

LOTS Take Two, Sep 2020

Constructive Communications

Why, How?

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with additional thanks to all those who took part and contributed tips

Good communication is the glue which binds our Kingdom together, and each of its groups. This workshop explores the immense value of timely, friendly and effective communication in helping us all to prosper. It looks at different styles and techniques you can use for distinct targets - group members, the people you report to, the people who report to you, the wider public - and also how to vary your approach for different media.

We'll consider the significant benefits of getting it right and the costs of dropping the ball. You'll be pointed at many excellent resources already out there and take away techniques of engagement and presentation that will help with all your communication tasks.

Four pillars of excellent communications:

THAT!

(you communicate)

WHAT?

HOW?

REPEAT!

THAT! - #1 by a very long stretch

The biggest communication mistake people make?

- *NOT DOING IT AT ALL!*

All comms say: “I’m here and I care”

- They give permission, encouragement and modelling for further communication. They overcome shyness, uncertainty, fear of interrupting, peer-fear, ...

Directions:

- Out – to the populace
 - create engagement/belonging
- Across – to fellow officers
 - create understanding
- Up – to Crown/B&B, Incs, upline officers
 - create confidence
- Down – to deputies, helpers, dependent groups, all those who report to you
 - create all the above

The best comms create *conversations* – multi-way exchanges of ideas, problems, support, inspiration, encouragement, community.

Really, really do it.

Do it a lot!

WHAT?

Decide the main purpose and focus on it – but also remember most messages serve multiple goals.

Common purposes:

- Conveying information
- Seeking information
- Encouragement – personal support, or to induce action: “attend this cool event”
- Feedback

When conveying information, aim for completeness - e.g. don't forget event type, date, time, duration, location, price, how to book, *what it's for* – but avoid clutter.

Allow for relative newcomers - to the SCA, to your group - and especially watch like a hawk for assumed knowledge:

“Fighters Practice is on tomorrow.”

HOW?

Who is the audience? Are they like you? Do they even share the same location, time zone, income, mobility, social media, free time, main interests?

The best comms has:

- Timeliness
 - quick email responses (even “too busy just now”), websites up to date, job & event announcements early enough to think
- Positive tone
 - being friendly makes friends, enthusiasm is infectious
- Courtesy and kindness
 - allow for others’ bad hair days and don’t propagate your own
- Appeal
 - engaging to read – see anything written by Master Nicodemus!

- Accessibility

- font, layout, lack of jargon – especially for newcomers/media

Where will it appear - how many will see it? Can you or a helper spread it further?

Facebook: go where the audience is, but never, ever force *others* to go there to get timely info!

When done, read it as the reader would read it.

REPEAT!

The rule of seven – marketers believe someone needs to notice a new product or service seven times before acting to buy or use it.

If it's worth saying once, it's worth saying more than once. If necessary, in a different way.

Find ways to confirm it has been read, and understood - "Just checking you got this ok?"

Generate good reasons for follow-up:

- new information, such as extra classes
- new perspectives - "I heard/realised that..."
- feedback - "I wonder if others think..."
- introductions - "Lady ABC will be there and..."
- requests for assistance – "helpers sought for the wonderful xyz..."
- expansion – more detail on the entertainments

Be creative! And persistent.

TIPS

- don't bury the lede, i.e. key info first or at both ends of the message
- don't over-dilute or clutter the main message
- add personalisation/hook wherever possible
- tone really, really matters
- accessible: language, layout, location, font
- sell the benefits – put yourself in their shoes
- include call to action – book now, apply within!
- start very long messages with a summary
- design a website from the viewpoint of people using it, not just as an information dump
- on websites use standard fonts – they will autoscale for people with eyesight issues
- in documents use readable fonts, not medieval
- for online events, remember time zones!
- beware of jargon (“Regnum”) or abbreviations
- read up on Nudge Theory, apply with care

TIPS (cont'd)

- your overall aim should be clear, accurate, empathetic messages – cf: NZ's Covid comms
- Zoom/Discord etc – be prepared for a new way of handling questions – will they interrupt your flow? Will you miss them? If so, get a helper to monitor and raise them. For off-topic questions, consider allowing a bit of time at the very end.
- for slides, be sure to use big enough fonts
- break long sentences down, shorter is almost always better
- people who read to the very end of long messages or documents *love* finding easter eggs
- chocolate is a valid form of communication. It speaks for itself.
- did I mention “repeat?” You should repeat!

References and Resources

- media tips – see <https://sca.org.nz/media.php>
- providing constructive feedback, reducing issues – see *Helping Make Behaviour Better* on <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/resources>
- effective use of your group website – see *Luring Newcomers via your Group Website* on the page linked above
- Articles and resources on <https://hospitaller.lochac.sca.org>

Related sessions at LOTS Take Two:

Baron Sorle's *Streamlining Messaging Without Leaving Anyone Out*

Baroness Torfa's *Hospitallers in Lochac*

Baroness Anne's and Lady Madilayn's *Utilising Social Media in the SCA*

Comments, ideas, questions? I'd love to hear from you: bartholomew.baskin@gmail.com