Technology & Communication: Enhancing Volunteer Engagement

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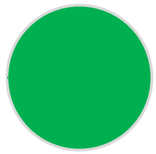
Presenters

Roseanna Galindo, CAVS, CCBA, blends three decades of teaching experience with 16 years in healthcare leadership. Certified in business analysis, she helps nonprofit and healthcare leaders to confidently harness data for meaningful impact. Through her blog on www.PeriscopeBPA.com, she bridges communication and data, championing the human experience in healthcare and the essential role of volunteer leaders. Roseanna is also the developer of the Volunteer Satisfaction Index (VSI) and the Executive Director of a nonprofit foundation.

Dana Litwin, CVA, is a globally recognized strategic advisor, speaker, and advocate for civic service. Since 2002 she has guided organizations nationwide to produce breakthrough volunteer and community engagement programs. Dana is the creator of the YouTube channel “Priceless Advice for Leaders of Volunteers”. She served as President of the Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement (AL!VE) and is a founder of the National Alliance for Volunteer Engagement. Learn more at danalitwinconsulting.com.

Target audience for today's webinar

SKILL LEVEL



Minimal Knowledge

Looking for some basic information, key principles and "how-to's" on the subject.

Working Knowledge

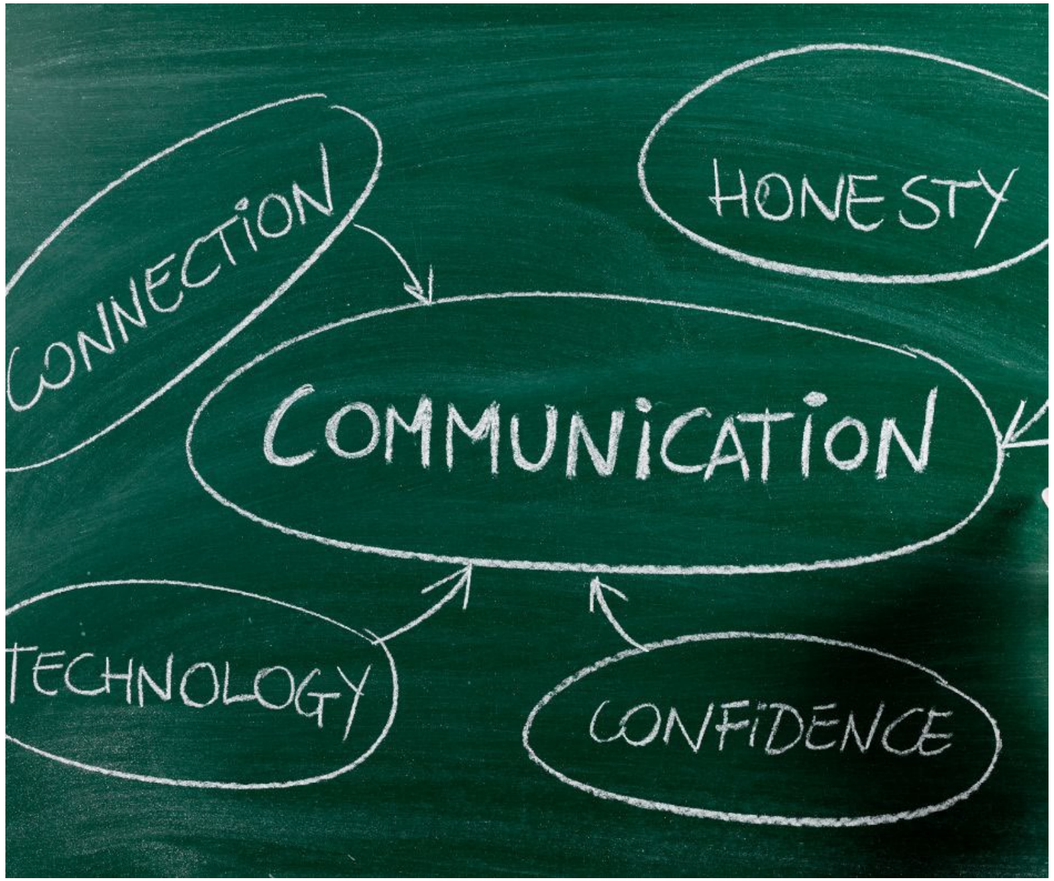
Integrated practices and moving beyond basic concepts. Looking for breadth and depth on a topic

