



Communications Plan: SoundWave 2021

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Disclaimer

This communications plan is written under the assumption that COVID-19 vaccines have been distributed to the general Albertan public. The authors of this plan acknowledge that there is a high probability that there will not be an event of this size in 2021 due to the aftermath of the current global pandemic. We base the entirety of this plan on the hypothetical scenario that restrictions have been lifted and large-scale events can resume in the general public.

Introduction

This plan will discuss, in-depth, the communications that we will be utilizing to ensure that the Spring 2021 SoundWave event will be a huge success. SoundWave is an event-based organization run by West Edmonton Mall but will be analyzed as its separate organization for the intents and purposes of this communications plan. We discuss our audience and their needs and then identify the purpose of this event. We then go on to analyze our event and organization through the use of a SWOT analysis and a PEST analysis. Following these analyses, we will review the goals and objectives surrounding Spring 2021 SoundWave. After that, we introduce our key audiences, key messages, and the strategic approach that we will be taking. We will then explain our tactics, budget, and timeline for the plan and finish it off with how we will evaluate the success of this campaign.

Needs Assessment

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a very well known model of the needs that we, as humans, possess. In doing our needs assessment of our key audiences for this communications plan, it became evident that we would not be meeting the bottom tiers of this hierarchy: physiological needs such as food, water, warmth, or rest (MacLeod, 2020). However, Maslow's second tier, safety needs, includes taking care of one's health (MacLeod, 2020).

In Otu, Charles, and Yaya's 2020 article, Mental health and psychosocial well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic, they state that, "In the wake of the massively volatile global situation created by COVID-19, it is vital to recognize that the trauma it causes can affect people in different ways... resulting in mental health challenges for many. While it is crucial to limit the spread of infections during an outbreak, previous experience suggests that mental and behavioural health interventions should be considered for public health response strategies."

We will be aiming to meet the primary needs by implementing this communications plan are mental health needs. We are providing an opportunity to not only socialize after almost a year of isolation that this pandemic has caused but also a chance to experience live music and dancing. These things give people a sense of belonging and community, and they allow people to be with people they love, doing things that they love, therefore boosting their overall mental health!

Identification of Purpose

Our Purpose: Provide a safe and enjoyable live music social event for the people within our community to celebrate the end of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As we have reiterated multiple times throughout this communications plan, health and safety have become a major, all-encompassing priority for us as an organization. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, sanitation and cleanliness are at the forefront of the general public's minds. They are critical to adhere to in planning and hosting an event. Although SoundWave has struggled with allegations of dirtiness in the past, we have adjusted not only our health, safety, and cleaning protocols and customs, but have also revised our communications in order to ensure that our audience is aware of these changes.

The purpose of SoundWave 2021 is to provide an opportunity for socialization, enjoyment of live music, and an opportunity to help meet mental health needs, all while still being conscious of immaculate cleanliness in order to protect the health and safety of our attendees.

SWOT Analysis

As we learned in class, the SWOT analysis helps us get a general idea of our event and the organization's internal and external considerations (Gauthier, 2018). According to Bell & Rochford (2016), the SWOT analysis is an excellent tool for students and managers to identify and allocate organizational resources appropriately, based on internal and external forces in the organizational environment.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Money.</i> With access to the West Edmonton Mall budget, money is a strength for the promoting, preparing, and hosting of SoundWave. Since it is a strong resource, we can allocate it widely yet responsibly. ● <i>Stories.</i> We can leverage stories from employees and previous SoundWave attendees. This can help with word-of-mouth and help establish a relationship with audiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>People.</i> We need to overcome the shortage of people working on the preparations, marketing, and development of SoundWave. We can do this by leveraging money and hiring more people for the teams. ● <i>Time.</i> While having too little time can be stressful, an overabundance of time increases the chance of our audiences losing interest or simply forgetting, especially since SoundWave has been

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Vehicles.</i> Access to social media like Facebook and Instagram, along with owned media and word-of-mouth, increases the likelihood that our messages will reach most of our intended audiences. 	<p>postponed twice in 2020. We can overcome this by planning ahead and adjusting our timeline as needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Internal Cohesion.</i> A lack of support from WEM and SoundWave employees could be detrimental to the event’s success. Ensuring employees feel comfortable enough for their concerns to be heard and addressed can help us overcome this weakness.
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technological.</i> The development and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine has significantly decreased the public health risk. • <i>Competitive.</i> Although other raves can be seen as competitors, SoundWave is unique because of its location: in a wave pool. We need to leverage stories and vehicles to capitalize on the uniqueness of our event. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Economic.</i> Our economy is still in recession, and unemployment rates are high, so we need to be mindful that our audience likely has less disposable income. One way to mitigate this threat is to be cautious and responsible with our own budget. We can listen to our audience for concerns about ticket, food & drink, and merch costs. • <i>Natural.</i> Although the COVID-19 vaccine

