

So What Else 2024 Strategic Communications Plan

Communications Strategy

So What Else Objectives

- Provide hunger relief across Baltimore, Montgomery County and DC through food recovery efforts.
- Provide quality after-school time programming across Baltimore, Montgomery County and DC.
- Hosting volunteer projects to better our community and engage our youth.

Target Audiences and Insights

- Donors
- Clients
- Funders
- Partners
- Volunteers
- Supporters

Key Messages

All So What Else messaging should be focused on highlighting our work, discussing our accomplishments, conveying operational information and updates, thanking our network, or calling our base to action (to volunteer, donate, attend an event, etc).

Key narratives:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yL74hm7BW1EbVXIqua9FsR-_C9G-t6TQ/edit?usp=sharing&oid=104190520817812432474&rtpof=true&sd=true

Branding Guidelines

So What Else content should be mission oriented, modern, sleek, minimalist, and professional. Graphics should be more abstract than realistic. Content should primarily stay within our color scheme, except for occasional outside accent colors. All pieces should include our logo, our name, and at least one way to contact and/or learn more. There should be no overtly violent, obscene, or derogatory graphics or references. Any images of graphics used should be relevant to the theme of the message (the call to action, the nature of the event, etc). To learn more or see examples, please see the documents below.

Brand Guidelines:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Gp02lqBgTrEZcLhr4VR0UkjpYQL0yfyW?usp=drive_link

Past content for reference:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DEzHAbIqZa4IYS-vnmPDCLwB7hp8yAgz?usp=drive_link

Available resources (Budget, staffing, etc)

Our communications department currently comprises the Director of Communications and any interns we are able to bring on board (none currently). Budget is limited while the organization sits at a budget deficit.

Key Performance Indicators

- Numbers on engagement, follows, profile visits, and link clicks on all platforms
- New volunteers, donors and in kind donors ****
- For emails: Click through rate and read through rate
- Unique volunteer sign-ups
- Unique individual donations

Communications Plan

Communications Objectives:

- Curate professional, organized, well-branded communications channels.
- Increase followership and subscribership across all communications channels.
- Increase engagement and interactions from supporters across all communications channels.
- Create a sustainable, effective posting schedules that capture audience attention while avoiding supporter burnout and fatigue.

- Effectively harness communications platforms to fundraise and find new donors.
- Effectively harness communications platforms to attract and engage new volunteers.
- Create streamlined, So What Else branded content that is professional, well done, and strategically advantageous.
- Develop and maintain written stories for multi-use purposes across the organization.
- Develop and maintain press relationships and routinely submit press releases for coverage.
- Better communicate with partners, donors, and volunteer groups to discern what platforms they are most active on to ensure our shoutouts reach peak efficacy.
- Increase the effectiveness of internal communications as it pertains to posting across the organization.
- Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of current communications strategies, and phase out techniques that do not serve to further our primary objectives.

Content Categories

- Social media
- Website
- Newsletter
- Press
- Other

Channel List

Social media:

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Tik Tok
- LinkedIn
- Youtube
- Baltimore Instagram
- Baltimore Facebook
- DC Instagram
- Stories

Website:

- Website tabs
- Blog
- Events calendar

Newsletter:

- So What Else newsletter
- Baltimore newsletter
- Volunteer newsletter

Press:

- Press releases

Other:

- Donor letters
- Impact Stories
- Strategic partner outreach calls
- Eventbrite
- Student board

***Channel Strategy (By Channel)**

Instagram (main, Baltimore and DC):

