

Creating better places.

MASTER COMMUNICATION PLAN





MASTER COMMUNICATION PLAN OUTLINE

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Purpose

Fairlawn is a full-service real estate firm, dedicated to creating better places through focused investment, strategic development, and proactive management. This communication plan helps outline various procedures, practices, and proofs to guide branded communications for cohesiveness effectively. This cohesion builds functional and relational trust, internally and externally, which helps you build a brilliant brand.

What is a Communications Plan?

A Communications Plan is a resource that explains the proven processes and practices that help your leadership, staff, and sales teams as a whole deliver information to their audiences whether it be in-person, through marketing communication in print or online, and overall to local communities. Any person should be able to read it and see that Fairlawn is a full-service real estate firm that creates better places. It does this through investment, development, and management.



There are many options to distribute and deliver information about Fairlawn programs, events, and happenings and there are both effective and ineffective ways to do it. An overall goal of the Plan is for internal teams to work together, following the same steps for consistency using the Fairlawn voice.

The Communications Plan aims to put in one place the better practices of messaging and branding associated with:

Programs and Events: - everything from extended themed programs to individual one-time events

Web-based Solutions: sharing information through the Fairlawn website

Email: company-related information including updates on events and programs, email blasts and surveys, and even good practices for individual personal emails from a Fairlawn staff/volunteer representative

Print: printed pieces that properly represent the Fairlawn brand and design

Social Media: steps to using social media platforms that are effective, appropriate and carry the brand voice

Marketing: guidelines for marketing and promotional materials promoting individual properties or the brand as a whole

Word of mouth: rules of thumb for representing Fairlawn in messages and conversation

The Communications Plan also contains valuable direction in building a communications strategy, including setting a goal, choosing a media, using Fairlawn processes, and determining measurement and follow-up.

Following the guidance of this Communications Plan will help any Fairlawn member understand, enact, and adopt good habits for many types of communication delivery.

Why Does Fairlawn Need a Communications Plan?

A strategically executed communications plan is especially helpful to those who receive Fairlawn communication and information. It reflects an effort of care, consideration, and even creativity that can be trustworthy and reassuring to the audience that the information is credible and uniquely Fairlawn.

The Fairlawn Communications Plan provides:

Clarity - Focused and structured thinking results in a well-crafted program or message. A sound strategy typically results in a message that is clearly understood in its main message such as a call to action. The Plan points towards a process that includes setting a goal, developing a message towards the goal and following up, or measuring the goal - all leading to clarity.



Consistency - The combination of following the Communications Plan and the [Digital Branding Style Guide](#) will provide consistency and cohesiveness across all communications. It is the overarching goal for all communications to clearly reflect the Fairlawn brand, core messaging, voice, and tone. Recipients of communications from Fairlawn should never be uncertain or confused about the source or the language used for each communication.

Accountability - To anyone who generates Fairlawn information, the Communications Plan places a priority on creating and delivering content and information of quality and value that reinforces the values and vision to create better places. The internal team does through each value by owning it, being flexible, being kind, and always improving.

Procedure

Information about programs, events and properties goes out consistently to the people who know, rent, or engage with Fairlawn. It also represents many occurrences of information impacting potential investors, tenants, and prospective staff members of Fairlawn.

The constant communications of Fairlawn should be seen as an opportunity to build functional and relational trust to all who receive it. That presents a responsibility to each department and team member and other representatives of Fairlawn to develop and deliver content and information that reflects the overarching vision and values. It also helps add responsibility by laying out proven procedures and practices for clear and consistent communication throughout all the efforts of Fairlawn.

When Should Someone Consult the Communications Plan?

The Communications Plan is helpful for any type of communication from an event or property launch to a single email. It provides helpful guidance regarding good practices for communications that successfully reach the intended audience. It also sheds light on habits that actually detract from the goal of the communications effort.

It is helpful to consult the Communications Plan at the onset of initiatives such as:

- Promotional materials & ad campaigns
- Event announcements
- Email blasts, surveys, and digital campaigns
- Social media campaigns
- New development/property updates and posts
- Investor communications
- Presentations and proposals



These are just a handful of the many ways departments and team members represent Fairlawn and why it is important to follow good communication practices to show a unified, cohesive brand.

Begin with the End in Mind: Establishing a Goal

The best place to start with a communications effort is at the end. Whether working as a team or an individual, make sure there is a commitment to or agreement on the end goal.

It is best to put down the goal in writing and be acknowledged by team members. Be as specific as possible when articulating the goal of the communication and if given time, set it aside for a day or two and then return to it to see if it still fits within the mission and purpose of your original motivation.

A goal can be spelled out in a specific sentence or in a bulleted copy and should be clearly outlined with the desired outcome. Use the box below to write out the goal for your communication.

There is value in assessing your goal against the guidelines for SMART goals.

A SMART goal is:

- *Specific* – target a specific area for improvement
- *Measurable* – quantify an indicator of progress and completion
- *Achievable* – specify who will do it
- *Relevant* – state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources
- *Time-bound* – specify when the result(s) can be achieved

This list helps specify the who, what, when, where, and how of the entire communications initiative.

