



AJC-AJJ
ASSOCIATION OF JUSTICE COUNSEL
ASSOCIATION DES JURISTES DE JUSTICE

AJC COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2014-2016

Approved by the
Governing Council

June 19

2014

A strategy for the AJC's internal and external communications.

Introduction

Communications play a critical role within the Association of Justice Counsel (AJC) and also with the broader public. In a fast-paced, 24-hour news cycle where coverage is live on the web and on social media in a matter of minutes, getting our voice heard is more important than ever

In an effort to improve both its internal and external communications, and with the goal of raising its public profile, the AJC undertook a communications audit in 2011.

Being a relatively young organization (founded in 2006), the AJC proceeded with a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) which was followed by defined recommendations.

Amongst the key findings of the communications audit were:

- In terms of communications, the AJC is making real progress. It has developed key vehicles, undertaken outreach activities and is establishing the in-house expertise to implement a strategic communications plan.
- The Weaknesses and Threats identified by the analysis revolve around the fact that the significant potential of Board members to be the organization's champions and key communicators has not been used to its full potential. Another difficulty is the lack of clear roles and responsibilities among all of the players in the communications process (the Board, the Executive, the AJC staff and the Communications Committee). There is an opportunity to define those roles and responsibilities so that communication initiatives provide optimal yield.
- During its first years of existence the AJC's communications approach and communications vehicles have focused on the nature of the organization, its structure, proposed projects and other internal matters.
- There is now an opportunity to strategically align the AJC communications towards a more outward focus. Seizing these opportunities at this juncture will help increase AJC's profile. It will make it more credible and more effective.

The audit also identified several common topics that emerged from the focus groups. These include:

- GC members want to know more about the future challenges the AJC will be facing (emerging issues). They want to know which issues they will be wrestling with in the years ahead.
- Inconsistency of communication from the employer was mentioned often as the reason for communication breakdowns. Also, too much information from too many different sources going to the same people is leading to more confusion than clarity.

- The AJC needs tools to be better equipped to answer questions from members and share this information with all members.
- Many policies now produced by the AJC are seen as very professional, but too many participants are unaware of many of them (outside of EC and GC). They don't reach AJC members because they are not necessarily associated to high profile topics on the website.
- Many focus group participants expressed strong beliefs that the AJC should continue to work to expand its communication programming.
- Many suggested that the AJC continue to explore ways in which it can continue to expand its technology-driven communication efforts. The introduction of interactive modules in the new Web site could provide significant opportunities to improve efficiency in that regard.
- Participants also urged the AJC to continue further developing the web site as an information source. Many participants clearly expressed beliefs that online and other technology-driven communication methods will continue to become more and more important in keeping members informed.

Information overload is commonplace for many LPs. At work, LPs are bombarded with information from internal and external sources. The AJC's Communications Committee may be able to help look at ways of reducing this burden. The AJC also needs to deal with the primary e-mail address to be used to reach members (at work or at home).

Staff including members of the Communications Committee reviewed the findings of the audit and concluded that there is very little to add with the exception of the very relevant discussions that took place during that the last GC Face-to-Face meeting in October 2013 regarding social media.

It is clear that the Governing Council heavily supports the need for interactive means of communicating within the AJC among the membership.

Following a staff and Communications Committee review of the prior SWOT analysis and having regard to the progress made since 2011, which is listed further below, the following SWOT results have been identified.

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<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordinated Voice ● Ability to think strategically ● Delivery of Timely and Relevant Information ● Regional Representation ● LPs Provide Essential Services ● 85% Registered Membership ● Recent ratified collective agreement considered a “win” 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stewardship Training ● Public is Not Familiar with Role of Public Service Lawyers ● Low Public Support for Unions, Public Service Employees and Lawyers ● Services Provided by LPs Viewed as Expensive while Value Provided is not Easily Quantifiable ● Limited Ability to Share Good News Stories because of Privacy Considerations ● New Union - Membership Engagement ● LPs are spread out across the country and work in multiple locations and time zones ● Internal Mechanics of the New Website
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public Awareness Campaigns (Show Work that Public Service Lawyers do) ● Strategic Alliances ● Membership Drive ● Contributions to Legislative Agenda ● Raise Profile of LAs and Improve Public Perception of Unions and Public Service Lawyers ● Show Value of Services Provided by LAs ● Show Value of services Provided by the AJC to its Members ● Improved Web Site Platform 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wage Control Legislations ● High Membership Expectations ● Lack of Confidence by Members in AJC’s Ability to Negotiate Satisfactory Collective Agreement ● Low Membership Morale – Involvement - Engagement ● Government Ideologically Focused – Doesn’t listen to Meritorious Opposing Positions ● Budget Deficit Pinned on Public Servants ● Law Practice Model (or equivalent replacement) ● Contracting Out of Legal Services ● Strategic Operating Review