Authoritative Knowledge

Looking for advanced knowledge, integration and concepts that are innovative and cutting edge.

Today’s Objectives

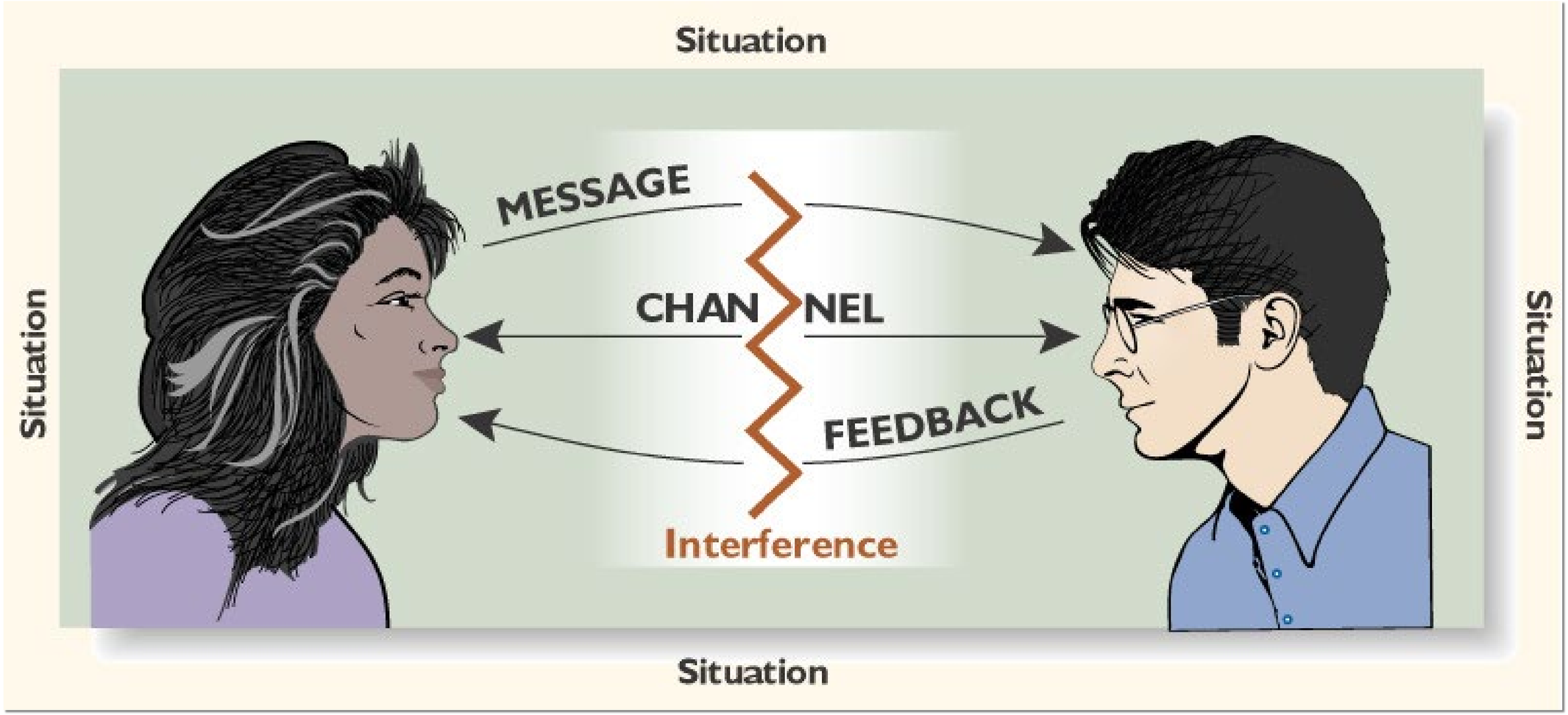
1. Understand that volunteer engagement is shaped by how, not just what, we communicate
2. Be familiar with how to use technology to amplify good communication
3. Select the most effective channel for clarity, connection, and action



