times, this has never resulted from any act or intent on the part of government to silence the media. Nor has it ever led to action or threat to revoke the constitutional obligation to media freedom and the general right to information.

Both the South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) and South African government acknowledge that there is a skills shortage on both sides. It is common cause that there has been a juniorisation of the newsrooms. It is within this context that efforts by SANEF, Forum for Black Journalists and some media houses aimed at improving the level and standard of journalism should be encouraged, promoted and appreciated. This would, in the main, enable journalists to inform and educate citizens to take active part in the process of consolidating our young democracy. The information needs of the citizenry, include amongst others, matters regarding their freedoms and responsibilities, access to opportunities, resources and services and how they can take part in improving their lives for the better. Media forms a critical part of platforms for such communication, and government values the role of the media in this regard. Generally, there is a positive climate in the country for such developmental communication to take place. Furthermore, the government pursues its service to the people

with a firm belief that communication itself is a site of delivery, a constitutional obligation and a fundamental component of the Government's political mandate.

4 THE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATORS' TOOLKIT

The toolkit is meant to share with government communicators mechanisms of dealing with different functions expected of any communicator working for government. It will outline the policy positions relating to the work of a government communicator as well as provide guidance on how to approach certain functions.

4.1 GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AS A COORDINATED FUNCTION

The Communication Task Team (COMTASK) that was set up by Cabinet in 1995 to investigate and make recommendations about government communication revealed as part of its findings that "government lacks central coordination of messaging and adequate planning of information campaigns".

As a result of COMTASK findings and recommendations, government established the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS). The GCIS was thus established as a structure within which the framework of all government communication and information would be coordinated. The GCIS was given a mandate to introduce a system that is comprehensive, integrated, streamlined and structured for delivery.

Since its birth in May 1998, the GCIS has put in place systems to coordinate and plan the communication work of government. Among these is the Extranet, which serves as a calendar of events designed to enable government communicators to share their plans for public activities and programmes. This system enables communicators to take advantage of the opportunities created by other departments for bilateral work, to be more sensitive to the environment within which information is released and approaches taken and to be more proactive in setting the government agenda.

Additional to this is a series of forums for government communicators at national, provincial and local level designed to ensure collective planning and strategising around communication in government.

The Government Communicators Forum (GCF), which is convened quarterly by the GCIS, provides a platform for government communicators to plan and identify communication opportunities across all spheres and sectors of government through substantive discussions and joint planning to fulfil the Government's commitment to accelerate service delivery. The introduction of the GCF webpage (<http://www.gcis.gov.za/gcf>) assists government communicators to access minutes of previous GCFs, presentations and current information around government communication issues.

In addition, communication clusters have been established to provide a platform for government communicators to jointly plan and collectively implement government communication programmes. These communication clusters are designed in the same manner as Cabinet clusters and thereby allow for communication programmes to be developed on the basis of concrete plans that emanate from Cabinet.

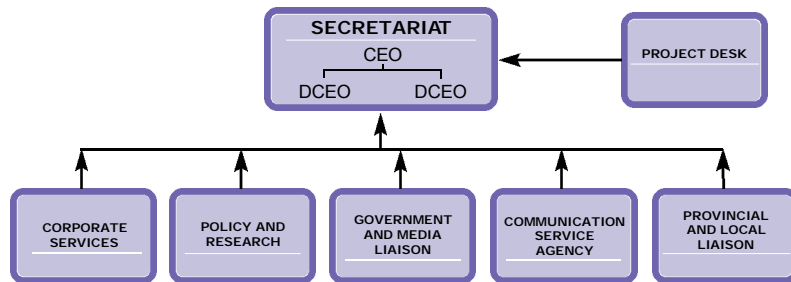
BuaNews Online is an electronic government publication targeting, especially, community media. It provides daily stories covering activities of government and other sectors of society to community media across the country. The Head of GCIS sits in Cabinet and conducts post-Cabinet briefings to communicate the decisions taken by government on a number of policy matters.

