

Strategic Communications Plan for Tribune Education

April 1997

Background information

In the fall of 1996, the Manager of Communications/Education visited Tribune Education business units to conduct interviews with CEO's/GM's and their senior management teams regarding communications issues. Strong communication exists within each individual business unit. There is excellent use of face-to-face and interpersonal communication within business units. There is strong interest in being aware of what is happening at other Tribune Education business units. People want to interact with their counterparts at sister business units but are hesitant to make such contacts directly.

Collectively, the senior management team possesses exceptionally strong knowledge of the education industry and publishing industry. Individuals at each business unit have extensive personal contacts and are active in many professional associations but there is no system in place at the group level to take advantage of this valuable pool of information.

There is strong interest in using Internet as a communications tool. Despite the strong interest, physical access to Internet, other than access to cc:Mail, is limited. Those managers who do have full Internet access have relatively limited knowledge of how to perform Internet research and/or monitor NewsGroups.

The senior management team relies heavily on trade press to keep track of the education and publishing industries. Yet, business unit usage of trade press and general media varies greatly. Some business units aggressively seek media coverage while other business units shun media coverage. Many managers see a role for a proactive trade press strategy for Tribune Education. Among typical comments were:

- "Before we were acquired, we played it close to the vest. Now it's time we took advantage of the trade press."
- "The merits outweigh the risks. The media are hungry for good stories."
- "If you want to be thought of as a group, you have to speak as a group."

It was clear that managers enjoy the open communication style that has characterized their respective business units. As the business units grow, people clearly want to retain the decentralized management and open communication styles to which they have become accustomed.

Target audiences

Successful communication begins with careful consideration of target audiences. The following target audiences are considered crucial to Tribune Education's communications efforts:

- Parents
- Teachers
- Administrators (e.g.- Superintendents, curriculum coordinators, purchasing agents)
- Boards of Education
- Employees (Tribune Education business units and other Tribune business units)
- Students (and adult learners)
- Investment community

Strategic initiatives

Tribune Education's communications plan is intended to accomplish five strategic initiatives. All of the communications recommendations contained in this plan are associated with one of the following strategic initiatives:

- Enhance business unit Sales & Marketing efforts
- Improve issues management procedures
- Enhance employee communication and morale
- Enhance the image of Tribune Education
- Support corporate relations activities that relate to Tribune Education and/or investor relations

Channels of communication

Tribune Education's communications plan will utilize a variety of written and inter-personal communication channels.

Media and written communication channels will include:

- Education trade press (e.g.- Education Week; American School Board Journal, Educational Leadership, etc.)
- Educational Publishing trade press (e.g.- Educational Marketer, Electronic Education Report, Subtext, etc.)
- Publishing trade press (e.g.- Publishers Weekly, AAP journal, etc.)
- Employee newsletters (e.g.- Tribune News, business unit employee publications, where applicable)
- Investor relations communications (e.g.- Annual Report, Quarterly Reports, etc.)
- Tribune-owned newspapers and broadcast operations (as appropriate)

Inter-personal communications channels will include:

- Attendance at professional meetings and seminars
- Participation in professional organizations
- Partnership activities involving business units and/or Tribune Education

Communication themes

It is important to establish parameters for what the Tribune Education "message" will be. All of the communication recommendations listed below will be framed around the following communication themes.

Tribune Education business units...

- offer balanced programs and products
- publish high quality and innovative curricula based on research and field testing
- value and respect the professionalism and hard work of teachers and administrators
- recognize and understand public concerns regarding the quality of education
- genuinely care about enhancing the quality of education
- believe that all students can learn
- understand the challenges presented by the diversity of today's classrooms
- are part of the one of the country's most respected media companies

Implementation Timeline

This communications plan would be phased-in over the course of three calendar years. Action plans are listed by implementation year. It is presumed that successful action plans would be continued from year to year so an action plan is listed only during the year in which it is to be implemented.

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1997 (Priority 1 of 10)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Enhance employee communication and morale.

ACTION PLAN: Annually, bring together the individuals who perform PR and/or internal communication functions at each business unit.