What is Communication?

"Communication is a transactional process of sharing meaning with others."

Communication is a Process (not a Tool)



Audience-Centric Communication

- Effective communication starts with the purpose and audience, not the technology
- Key reminder for volunteer leaders:
  - Don’t confuse quantity with quality
  - Engagement depends on how messages land, not how they’re sent
  - Use data-driven feedback

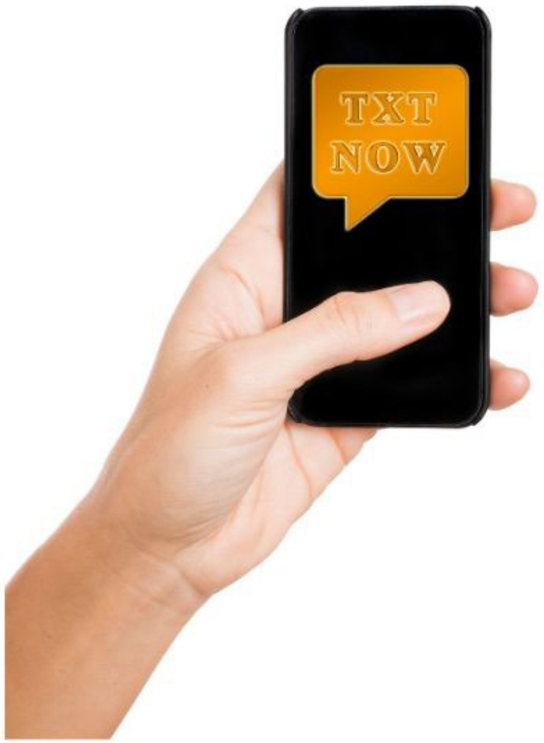
Why Channel Choice Matters

- Same message + different channel = different experience
- Channel affects:
  - Attention
  - Interpretation
  - Response
- This webinar focuses on technology-based channels only

A Communication Technology Decision Lens

- **Choosing the Right Channel**
  - ❖Urgency
  - ❖Complexity
  - ❖Emotional Weight
  - ❖Audience Size
- Reduces over- or under-communication
- Prevents “defaulting to email”
- Supports consistency across staff, teams, units, and volunteer leaders

Text



Channel Overview

- Best for immediacy and short messages
- High open rates, low tolerance for length

Text Through the Decision Lens

- Urgency: High
- Complexity: Low
- Emotional Weight: Low to moderate
- Audience Size: Individual or small groups

Appropriate Use Examples

- Shift reminders
- Last-minute changes
- Quick confirmations
- Short recognition (“Thank you for covering today!”)

Cautions

- Not for complex instructions
- Not for sensitive or corrective messages
- Risk of overuse = disengagement

Email

- **Channel Overview**
  - Most common default
  - Flexible but easy to overload
- **Email Through the Decision Lens**
  - Urgency: Low
  - Complexity: Moderate to high
  - Emotional Weight: Neutral to moderate
  - Audience Size: Any
- **Appropriate Use Examples**
  - Schedules and updates
  - Policy reminders
  - Training information
  - Follow-up documentation
- **Cautions**
  - Length reduces effectiveness
  - Important messages get buried
  - Often needs reinforcement via another channel

Kiosk (Volunteer Sign-In Tool)