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>News media.</i> We can leverage our strengths in earned media to increase publicity via established connections to media outlets, and capitalize on publicity for SoundWave as an event. 	<p>significantly decreases public health risks, we still need to consider the threat of other illnesses, natural disasters, or even a third wave of COVID-19. The best way to mitigate this threat is to be prepared for the worst and be able to adapt to quickly changing situations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Social/Cultural.</i> There is a cultural stigma about the cleanliness of the wave pool during SoundWave. This is an especially relevant threat, given how cautious people will be about cleanliness as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We plan to leverage our money resource to cover the cost of draining and thoroughly cleaning the wave pool both before and after SoundWave.
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PEST Analysis

Though Bell & Rochford support the use of SWOT analysis, they also argue that, “with SWOT, part of the problem is that internal and external analyses are normally presented discretely rather than being integrated, which leads students to see the idea of integration as

alien,” (p. 313). Since Bell & Rochford point out that SWOT analyses can easily become simple checklists that remain theoretical or hypothetical, we use a second situational analysis in addition to the SWOT, to help turn theory into action. The PEST, or PESTLE, explores political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental forces that can become opportunities and threats to SoundWave. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us how quickly situations can change, and we want to remain a thriving organization that can quickly adapt to these liquid-modern times, as Conboy & Doyle (2020) suggest. We use the PEST analysis below to narrow down the political, economic, social, and technological forces that could affect the success of SoundWave, and explore suggestions to capitalize on or mitigate them.

Political	Economic	Social	Technological
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Government.</i> In recent times, we’ve seen just how quickly governmental legislation can change, resulting in businesses and organizations having to adapt quickly. This could either be an opportunity to capitalize on by proving Soundwave’s ability to adapt or a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Recession.</i> As mentioned above, the economic recession and unemployment rates affect people’s disposable income and incentive to spend it on entertainment. We can mitigate this threat by releasing tickets at various prices, including student discounts, tier levels, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Media.</i> As per the SWOT analysis, we can leverage <i>vehicles</i> through owned, earned, and social media. ● <i>Trends.</i> If we are aware of current trends, artists, and performers in pop and EDM cultures, we can capitalize on this force and hire the most popular talent within 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Vaccine.</i> The availability of the COVID-19 vaccine and lessened restrictions decreased public health risk. Our audiences will likely be more inclined to attend large, public events again. ● <i>Livestream, Video, Sound and Lighting.</i> We have access to video technology from WEM Inc. We can

<p>threat of closure and mass layoffs to mitigate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Employment laws and requirements:</i> Similar to <i>government</i>, we have to ensure we are in accordance with the regulations and requirements. ● <i>Food/drink laws:</i> Again, we need to ensure we are following food handling and serving permits and AGLC liquor licenses. Likely people will be more diligent about legalities as a result of the pandemic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Performer Rates.</i> While we want to hire the electronic dance music (EDM) industry’s top artists and performers, we must be diligent of our own budget. We can leverage our <i>money</i> resource to mitigate this threat, but only within our budget. ● <i>Utility Costs.</i> We anticipate the need to leverage quite a lot of our <i>money</i> resource for utility costs for cleaning the 12.5 million litre twice (West Edmonton Mall, n.d.). We also need to anticipate the electricity costs for running sound and lights to mitigate this threat 	<p>the budget.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Trauma.</i> People were affected by the pandemic and quarantine in different ways, especially for mental health (Otu, Charles, & Yaya, 2020). While this is neither an opportunity nor threat, it’s still important to consider. 	<p>leverage this resource to establish a good quality livestream feed for those attending Virtual SoundWave. We can capitalize on the opportunity to have the best possible sound and lighting equipment for the live show.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Internet.</i> Establishing a good internet connection is essential to a successful Virtual SoundWave. We can capitalize on this opportunity by leveraging the internet technology and signal boosters available to us.
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Goals and Objectives

Our goals establish the purpose of this communications plan. They are broad and represent SoundWave's priorities of this event: health and safety, entertainment, and of course, revenue. We plan on reaching these goals through the measurable objectives, which we can use at a later date to evaluate the success of SoundWave.

Goal 1: To host an event that follows health and safety guidelines for the purpose of safety and comfort.