Accordingly, Communication Clusters, the GCF, *BuaNews Online*, post-Cabinet briefings and GCIS Media Briefing have

helped enhance government's approach to co-operative governance and have responded to the need for a coordinated process of realising messages and information of government.

These efforts have created a new consciousness and appreciation of communication as a strategic tool for service delivery.

The structure of the GCIS is as follows:

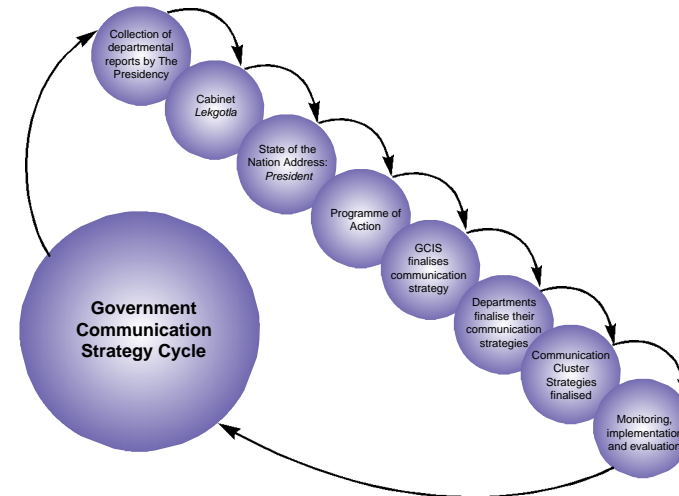


- Corporate Services is in charge of the human resource needs of the organisation – (012) 314 2402.
- Policy and Research is responsible for analysing the impact of government policy as well as research into the communication environment within which government operates. This section also facilitates research into the communication needs of other government departments on request – (012) 314 2176.
- Government and Media Liaison coordinates and facilitates the development, analysis and implementation of communication strategies; it manages and strengthens the relationship between government and the media; and convenes all the coordination forums aimed at promoting the integration of government communication – (012) 314 2108.
- The Communication Services Agency is responsible for content development and production of government

information products; coordinating bulk-buying of advertising and marketing space for government; and managing the video, photography and radio units of GCIS – (012) 314 2297.

- Provincial and Local Liaison is in charge of the coordination and facilitation of all development communication work towards the provision of government information and services for the empowerment and development of South African citizens. This section manages the Multi-Purpose Community Centres project of government and liaises with offices across the country – (012) 314 2426.
 - The GCIS Project Desk assist government departments with specific campaigns and events; it receives and processes communication projects/ campaigns requests by other government departments on behalf of the GCIS – (012) 314 2277.
- The government communication strategy

4.2 NATIONAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



(GCS) sets the framework for government communication each year. Taking serious account of their key programmes, departments are expected to follow this framework in determining their communication strategies and plans. The GCIS is mandated to monitor progress in the implementation of the government communication strategy. The Cabinet *Lekgotla* resolves on the broad programme and strategic priorities of government.

Towards the end of each financial year, departmental reports are assembled for the State of the Nation Address. The President announces the Government's Programme of Action in the State of the Nation Address at the beginning of each year. On the basis of this programme, the GCIS then finalises the GCS. At this point, the GCIS then presents to government communicators the government communication programme with the central government message which then guides the work of a government communicator for that particular year. Heads of Communication are, therefore, expected to submit, to the GCIS, departmental communication strategies and programmes that are developed in line with the overall Government strategy within two weeks of Cabinet approval of the strategy.

4.3 GENERIC FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY - A PROCESS IN OUTLINE

Why strategise for communication?

A thousand voices speaking without a common message and single purpose will in the end just make an indistinct noise that few will hear.

We must, therefore, speak with shared purpose and clarity of message. Our actions must be informed by an understanding of the environment we are working in, of who we are trying to reach, what they are thinking and how they are best reached.

In other words, we must strategise for communication, translating our ideas into a concrete programme of action that promotes our objectives.

The strategising process:

There are many ways of approaching this challenge. What follows is a process that has emerged out of the GCIS' own experience in strategising for communication. It is formulated in nine steps. But this is not

a mechanical process that yields automatic results. It needs hard work and lots of thought.