- **Channel Overview**
  - A built in, often underused communication touchpoint
  - Captive moment of attention
- **Email Through the Decision Lens**
  - Urgency: Low to moderate
  - Complexity: Low
  - Emotional Weight: Positive or neutral
  - Audience Size: Broad, rotating audience
- **Appropriate Use Examples**
  - Recognition and milestones
  - Reminders (“Training due next week”)
  - Micro-messages tied to purpose or impact
  - Simple pulse questions
- **Strategic Insights**
  - Kiosks reinforce culture, not just attendance
  - Ideal for repetition and reinforcement

Phone Calls

- **Channel Overview**
  - Personal, direct, and time-sensitive
- **Email Through the Decision Lens**
  - Urgency: Moderate to high
  - Complexity: Moderate
  - Emotional Weight: High
  - Audience Size: One-on-one
- **Appropriate Use Examples**
  - Sensitive conversations
  - Performance or conduct issues
  - High-value volunteers
  - Situations requiring dialogue
- **Cautions**
  - Not scalable
  - Requires preparation and follow-up documentation

Mail (US Postal Service)

- **Channel Overview**
  - Slower but tangible and formal
- **Email Through the Decision Lens**
  - Urgency: Low
  - Complexity: Moderate
  - Emotional Weight: High or formal
  - Audience Size: Individual or targeted groups
- **Appropriate Use Examples**
  - Formal notices
  - Legal or compliance-related communication
  - Significant recognition or milestones
- **Strategic Note**
  - Physical mail signals importance and permanence
  - Often paired with another channel

Criteria	Text	Email	Kiosk	Phone Calls	Mail
Urgency	High	Low to moderate	Low to moderate	Moderate to high	Low
Complexity	Low	Moderate to high	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Emotional Weight	Low to moderate	Neutral to moderate	Positive or neutral	High	High or formal
Audience Size	Individual or small groups	Any	Broad, rotating audience	One-on-one	Individual or targeted groups
Appropriate Use Examples	• Shift reminders • Last-minute changes • Quick confirmations • Short recognition ("Thank you for covering today!")	• Schedules and updates • Policy reminders • Training information • Follow-up documentation	• Recognition and milestones • Reminders ("Training due next week") • Micro-messages tied to purpose or impact • Simple pulse questions	• Sensitive conversations • Performance or conduct issues • High-value volunteers • Situations requiring dialogue	• Formal notices • Legal or compliance-related communication • Significant recognition or milestones

Cross Communication & Reinforcement

One Message Isn’t Enough

- ❖Repetition ≠ annoyance
- ❖Repetition = reinforcement

Cross Channel Strategy

- Example: Email + kiosk reminder
- Example: Text alert + follow-up email
- Use different channels for different parts of the message