Objectives:

- a) Decrease wave pool capacity limit by 15%
- b) Ensure employees know and adhere to AHS laws and guidelines
- c) Sell 7% of general sales as virtual tickets

Goal 2: To promote SoundWave in a way that encourages sales for the purpose of revenue.

Objectives:

- a) Increase student ticket sales by 8%
- b) Increase food, drink, and alcohol sales by 10%
- c) Increase merchandise sales by 7%

Goal 3: To help boost overall mental health in a positive way through music and entertainment.

Objectives:

- a) Increase mental health awareness-related Instagram content by 6%

- b) Increase shared posts relating to promoting mental health by 3% on all social media platforms
- c) Monitor social media activity for harmful/misleading comments or behaviour
- d) Monitor SoundWave for disruptive or aggressive behaviour or comments

Key Audiences

The engagement and participation of attendees are crucial to our event's success, as we rely heavily on ticket, food, drink, merchandise, and cabana sales for revenue. Therefore, we need to craft our entire communications plan with our key audiences in mind!

As Gauthier discussed in *Strategic Communication in Canada*, “Those whose behaviour we are trying to affect—the individuals and groups we want to move from awareness through to action and relationship—are logical publics for our campaign” (2018, p. 1). Moving our audiences along the public relations continuum (Awareness → Motivation → Instruction → Action → Habit/Relationship) from awareness to action and possibly habit/relationship is our main goal throughout this communications campaign (Gauthier, 2018, p. 24). Facilitating the move along this continuum for our audiences requires us to have an in-depth understanding of them. Gauthier’s BENCH analysis is a research-based method of assessing and getting to know our audiences. These analyses discuss the “five essential ingredients,” which are “biases, expectations, needs, codes, and habits” (Gauthier, 2018, p. 36).

With all this in mind, below we have laid out the main demographics that make up the key audiences of our campaign for the 2021 SoundWave event. These demographics are backed by support as well as a point form glimpse into a BENCH analysis of our key audiences.

1. 18-30 year olds

Support: We will be serving alcohol at this event, so it will be an 18+ event for legal purposes. Our events are also typically appealing to a younger crowd, hence capping this demographic at 30.

2. Music lovers

Support: As a live electronic dance music (EDM) event, we will be aiming to captivate an audience of people who love EDM and experiencing live music and dancing.

3. Extroverts

Support: This event provides an opportunity to get together with a lot of other people and socialize, therefore making this a perfect event for extroverted people.

4. College and university students

Support: We will be offering special deals and discounts for students to encourage their attendance at our event, therefore making them a key audience.

5. People who are excited to celebrate the end of isolation and lockdowns!

Support: Our event will be the first rave (live EDM event) following the Covid-19 pandemic and will consequently engage people who are excited to get out of the house after a year of isolation and lockdowns.

BENCH Analysis

Bias: The audiences above are sometimes biased against SoundWave because of the allegations of dirtiness that have arisen in the past.

Expectations: Our key audience will likely expect this event to be identical to events that happened pre-pandemic.

Needs: As discussed above, our key audiences need to take care of their mental health.

Codes: All of the above audiences use social media as a major code to interpret communications regularly.

Habits: After a year of living in a pandemic ridden world, many of our habits have changed; our audiences have created habits of social distancing, and simply staying home which will be a challenge that we will face.

Key Messages

Key messages are ideas that narrow down an organizations' targeted communication efforts and help produce a streamlined message that is direct to the general public. Crafting a proficient key message is no easy task, and is challenging for organizations of all sizes.

“Working with key messages is primarily about self advantaging communication where attention is drawn to the positive values and behaviours of the interest the practitioner represents” (James, 2011, pg. 9). As learned throughout the semester, we know that a proficient key message should consist of being concise, strategic, relevant, and compelling. “Well-crafted key messages have the power to cut through the environment to achieve specific outcomes and positively position organisations” (James, 2011, pg.1). As mentioned before, SoundWave has, unfortunately, had to reschedule two times as per the global health crisis. Because SoundWave already holds audiences that may be upset or angry with the changes, implementing messages that motivate the target audiences to come to the event while assuring health and occupational protocols are being followed is imperative. Ensuring that proper message support follows these key messages is critical in boosting the overall public appeal and regaining that lost trust with some of SoundWave's loyal client base.