Progress Since 2011

Since the development and approval of the AJC's first communications strategic plan in 2011, the AJC approved its first Strategic Plan in 2013 and met various objectives. More specifically, the AJC now has:

- A new logo and a consistent look and feel to all of its communications tools (website, communiques, blogs, etc.)
- A new and improved website with private membership only or Governing Council access
- A new email distribution mechanism via our website that allows for the AJC to deliver formatted messages directly to its members broadly, by region or by department
- Weekly press clippings distribution to registered members
- Social media presence via Facebook, Twitter (more than 1750 tweets and 261 followers on Twitter. 105 likes on Facebook)
- Blogs (Seven blogs posted so far. Over 3000 pages viewed and more than a thousand visitors)
- More FAQs on specific topics of interest to members (Collective Agreement, Conditions of Employment, Health and Safety, Workforce Adjustment, Classification and Job Descriptions and Leave Reconciliation)
- A means of providing frequent and timely updates provided to members on matters of interest (via email communiques and website postings)
- Town Halls at least once per year on a hot topic of interest to the membership
- Annual General Meetings open to Regular Members
- "I am the AJC" Video Campaign
- 85% membership registration following extensive membership recruitment efforts
- Input call surveys on bargaining priorities
- Greater public exposure as a result of greater Press coverage and its timely reactions to government action or inaction
- Greater exposure in government as a result of its attendance at House of Commons and Senate subcommittee hearings in the last couple of years
- Key messages in relation to what our members do have been developed and are incorporated in most of the AJC's public messaging
- A presence at the University of Ottawa's Law Day
- A voice in support of unionizing Legal Aid Ontario lawyers
- Public support from the NDP MPs including the Justice Critic on C-4, C-520 and other recently proposed legislation to which the AJC has serious objections

- A series of high profile policy grievances such as:
 - the one dealing with the right to reimbursement of all bar-related fees which have a direct impact on the level of support of AJC's newer lawyer members
 - leave reconciliation for DOJ and PPSC members which if successful, will result in several accolades and justification for ongoing unionization amongst existing members
 - the one dealing with agencies providing for a mixed range of percentages for LPs who receive a given performance rating.

Given the above, a review of the AJC's existing communications strategy originally approved in 2011 is warranted. For a summary overview of our progress since 2011 against the 2011 Communications Strategic Plan, please consult Appendix A to this report entitled "2014 Progress Report against the 2011 Communications Strategy".

Recommendations

The following recommendations for improvement are based on our review of AJC material and earlier input from focus groups (SWOT), feedback received from the Governing Council, including a list of government relations strategy recommendations made by Earncliffe in March 2013. As illustrated above, the AJC covers the organizational communication and operational information functions quite well.

AJC members can find an answer to a question primarily from searching the website, contacting GC members or the AJC Labour Relations Officers. There are however a number of areas that the AJC can improve or capitalize on.

Recommendations that can be implemented immediately are considered "low hanging fruit," with relatively little labor, few expenditures, or new technology required.

Recommendations for the Near-Term are those that require some planning and testing, but no new technology and limited expertise to implement.

Longer-term Initiatives are major efforts requiring significant planning, substantial know-how not currently available within the AJC, new technology, and/or funding. These initiatives will require some coordination with other activities of the association in order to implement without creating unmanageable workload issues for the staff.