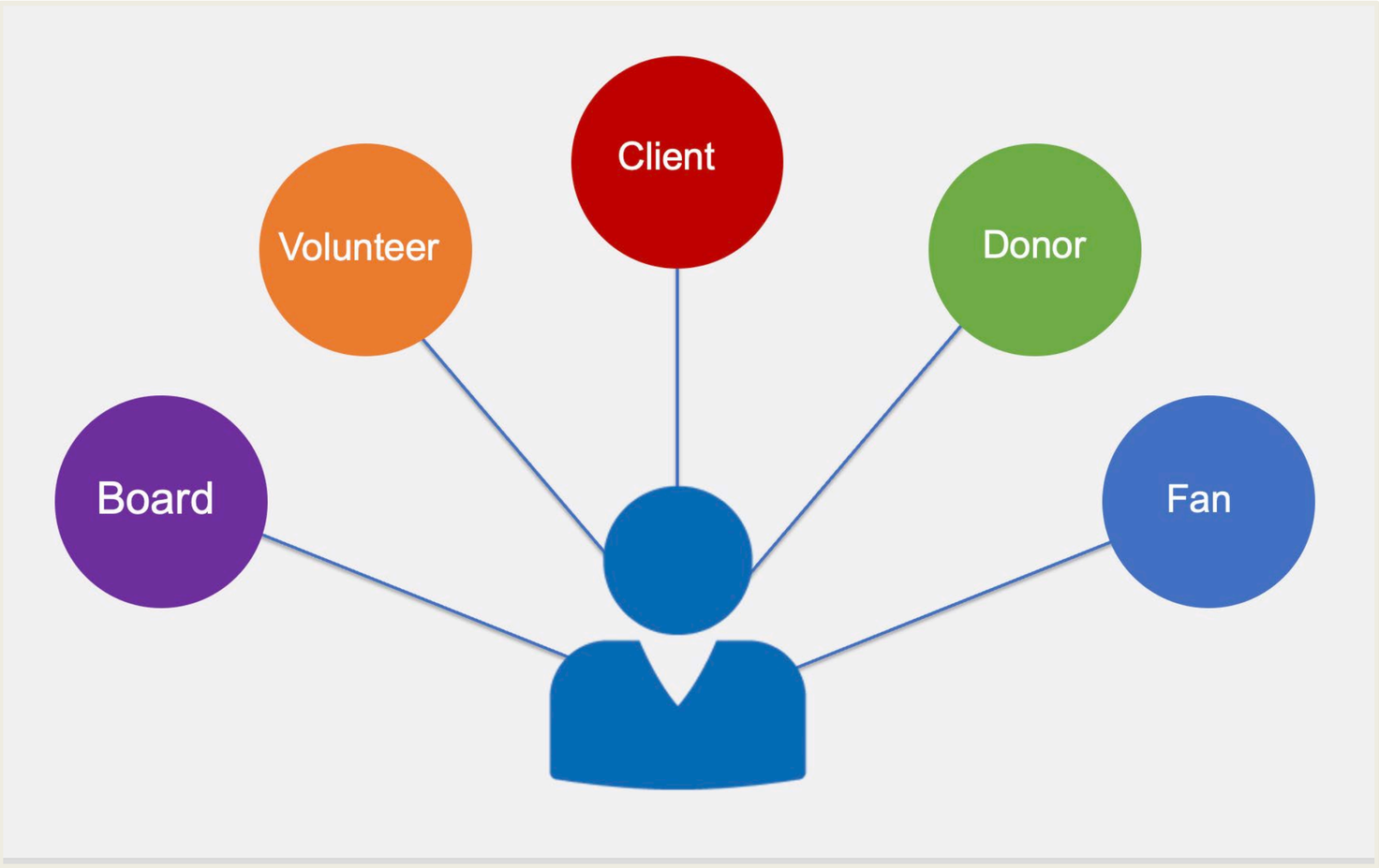
Ask Before Sending

- Technological tools work best when guided by intention.

- Ask before sending:
  - What is the goal of my message – what do I need the volunteer to know or do as a result of the message?
  - What channel best supports that goal?