OBJECTIVE: Maximize the knowledge level and productivity of individuals performing business unit PR and internal communication functions by giving them an opportunity to periodically meet to compare notes and ideas.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Meeting evaluation forms; EVP, CEO/GM perception of the value of such meetings.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Prepare list of individuals performing PR functions.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 2	Schedule a meeting of these individuals.	TBA	TBA

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education
CEOs/GMs (or designee)

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1997 (Priority 2 of 10)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Enhance business unit Sales and Marketing efforts.

ACTION PLAN: Facilitate development by business units of targeted communications plans for California, Florida, Texas and selected individual districts.

OBJECTIVE: Provide proactive and targeted communications in key adoption states and districts.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Positive media coverage; Feedback from sales reps and field contacts; Feedback from EVP, CEOs/GMs.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Prepare master calendar of key adoption dates (for targeted states).	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 2	Meet with business unit CEO/GM (or designees) to identify state-by-state target audiences and communication priorities.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 3	Aggressively seek positive stories in the news media (will likely require use of outside PR counsel).	2 nd Q	Ongoing
Task 4	Forge strategic partnerships with statewide educational organizations.	2 nd Q	Ongoing

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education
 CEOs/GMs (or designees)
 Outside PR agency (if funding is available)

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1997 (Priority 3 of 10)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Enhance business unit Sales and Marketing efforts.

ACTION PLAN: Assist business units in enhancing coverage in professional journals read by teachers, administrators and school board members.

OBJECTIVE: Increased product exposure in the education trade press.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Quantity and nature of media coverage; Feedback from EVP, CEOs/GMs.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Prepare list of professional journals read by teachers, administrators and school board members.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 2	In consultation with CEOs/GMs (or designees), identify products with particular news value or in special need of media attention.	3 rd Q	Ongoing
Task 3	Target specific pitches to appropriate journals.	3 rd Q	Ongoing

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education
 Business unit marketing departments
 CEOs/GMs (or designees)
 Outside PR agency (if funding is available)

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1997 (Priority 4 of 10)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Enhance the image of Tribune Education.

ACTION PLAN: Publish a brochure about Tribune Education.

OBJECTIVE: Provide a written document suitable for distribution to a variety of internal and external audiences.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Feedback from EVP, CEOs/GMs; Reaction to brochure by recipients.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	In consultation with CEOs/GMs and Executive Vice President, establish goals for the brochure.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 2	Prepare copy.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 3	Provide copy to CEOs/GMs for review.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 4	Obtain suitable color photographs.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 5	Have design prepared by Chicago Tribune Design Service Center (or outside vendor).	2 nd Q	3 rd Q
Task 6	Contract for printing.	3 rd Q	3 rd Q

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1997 (Priority 5 of 10)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Improve issues management procedures.

ACTION PLAN: Establish procedures at each business unit for the handling of media calls.

OBJECTIVE: Provide consistency and timeliness in media relations responses.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Feedback from EVP, CEOs/GMs; increased accuracy of news articles.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	CEOs/GMs designate a media spokesperson at each business unit.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 2	Establish consistent guidelines for business unit handling of media calls.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 3	Provide media relations training for spokespersons.	3 rd Q	3 rd Q
Task 4	Develop procedures for business unit spokespersons to provide feedback to Manager of Communications/Education.	3 rd Q	3 rd Q

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education
CEOs/GMs (or designees)

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1997 (Priority 6 of 10)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Improve issues management procedures.

ACTION PLAN: At the business unit level, monitor Internet NewsGroups/Web sites and respond swiftly when products or company names are specifically mentioned.

OBJECTIVE: Provide timely response to on-line inquiries and/or criticisms.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Reduced frequency of unanswered mentions on Internet

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Compile list of appropriate NewsGroups and Web sites.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 2	CEOs/GMs designate an individual to be responsible for the monitoring.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 3	Provide training for the individuals who will do the monitoring.	2 nd Q	3 rd Q

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Director of Technology
 Manager of Communications/Education
 CEOs/GMs (or designees)

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1997 (Priority 7 of 10)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Enhance business unit Sales and Marketing efforts.