With all of these valuable pieces of academic information in mind, the authors of this piece aimed to craft messages that reach different types of audiences and aim to navigate the

cluttered environment into which we are sending these messages. In the academic article *Ready, aim, fire: Key messages in public relations campaigns* written by Melanie James, she suggests that “all data suggest that award-winning practitioners work with the understanding that many messages from multiple sources are competing for attention” (James, 2011, pg.4). This is important to remember when crafting key messages for SoundWave due to the number of other events that could be held simultaneously. With the potential threat of competition in mind, we need to ask ourselves how our organization can make these messages new and exciting as communications professionals. Our ability to cut through the clutter is detrimental to the success of the campaign; the target audience is never going to hear it (James, 2011).

Below are the three key messages for this communications plan with all of this important information in mind. Like we learned in class, these key messages and their supports are contained within one page to be concise, with the directional aim to motivate our target audiences to buy tickets and attend the event at hand.

1. Has 2020 got you feeling down? Come celebrate the end of quarantine with live music, socialization, and more!

Message support: SoundWave 2021 is going to be the best party of the year with Steve Aoki headlining, tons of food, drinks and prizes to be won! Not feeling up to SoundWave live? Take the party home with our online livestream pass! This is going to be the most extravagant SoundWave yet!

2. With enhanced cleaning and safety protocols, there has never been a better time to come party at SoundWave!

Message support: SoundWave's top priority is always the health and safety of our guests, artists, and employees. The SoundWave and WEM Security Team works closely with EPS, The City of Edmonton and Alberta Health Services to ensure that all COVID-19 protocols are enforced, and are working hard to ensure that the event is as safe as possible for all parties attending.

3. Edmonton's biggest party of the year is back!

Message support: Come to SoundWave at West Edmonton Mall and kick off post quarantine with drinks, friends, fun, and music!

Strategic Approach

For strategic approach, we will be mainly using content marketing and social media marketing. Social media marketing will allow us the opportunity to push out information to our audience while engaging with them in a more personal manner. Content marketing will allow us to predict what our audiences will need to know and provide the information for them online!

We will be utilizing both push and pull tactics to target our key audiences and make our event a success; however, we will be relying more heavily on push tactics than pull. For pull tactics, we will, of course, have all SoundWave related information posted on both the SoundWave website and the West Edmonton Mall (WEM) website for our key audiences to access whenever they desire. One of our main push tactics will be social media posts across WEM and SoundWave platforms where we have very large audiences. We will also utilize our mailing lists to send out emails and e-newsletters to our audience with all of the information they will need regarding our event. The tactics section below will discuss these push and pull tactics in more detail.

Tactics, Timeline, and Budget

Ensurance of the effective implementation and integration of tactics is crucial to the success of this plan. With the number of changes that Soundwave has had to implement during the COVID-19 pandemic, tactics, timeline, and budget are integral to the event's success. This section of the plan aims to outline specific communications tools that we will use to help formulate and amplify the probable success of Soundwave 2021. It is essential to address what internal and external communication vehicles are available to Soundwave, considering what options are appropriate for the targeted audience group. Understanding the key differences between push and pull marketing tactics helps amplify the uses and importance of each tactic to pull in the general audience that Soundwave is trying to reach, which in return, creates more ticket sales to the event.

Because SoundWave is an event that will be happening at the tail-end of the COVID-19 global pandemic, it is important to look into how language is used in terms of the tactics. We need to frame our tactics to entice and influence the audience to come to SoundWave. We also need to consider language framing in the context of health promotion. In the academic article *Language and framing as determinants of the predominance of behavioural health promotion: an Australian view* by Denise Fry, they state that “the language used in health promotion warrants attention as it shapes how health promotion is understood, constraining or opening up possibilities for action” (Fry, 2020, pg. 1). We need to ensure that the general audience feels that their needs are addressed and that there is active transparency between them and the organization. This consideration is critical to making these proposed tactics more effective. "Message language helps to set a pattern in which informational and/or behavioural strategies are assumed to be the primary goal and extent of health promotion; rather than one component of a comprehensive, multi-strategic approach" (Fry, 2020, pg.1).

The proposed tactics in this communication plan are meant to boost the credibility of SoundWave and build back the lost trust that the organization has lost with loyal customers.