- Post no more than once every weekday (and occasionally once a day on weekends), targeting between 3-5 posts every week - this is to avoid oversaturation of content and play to the instagram algorithm.
- Post a variety of content, ensuring no two types of posts are posted back to back (no two distributions, no two youth programs, no back to back posts of flyers, etc) - see the content plan calendar for reference.
 - It's critical for diversity of posts, including a mix of graphics and pictures and reels, a mix of food distributions, youth programs and volunteers, and a mix of donor shoutouts, flyers, etc. - the goal is to ensure there is an even keel when new supporter view our page and no one area overpowers the content.
- 80 / 20: making it 80% social and 20% asks.
- Post multiple stories daily to help bridge gaps in only making one post a day; including links, questions, and other interactive elements in stories to boost engagement and play to the algorithm.
- Post more reels to help attract unique followers to our page.
- Create shared posts between all three instagrams to encourage followers to look at and interact with other So What Else pages (and also boost key posts).
- Interact with supporters, partners, donors, etc by tagging, posting thank you shoutouts, commenting, liking, and sharing their posts, and adding creating stories about them.
- Utilize hashtags to boost out posts and make us more recognizable to search engines.
- Ensure all posts and content are in line with our branding guidelines.
- Assert ourselves are a resource hub in order to attract new and returning clients to our page and help build community relationships (we have been successful at doing this in Baltimore by posting our weekly schedule).
- Check messages at least once a week.

Facebook (main and Baltimore):

- Post at least once every weekday (and occasionally once a day or more on weekends), targeting between 3-5 posts every week. Facebook encourages more posts rather than less so it's permissible to post twice or more in a day here.
- Post a variety of content, ensuring no two types of posts are posted back to back (no two distributions, no two youth programs, no back to back posts of flyers, etc) - see the content plan calendar for reference.
 - It's critical for diversity of posts, including a mix of graphics and pictures and reels, a mix of food distributions, youth programs and volunteers, and a mix of

donor shoutouts, flyers, etc. - the goal is to ensure there is an even keel when new supporter view our page and no one area overpowers the content.

- Post links to press coverage, blog posts, and other web pages as this site is more user friendly in sharing and accessing links.
- 80 / 20: making it 80% social and 20% asks.
- Post multiple stories daily for increased visibility.
- Post reels, however, be aware Facebook's algorithm doesn't necessarily boost reels in the same way as instagams.
- Share posts between both facebook accounts in order to boost engagement and traction on each page.
- Interact with supporters, partners, donors, etc by tagging, posting thank you shoutouts, commenting, liking, and sharing their posts, and adding creating stories about them.
- Ensure all posts and content are in line with our branding guidelines.
- Assert ourselves are a resource hub in order to attract new and returning clients to our page and help build community relationships (we have been successful at doing this in Baltimore by posting our weekly schedule).
- Create events on Facebook to market to even more individuals.
- Check messages at least once a week.

TikTok:

- Target is to post at least once every two weeks or less, depending on capacity and support from So What Else team.
- Create videos using trending tags, audio and filters to help boost posts.
- Create informative and funnier videos that highlight the broad range of operations we have at so what else.
- Videos should ideally be less than 1 minute 30 seconds to keep them transferable to reels.
- Tap into trending video ideas and topical current events.

Linkedin:

- Post 2-3 times every single week (with opportunities to post more depending on the availability of content).
- Content should be more professional and well thought out as opposed to the fun, creative content we post elsewhere.
- Emphasis on posting blog posts, press stories, and reposting staff and partner tagged content (which statistically performs better on linkedin).
- The *majority* of corporate volunteer and donor shoutouts should go here, as many businesses are far more active on their linkedins than on their instagram and facebook.
- The goal is to consistently build up the following on this page to make it easier to attract candidates when hiring.

Youtube:

- Target is to post long form content a few times a year depending on our ability to bring in videographers to produce content.

- Post a gala video and end of the year video (in November and December respectively).
- Post more shorts using the TikToks / reels we create elsewhere.

Stories (across all instagrams and facebook):

- Post multiple times a day throughout the day.
- Use interactive features such as questions, links, taps and more to ensure engagement and priority in the algorithm.
- Create interchangeable templates for creating stories fast.
- Host staff takeover days to encourage staff to contribute to stories and encourage staff to have their friends follow and watch us.
- Mention partners, volunteers and donors to encourage them to share our stories on their page.
- Use gifs and other fun elements to make stories eye catching.
- Repost community resources and events to further assert ourselves as a resource hub.
- Post schedule updates and cancellations as they happen.
- Have designated staff accountable for posting stories on the ground (Megan, Justin, Valeria, etc).