ACTION PLAN: Identify senior management’s involvement in the governance of education and publishing organizations of strategic importance to Tribune Education.

OBJECTIVE: Provide opportunities for face-to-face interaction between Tribune Education personnel and the leaders of key organizations.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Increased involvement by business unit personnel in professional organizations.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Prepare a list of professional organizations of strategic importance to Tribune Education.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 2	In consultation with CEOs, determine which individuals are already representing the business units in key organizations.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 3	In consultation with CEOs, assign appropriate individuals to key organizations which are not already covered.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 4	Work with identified contact persons to identify possible collaborative opportunities with selected professional organizations.	3 rd Q	Ongoing

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education
CEOs/GMs (or designees)

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1997 (Priority 8 of 10)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Enhance employee communication and morale.

ACTION PLAN: Increase coverage of Tribune Education and its business units in Tribune News.

OBJECTIVE: Use Tribune News as a vehicle to enhance employee awareness of the strategic importance of Tribune Education.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Increased quantity and quality of coverage in Tribune News of Tribune Education and its business units.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Work with CEOs/GMs to ensure that appropriate individuals are representing the business units on Tribune News Advisory Board.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 2	Schedule meeting between Tribune News editor and CEOs/GMs to establish personal contact (phone meetings for non-Chicago area CEOs/GMs).	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 3	Place "Tribune News story ideas" as periodic agenda item on CEO conference call.	2 nd Q	Ongoing
Task 4	Establish a database to track publication of Tribune News stories about education business units.	2 nd Q	Ongoing

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education
CEOs/GMs (or designees)

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1997 (Priority 9 of 10)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Improve issues management procedures

ACTION PLAN: Conduct periodic focus groups of parents, teachers and administrators regarding key education issues.

OBJECTIVE: Supplement the product-line focus groups conducted by individual business units by concentrating on “big picture” issues that affect all business units.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Feedback from EVP, CEOs/GMs; Perceived value of data.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Determine whether outside counsel is available to coordinate and conduct the focus groups.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 2	If outside counsel is not available, determine the feasibility and advisability of conducting focus groups.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 3	If focus groups are to be conducted, consult with CEO's/GM's concerning what issues are appropriate for Tribune Education sponsored focus groups.	2 nd Q	3 rd Q
Task 4	Conduct focus groups (assuming they are to be conducted).	TBD	TBD

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education
 CEOs/GMs (or designees)
 Outside agency (if funding is available)

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1997 (Priority 10 of 10)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Support corporate communications activities that relate to Tribune Education and/or investor relations.

ACTION PLAN: Provide communications support for major corporate relations activities.

OBJECTIVE: Ensure that the Tribune Education story is an integral part of Tribune's corporate communications effort.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Feedback from Vice President/Corporate Relations & Executive VP of Tribune Education.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Tribune Annual Report	1 st Q	2 nd Q
Task 2	Tribune Quarterly Reports	2 nd Q	4 th Q
Task 3	Tribune Annual Meeting	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 4	Tribune Management Forums	2 nd Q	Ongoing
Task 5	Special projects (e.g. Investor Conference, Tower lobby window project, Paine Webber, meetings with investment analysts)	Varies	Varies

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education
CEOs/GMs (or designees)

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1998 (Priority 1 of 5)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Enhance employee communication and morale.

ACTION PLAN: Create a specialized cc:Mail mailing list of all senior management at Tribune Education business units.

OBJECTIVE: Provide the infrastructure for timely and accurate distribution of information about Tribune Education.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Feedback from EVP, CEOs/GMs.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Consult with CEOs to determine which business unit personnel would be included in the mailing list.	1 st Q	1 st Q
Task 2	Create Tribune Education cc:Mail mailing list.	1 st Q	1 st Q

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education
 Director of Technology

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1998 (Priority 2 of 5)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Enhance employee communication and morale.

ACTION PLAN: Establish a "Manager's Memo," to be distributed periodically via cc:Mail to senior managers at Tribune Education business units.