- Additional factors to consider if communicating data

Balance High Tech & High Touch

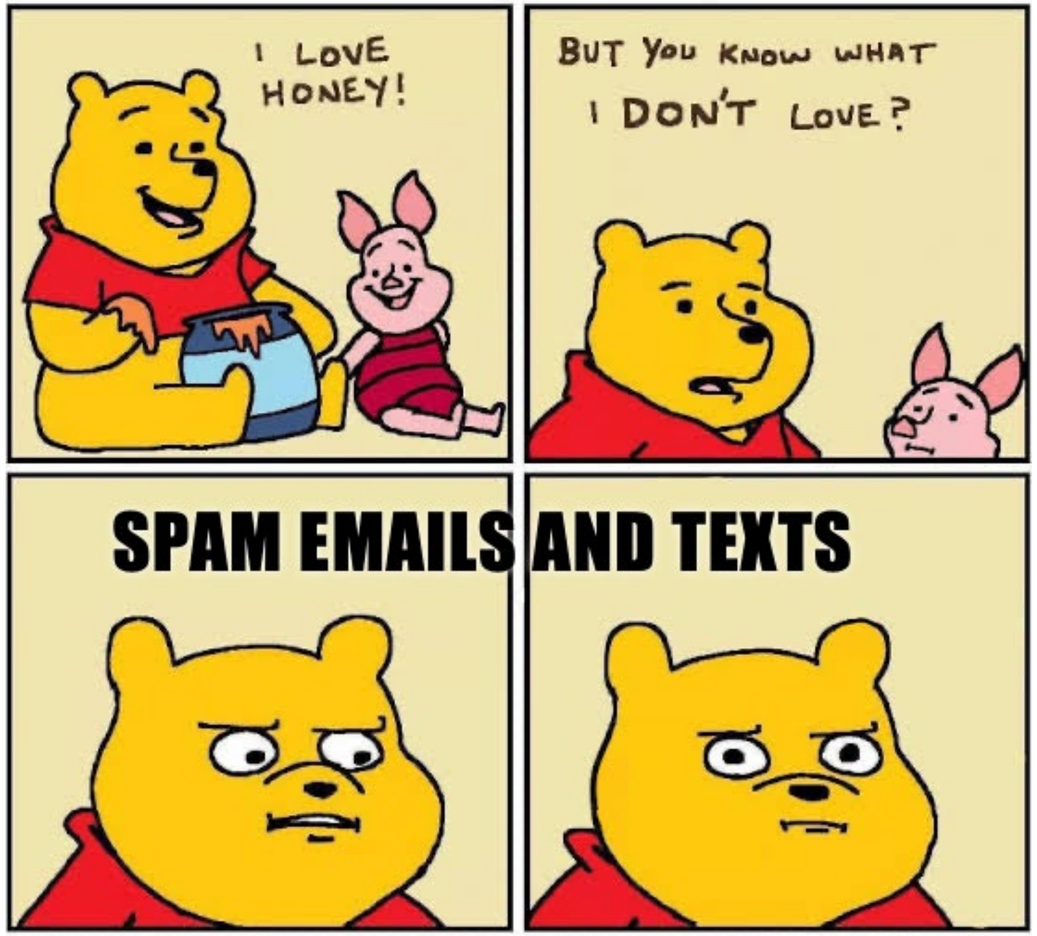


- Holistic view of volunteers; many roles at a time or during their time with your org.
- Use high tech to support high touch engagement, not replace it!
- Peer to peer support for technophobic folks and new tech.

“Sticky” Messaging: Just Do It!

- Sticky messages = Changing thought or behavior, a Call to Action.
- Understandable, memorable, effective.
- Short and sweet!
- SUCCESS: Simple, Unexpected, Concrete, Credible, Emotional, Stories, *Simple* (Repetition supports engagement).

Meet People Where They Are



- Over- vs under communicating; ask how volunteers prefer to be contacted.
- Repetition supports engagement, until it doesn’t. Options in/out for volunteer communications.
- Is it truly “Urgent”? If all messages are urgent, none of them are.
- Check-in in person if you think someone is not reading/getting your communications.

Key Takeaways

1. Volunteer engagement is shaped by how, not just what, we communicate
2. Technology doesn’t replace good communication—it amplifies it
3. The goal is clarity, connection, and action

Open Discussion & Questions

More Resources: Visit Roseanna's Blog!

More Resources: Visit Dana's "Priceless Advice"

https://youtu.be/HyYWxyd8QyE?si=Lgf54hgX6tJqvx5I

More Resources

Additional Articles:

- https://www.textrequest.com/insights/best-practices-healthcare-texting (not directly related but helpful advice)
- https://business.purdue.edu/marcom/resources/files/dsb-sms-best-practices-deck.pdf
- https://www.twilio.com/en-us/blog/insights/email-vs-sms-which-channel-should-you-choose

Thank you for joining us!

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