Website Tabs:

- Conduct yearly website audit to ensure our website is organized, professional, visually stunning, and rich with information and that each tab is reflective of the overall mission of So What Else.
- Ensure via check-ins that website information is up to date and accurate.
- Create a photo gallery tab.
- Create FAQ tab for SEO optimization.
- Rename old page links and photos to better improve SEO performance.
- Invest in SEO training to continue improving webpage performance.
- Add a DC Food Program tab under the Food Support tab.
- Keep maps updated and user friendly to ensure visitors can easily find the resources they need.
- Analyze website accessibility and update as needed.
- Remove page “islands” and broken links left behind from past website manager.
- Implement Elementor or comparable plug-in to improve site design and accessibility for So What Else staff.

Website Blog:

- Target is to make 1-2 posts a month, with hopes of increasing this to 2-3 if staff cooperate.
- Compile and edit impact stories to have at the ready for blog posts.
- Have staff write op-ed and research articles for our blog (this will take a bit of work and planning and probably require us to delegate this to folks).
- Ensure blog has photos and is visually alluring.
- Feature and link blog posts in newsletters and on Linked-in to give articles better visibility.

- Use blog to better optimize the SEO capabilities of the website as a whole.

Website Events Calendar:

- Post all So What Else events, not just publicly open ones, to give us better exposure and shed light on our work.
- Link eventbrite RSVPs through listed events to encourage RSVPs for applicable events.

So What Else Newsletter:

- Post one newsletter bi-weekly, with a mix of narrative stories, calls to action, and upcoming events.
- Create a posting timeline to ensure regularity of emails moving forward, in order to create consistency and continuity - proposal is Fridays at 2:00pm.
- Create cut offs for newsletter inclusions, no more than 48 hours before a newsletter must be sent.
- Allow at least 48 hours for post production editing by other staff members to take place before newsletter is sent.
- Have at least 3 but no more than 5 feature stories.

Baltimore Newsletter:

- Post one newsletter a month, with a mix of narrative stories, calls to action, and upcoming events that highlight what is on the horizon for Baltimore each month.
- Create a posting timeline to ensure regularity of emails moving forward, in order to create consistency and continuity - proposal is Fridays at 2:00pm.
- Create cut offs for newsletter inclusions, no more than 48 hours before a newsletter must be sent.
- Allow at least 48 hours for post production editing by other staff members to take place before newsletter is sent.
- Have at least 3 but no more than 5 feature stories.

Volunteer Newsletter:

- Post at least once a month or more to keep volunteers engaged in our work.
- Highlight new volunteer opportunities, donation drives, fundraising opportunities, and upcoming events in letters.
- Communicate any updates or answer recurring questions in this space.

Press Releases:

- Work on building press contact sheet and relationships to have at the ready when press releases must go out.
- Work on creating and sending an average of one release a month to ensure we stay in the public eye (doesn't have to be exclusive to news channels, we can also work to get on podcasts, newspapers, magazines and blogs).

Donor Letters:

- Create and draft donor letters at the discretion of the development team.

Impact Stories:

- Use check-ins to brainstorm impact story ideas and encourage directors to create that content.
- Create an average of one a week (4 a month) with an emphasis on regional and programmatically diverse topics.

Strategic Partner Outreach Calls:

- Use outreach sheets and partner contact sheets to put out calls for events, pick-ups, volunteer needs, flier circulation, and more.
- Calls should be separate from calls we put out on social media.
- Directors should identify what calls make sense for us to send via this method.

Eventbrite:

- Begin posting all big events via eventbrite to ensure better visibility.
- Link eventbrite in website events calendar events and in social media posts using short links.