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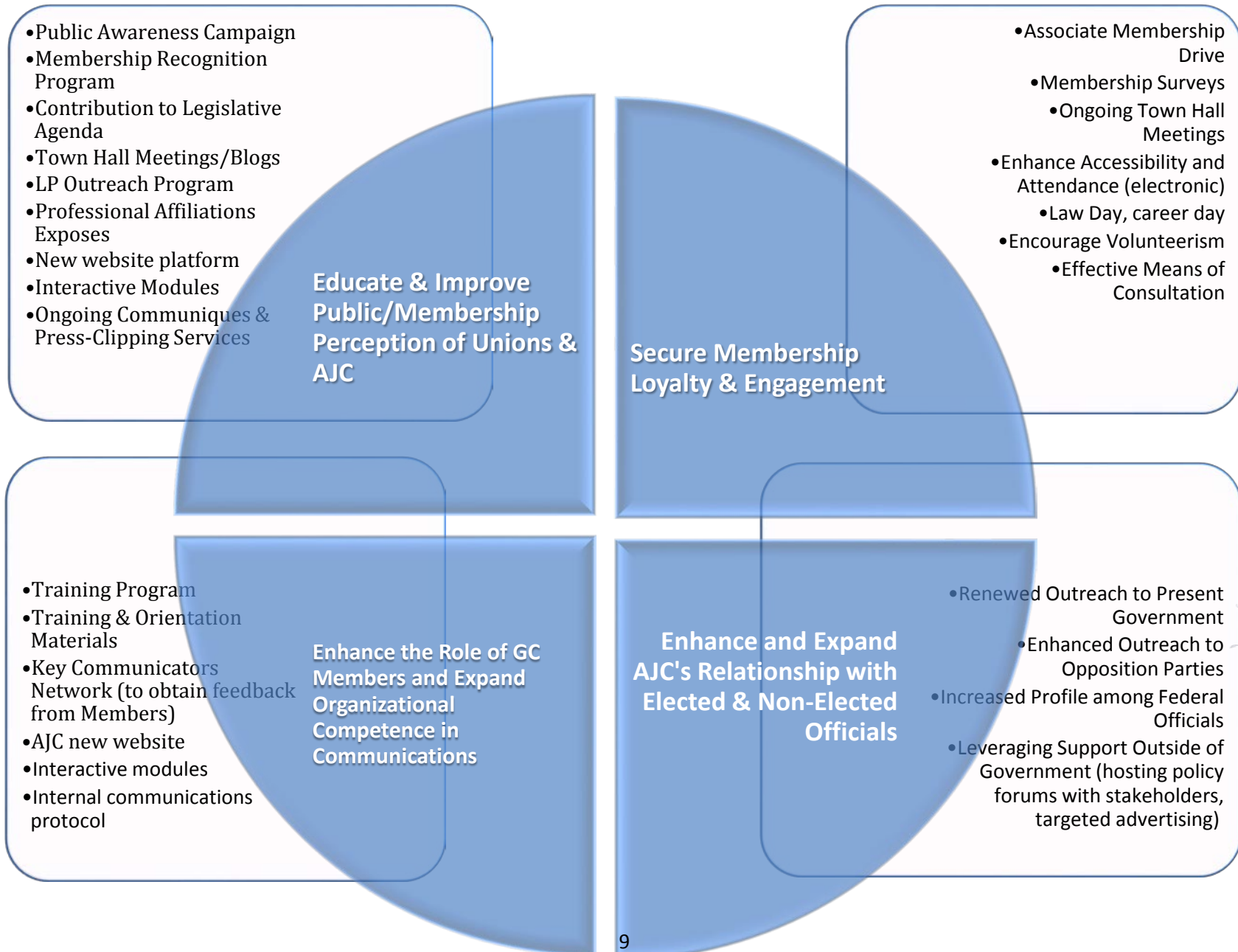
SWOT Cross-Link Tables		Short term	Medium term	Long term
How to use strength... to take advantage of opportunities... and tackle a threat with a communication program				
External Audiences (Public, Media, Government, etc.)				
LPs are providing an essential service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show the work that Public Service Lawyers do Demonstrate the value of services provided by LPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government is pinning Budget Deficit on Public Servants Farming out Legal Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Awareness Campaign Presence on social media 	
Ability to think strategically with a coordinated voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AJC can contribute to the legislative agenda Strategic Alliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage Control Legislation Strategic Operating Review, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letters to the Editor Presentations before Standing Committees Outreach to political class 	
Internal Audience (AJC Members)				
The AJC has the ability to provide timely information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising the profile of Las and improve public perception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low Membership Morale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AJC Membership Recognition Program 	
Satisfied members willing to share testimony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run an Associate Membership Drive Demonstrate AJC's Relevance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low membership Involvement – Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to Associate Membership Drive Provide electronic access to members (webcasting, teleconferencing, etc.) to allow them to participate more easily and more actively 	
Develop potential of region representatives (GC members)	Show the value of services provided by the AJC to its members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Membership Expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synchronize Town Hall meetings – sharing results 	

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How to use strength... to take advantage of opportunities... and tackle a threat with a communication program			
External Audiences (Public, Media, Government, etc.)			
The Public is not familiar with the Role of Public service Lawyers Negative perception of Las by the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current Government Ideologically Focused – not listening to meritorious opposing arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve Public’s Perception Develop Strategic Alliances with other Unions Capitalize on opportunities that help increase LA’s profile with the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Awareness Campaign Law Day participation Encourage volunteerism Renewed outreach to government
LP services are perceived as expensive but their value is not easily quantifiable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget deficit Pinned on Public Servants Farming out Legal services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise profile of Las Improve Public’s Perception Garner Public support for the work that Las do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Awareness Campaign Contribution to legislative agenda Increased profile among Federal officials Government relations
Internal Audience (AJC Members)			
Outdated orientation material for new AJC members Insufficient training for GC members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low Registered Membership Ratio Low level of involvement – engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Registered Membership Ratio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associate Membership Drive Membership surveys

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<p>New Union Lack of members involvement and engagement Satisfaction with Status quo, complacency Limited ability to share “Good News Stories” because of privacy issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Confidence in AJCs Ability to Negotiate Satisfactory Collective Agreement • AJC members unaware of the support provided by the AJC labour relation team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show the value of services Provided by the AJC to its Members • Capitalize on opportunities that help increase the Associations’ profile with its members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise positive results (Communique – Web Site, etc.) • Enhance accessibility and attendance (electronic)
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2014 PROGRESS REPORT RELATING TO THE 2011 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