These steps are the elements of developing strategy for communication and implementing it. Each step is of critical importance, and interlinked. But there is a logical order. We need, early on, to give critical attention to two things or our work will be undermined. Those two things are the objectives and messages.

Strategising is about how to achieve objectives. Individuals and organisations are all able to strategise. But if we are unclear about our objective or get it wrong then all the rest will be of little or no value. And the same goes if we have not correctly defined what we want to say i.e. what the message is.

The communication strategising process entails the following core elements: background, objectives, environment, communication challenges, messages and themes, messengers, audiences and channels, types of event, a phased communication programme, structures and processes and action plan.

• Background

Outlines what has led to the need for the communication strategy in order to ensure that we are conducting the right battle and engaging in the right terrain.

• Objectives

Clarifies intended outcomes. Broadly clarify why you are communicating and what you are trying to do. It may be to educate, reassure people, receive or provide feedback about a departmental or government programme, change perception, etc.

**• Environmental analysis/
Communication Environment**

This will define the terrain and environment in which you choose to communicate. It should deal with issues like the public mood, the media agenda, concerns and attitudes of varying

sectors and forces, potential for improving environment, etc.

It is critical to understand the environment before implementing the communication strategy. In fact, the exercise of scanning the environment contributes greatly to the kind of programme you end up developing for your department. Such a scan may require a number of areas that we may not clearly understand and needs further research.

• Communication Challenges

Having considered broad OBJECTIVES in the context of a defined ENVIRONMENT will lead you to identify specific communication CHALLENGES which have to be met successfully in order to achieve the objectives. Challenges could be developments which we must expect and take full advantage of, and obstacles which we need to overcome.

Once challenges are clarified, it will be possible to know exactly what it is we must communicate and how that should be done.

• Messages and Themes

It is critical to indicate the themes and concepts that are associated with the communication effort being undertaken. A distinction can be drawn between core themes and sub-themes.

Once this has been done effectively it will be possible to formulate a core message. It is important to avoid making a simple list of messages. Rather arrive at a core message and then important sub themes and messages.

When adopting a core message it is critical to integrate it with the Government core message for the year. For instance, recent key messages were *Unity in Action for Change* for 2001 and *A nation at work for a better life for all* in 2000. The government's core message is particularly important because it communicates the central message adopted by Cabinet in the national communication strategy.

Element/Tasks	Date	Responsibility	Remarks
Phase 1:			
Phase 2:			
Phase 3:			

An example of a table format to develop an action plan for a communication strategy.

**• Messengers, Audience and Channels,
Types of Event**

A campaign should always have its own voice. Who is to speak for it? To whom? This requires a detailed breakdown of the audiences it is aimed at. In what ways? Through which channels? Here we can distinguish between the person who will speak and play the lead role in communication and support messengers. This could be different adverts etc. This leads to the type of events that need to be planned or are already on the calendar but which can be used for the campaign.

• Phased Communication Programme

There are two parts here: phasing of a campaign and the broad outline of a communications programme.

Very rarely is there just one stage to a campaign. One may move, as in the case of Y2K, from a first phase of education and awareness to a second of mobilising for action to prepare for the millennium; and then a third one of reassurance that the country is prepared. Each phase has its different needs and challenges.

Then one can begin, and it may be no more than beginning, to map out a broad communication programme.

• Structures and Processes

Implementing the communication strategy requires consultation with various structures. It has to be well articulated who the partners in the programme are and what their role will be.

• Strategy document and action plan

A well-written Communication Strategy Document is a critical instrument for a good campaign.

The document will be the guide for all future action, the standard against which the success or failure of communication is measured and the most critical means for keeping the campaign on track. It is a communication tool in itself, helping principals and colleagues to understand what the issues are and how they will be managed in terms of communication. If a tender process is being considered, it should also act as a basis for a brief.

It needs to be clear and concise and well-written in a form that is easily understood and persuasive, not as a series of bullet-points but as a logical presentation of the thinking behind the strategising session, crisply articulating the core message and the themes.