Student Board:

- Use student board to help get out strategic asks and communications.
- Focus on one big push a month to ensure students are not overwhelmed and can focus on effective engagement.
- Host one in person element a month to ensure connectedness to our mission.

Content Formats

- Graphics
- Photos and videos
- Written pieces
- Written social media posts
- Written email newsletters
- Landing pages

Constraints and Challenges

- Limited budget for expanding and growing communications space.
 - Limited staffing to dedicate to the communications space as a result of a smaller budget.
- A lot of content and limited channels: must be vigilant of support fatigue and over saturation of content on channels.
 - Difficulty balancing the posting needs for all areas, departments and stakeholders with so few channels.
 - Must prioritize donors and funders in spite of what will perform best online.
- Lack of deference and proactive communication from other directors leading to double work and conflicting messaging and content priorities.

- Budget deficit: puts additional pressure on content returning tangible results.
- We lack public awareness of our organization, putting a steep pressure on our communications to bridge that gap and get us recognition.

Point person / Chain of Command

The Director of Communications, Tori Nefflen, is the current point of contact for all communications at So What Else. All communications projects should be run past her prior to making external commitments or publishing / posting a piece. Tori reserves the right on final say for communications projects, except for specific requests made by the Executive Director, Board, or a high-calue funder, at which time her decision can be overridden. In the instance she is unavailable, content should be run past Ricardo Claros, Metrics Director, for approval.

Content Management Plan

Editorial themes for 2024

- Take a stand and bridge the gap - Call to action and fundraising push using social media and email marking (December 2023 - March 2024).
- Get involved in the So What Else mission - Call to past and prospective volunteers to get involved in the So What Else mission, highlighting new volunteer opportunities and critical volunteer needs on social media and in email newsletters (February - Mary 2024).
- Support the So What Else Gala - Push on social media and in email marketing for supporters and partners to purchase tickets to the gala (September - November 2024)
- Large Holiday Giveback - Learning from last years pitfalls, this year we will host one large, 2-month-long holiday campaign to socilicit in-kind donations, fundraise, and urge the community to volunteer during out extended holiday hours. This will including newsletter marketing, social media graphics, calls to high-impact donor list, push for board member involvement, and calls on VolunteerHub (November 2024 - January 2025).

Content Plan Calendar

The social media content queue is hosted on buffer.com. To view the So What Else or Baltimore Chapter Buffer accounts, please see the “passwords document” for login credentials.

Email newsletter queue:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1AkqIMfAczue7GmN20vjR00R4xRciBIJG-tBrjNmfDvg/e/dit?usp=sharing>

Project Ideas for 2024

- Hosting lives on Tik Tok of the Saturday food giveaways.
- Creating more “trendy” and silly Tik Toks to boost engagement.
- Posting more reels on Instagram, irrespective of if we posted a Tik Tok or not (even an unedited video will perform better than a picture, let’s leverage that to our advantage)
- Creating a peer to peer social media bingo board for staff to individually fundraise (and win a prize for the most fundraised).
- Uploading more shorts to Youtube.
- Making weekly newsletters to be posted at the same time each week.
- Having staff write think pieces for blog posts to be posted on our website and LinkedIn.
- Engaging the press more and highlighting Baltimore and DC in the news cycle.
- Making distributions and volunteer opportunities their own events on Facebook.
- Engage with partners more on social media (host joint campaigns / tag each other more / etc).

Content Archive

All current content can be found here (or search for folder “4. Content” in the shared drive):

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/127_CnXzEniePatJVVz4YaUXM3rGIPOz7?usp=drive_link

For content prior to 2020 you will most likely have to dig in the archives here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-0d-gPzQGdFw8UbH91hVh6yjPUBP4ghl?usp=drive_link

For all current and past graphics content: <https://www.canva.com/>

For photos and videos specifically:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1q4sxc0ln5pPLqAG8dur05CniYjgtET_x?usp=drive_link

For written pieces specifically:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1N0R0Y9qHAc4jD7vp9CT2DDYFavmDEj0C?usp=drive_link