<p>Tactics:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Push Tactics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media release on the new measures that event staff are taking to make sure that the event is as safe as possible. - Increased promotion on social media through the implementation of partnerships with social media influencers. - Promotional content marketing bi-weekly on SoundWave platforms. Cross promote on other WEM platforms. - An updated FAQ newsletter that will be emailed out to patrons with monthly updates on the status of the event. The main goal is to keep patrons in the loop about public health and event updates. - Food and drink coupons mailed out to patrons who have decided to keep their and use their ticket from 2020 for the new event. - Radio/TV commercials roll out in Mid April, advertising the biggest party of the year. — Pull tactics
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch contest to win free tickets, drinks and a cabana for the event. Social media users will have to follow @soundwave_wem, @official_wem, and be subscribed to our monthly newsletter, which can be found on our website, and tag a friend in the comments to be entered in the contest.
<p>Budget:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Please note that even though these budget numbers are based on the 2019 SoundWave revenue numbers, the calculations have been made to accommodate and reflect the 15% decrease in in-person ticket sales. - Talent cost: Budget in around \$50,000.00 for general talent booking. Must also consider backstage costs such as food and alcohol for talent. Important to note that this cost is split with other sponsors such as Red Bull. - Marketing and Communications cost: This is free for SoundWave, as all marketing and communications is done by the West Edmonton Mall marketing team. Their salary and pay wage is not determined by SoundWave or is meant for the specific event. - WEM Staff cost: Budget around \$20,000.00 for West Edmonton Mall staffing costs. This includes: Lifeguards,

	<p>Security staff, WEM Promotional Marketing staff, Facility staff, and Food and Drink concession staff. Please note that the World Waterpark slides and other attractions are not open at this time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Material cost: Budget around \$25,000.00. This includes audio, lighting and staging. Live streaming can be done through FaceBook or Zoom, which WEM already has access to.- Set Up and Tear Down cost: Budget around \$5,000.00 to \$10,000.00. This includes staff, equipment and the amount of hours needed for the setup and clean up. Please note that the cost to drain and clean the pool is also factored into this estimate.- Revenue: Ticket prices for the event are as followed:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- VIP: \$110 CAD- Tier Two: \$79.90 CAD- Tier 3 \$89.95 CAD- Private Cabana (Seats 8) - Admission NOT Included:\$1,000.00 CAD- Large Cabana & Bottle Service (Seats 10) - Admission NOT Included: \$2,400.00 CAD- Expected Ticket revenue: \$50,000.00 to \$70,000.00 (number based on previous years).- Expected Cabana revenue: \$15,000.00 to \$20,000.00 (number based on previous years).
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expected food and drink revenue: \$30,000.00 to \$40,000.00 (number based on previous years).
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Timeline:

The general timeline for SoundWave is planned to be executed in correlation and collaboration with WEM Marketing staff.

November 2, 2020: Refund period ends. All tickets left are transferred to SoundWave 2021

- An email is sent out notifying patrons about this deadline.

January 20, 2021: Provide a general update on the event in relation to the current public health crisis.

- Send out an update email and post an update on all social media accounts.

February 20, 2021: Launch online (Pull tactic) social media contest to win free tickets, drinks and a cabana for the event.

February 20, 2021: Provide monthly FAQ email updating patrons on the status of the event in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Announce any other important updates.

March 13, 2021: Pull tactic contest ends, winner is drawn, announced on all SoundWave social media accounts and is contacted.

March 15, 2021: Begin promotional content marketing bi-weekly on SoundWave platforms. Cross-promote on other WEM platforms as needed.

March 20, 2021: Provide monthly FAQ email updating patrons on the status of the event in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Announce any other important updates.

April 20, 2021: Provide monthly FAQ email updating patrons on the status of the event in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Announce any other important updates.

May 10, 2021: Provide final update in a FAQ/general information, rules and regulations email to all attendees.

- Provide a final update on the SoundWave social media accounts.

May 12, 2021: Host a media release outlining the safety precautions that SoundWave is taking to make this event a success.

May 15, 2021: SoundWave 2021 is here!

Evaluation Methods

The most effective method to evaluate our communications plan's success is to evaluate the success of SoundWave as an event. We plan to assess the success of SoundWave in the following four ways: social media analytics, food and drink revenue, merchandise revenue, and attendance or turnout rate. Social media analytics reveal communication trends in our followers that can help us establish or reinforce our relationship with our target audience (Birim, 2016). We will be evaluating the numbers of likes and follows on both our Facebook and Instagram pages for both West Edmonton Mall and SoundWave. We will also be evaluating audience engagement with posts across the two platforms. Success based on our tactics and strategies will look like an increased following of 4%, and increased engagement with social media posts from both pages by 35% overall.

We will calculate the total revenues in merchandise, food and drink, and ticket sales for sales evaluation. We will break the numbers down by price for tickets (ie. Student, General, Tier

1, 2, 3, Virtual). To evaluate the success of our tactics, we will calculate the total number of redeemed food coupons. Finally, we will evaluate turnout rates by calculating total number of tickets sold compared to total number of tickets redeemed for admission.

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