OBJECTIVE: Provide a tool for timely and accurate delivery of information about Tribune Education.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Positive response from EVP, CEOs/GMs and from the results of the readership survey.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Based on input from CEOs/GMs and group staff, create and distribute first issue.	1 st Q	1 st Q
Task 2	Establish "Manager's Memo input" as standing agenda item on CEO conference call to solicit suggestions from CEOs for topics to be covered.	2 nd Q	Ongoing
Task 3	Following publication of several issues, conduct a readership survey.	3 rd Q	3 rd Q

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education
CEOs/GMs (or designee)

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1998 (Priority 3 of 5)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Enhance business unit Sales and Marketing efforts

ACTION PLAN: Establish and maintain a database of trade journals currently being utilized by business units.

OBJECTIVE: Improve media relations and publicity efforts through synergy and avoidance of duplication.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: EVP, CEO/GM and group staff feedback.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Determine which elements the database will cover (e.g. news releases, product reviews, story placements, advertising, key contacts, etc.)	1 st Q	1 st Q
Task 2	Prepare one-page questionnaire to solicit input from business unit personnel.	1 st Q	2 nd Q
Task 3	Construct the database based on questionnaire responses.	2 nd Q	3 rd Q
Task 4	Establish a process for periodic updating of database information.	3 rd Q	Ongoing

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1998 (Priority 4 of 5)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Enhance business unit Sales and Marketing efforts

ACTION PLAN: Establish and maintain a database of professional associations (both publishing organizations and education organizations) of strategic importance to Tribune Education business units.

OBJECTIVE: Enhance existing partnerships and explore possible new partnerships.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: EVP, CEO/GM and group staff feedback.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Determine which elements the database will cover (e.g. key contacts, senior management participation, exhibits, etc.)	1 st Q	1 st Q
Task 2	Prepare one-page questionnaire to solicit input from business unit personnel.	1 st Q	2 nd Q
Task 3	Enter initial information into database and circulate database reports to interested personnel.	2 nd Q	3 rd Q
Task 4	Establish a process for periodic updating of database information.	3 rd Q	Ongoing

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1998 (Priority 5 of 5)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Improve issues management procedures

ACTION PLAN: Explore creation of a Tribune Education Advisory Council composed of six to eight national leaders.

OBJECTIVE: Provide a forum for ongoing feedback and advice for Tribune Education.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Feedback from EVP, CEOs/GMs; Feedback from Advisory Council members.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	In consultation with CEOs/GMs, brainstorm the advantages and disadvantages of formation of an Advisory Council.	1 st Q	1 st Q
Task 2	If a decision is made to proceed with formation, develop guidelines for the scope and operation of the Council.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 3	Research possible members for the Council.	2 nd Q	3 rd Q
Task 4	Convene the first meeting of the Council.	TBD	TBD

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education
Executive Vice President, Tribune Education

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1999 (Priority 1 of 2)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Enhance the image of Tribune Education.

ACTION PLAN: Pursue speaking opportunities for CEO's, group staff and selected senior managers at business units. Provide training and support for identified speakers.

OBJECTIVE: Showcase the professionalism and quality of Tribune Education products and management personnel.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Feedback from EVP, CEOs/GMs; Feedback from speakers; Response from the organizations to whom we speak.

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	In consultation with CEOs/GMs, identify persons interested in and capable of public speaking.	1 st Q	1 st Q
Task 2	Provide training and support for identified speakers.	2 nd Q	2 nd Q
Task 3	Solicit speaking opportunities before appropriate education and publishing audiences.	3 rd Q	Ongoing

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education
CEOs/GMs (or designees)

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR: 1999 (Priority 2 of 2)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Enhance the image of Tribune Education.

ACTION PLAN: Explore sponsorship of “academic” contests that have high visibility to and credibility with parents, teachers and administrators.

OBJECTIVE: Create an identity for Tribune Education and business unit brand names among target audiences.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Feedback from EVP, CEOs/GMs

Tasks	Description	Start	Complete
Task 1	Research existing academic contests and the sponsors of such contests.	1 st Q	2 nd Q
Task 2	In consultation with CEOs/GMs, determine whether Tribune Education should associate itself with existing contests or explore new contests.	2 nd Q	3 rd Q

INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE: Manager of Communications/Education