Finally, it is vital to stay committed to the goal. A communications project or plan that starts out strong but then doesn't deliver all of its content or components until completion has a negative impact on the audience and is a bad reflection on the Fairlawn brand.



Development & Delivery Strategy

Now that the goal has been clearly expressed it is time to put together a strategy for the development and delivery. There are many options available to “get the word out” on announcements, events, property communication, and updates. It is important to remember that the Fairlawn team has different media tools available to help you with communications projects and plans. Also, always refer to the [Fairlawn Digital Style Guide](#) to confirm that the communications effort is aligned with the Fairlawn voice, tone, and brand.

With a clear vision moving ahead, the team or individual can work on building the content. There are several important steps to take upon executing a development and delivery strategy:

1. Exercise empathy and understand your audience as completely as possible. Use tools like audience identification and journey mapping to help.
2. Strive to create all content of excellence no matter how large or small the initiative.
3. Always take advantage of Fairlawn brand resources to make sure language and messaging are fully on-brand.
4. Before any type of communication, proof the content and any type of media assets (photos, videos, links, animations, etc.) for accuracy and appropriateness.
5. Always check the display of the media (web, print, social media, video) and confirm that it is correctly delivered. Technology, especially, does not always cooperate as designed.
6. Stay with the strategy from start to finish and make sure to include any follow-up with the audience as needed.



Choosing a Media

Because there are a multitude of options for communication, it can be difficult to choose which one is best suited for an objective or goal. Oftentimes it is a combination of media choices that is the most effective. Determining the media choice can be as simple as stating your objective and then weighing the strengths of options. Use the four-step process below to guide your thinking.

1. **State your goal:** _____
Examples: new leasing opportunities, open positions, share photos from an event
2. **Identify your audience(s):** _____
Examples: tenants, community, investors, all constituents
3. **Identify media content:** _____
Examples: announcements, photos, updates, graphics, messages
4. **Identify Date:** _____
5. **Choose communications options:**

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Website | For: new event, new property development |
| Print | For: student open leasing, promotion, announcements |
| Social Media | For: quick, short information, immediate content sharing (photos) |
| Email | For: announcements and updates, targeted group sharing |
| Word of mouth | For: more personal messages, smaller group circumstances |

What makes the most sense to deliver your important message or program? Depending on your communications goal, the type of content, your audience and even your budget, there may be a best choice.

Consider these pros and cons for different media:

Email -

Pros: good for a large group, scalable from one to many, ideal for a singular longer message
Cons: can get easily overlooked

Print -

Pros: not dependent on tech, physical and permanent
Cons: can be expensive, easily misplaced, harder to distribute quickly

Web -

Pros: quickly updateable, easy access to many, measurable, interactive
Cons: dependent on web access, potential poor user experience



Social Media -

Pros: immediate, invites interaction and response

Cons: lack of control, can limit audience connectivity

Messages/Presentations -

Pros: personal & emotional, face-to-face

Cons: tends to be one-way communication, not always recorded or measurable

Larger communications efforts may include a combination of several of the choices above. Ideally, all of these actions take place under the guidance of the Communications Plan.

Communication Channels Available

- Branding/Brand Guidelines
- Paid/Earned/Owned Media Buying and Placement
- Website/Email
- SEO/SEM Management
- Social Media Management
- Analytics Reports/Information
- Print and Digital Communications Materials

Metrics and Measurement

When laying out the strategy, it is important to ask the question, “What does success look like?” The initial strategy was launched with a strong core idea, working towards a common goal. It’s important to clearly define the finish line.

Technology allows for many different ways to measure communications depending on the media being used. If the following deliveries are used the impact can be measured by:

Email Platforms: number of “opens,” number of responses, or number of conversions (such as RSVPs, clicks, opens, etc.)

Website: visits, clicks, page views, conversions (ex: Google Analytics, Facebook Pixel).

Social media: number of followers, likes (or engagements), shares, ratings, etc..

Print: received response cards, number distributed/sent, specific landing page links to track print engagement.

Presentations: verbal comments, reactions, attendance



Paid Media: Paid media such as print or billboard advertising or PPC advertising and can be measured by impressions, click-throughs, and conversions. Measurements from digital platforms are more easily obtained. With print ads or billboards, usage of specific landing pages can help capture views or engagement.

Earned Media: Earned media consists of any mentions of your brand that are outside your owned channels. This will include a variety of sources, including news sites, forums, blogs, and social media. This can be measured by analytics, referring pages, etc. This can be harder to measure unless you are actively partnering with outside sources to promote Fairlawn.

Owned Media: Channels owned and managed by Fairlawn. Measuring owned media can be done in the analytics platform of the social network channel you are using or by using analytics tools that work with specific channels. Example, social media post impressions, engagements, clicks, sharing, etc.

As a communications strategy plays out over time, the metrics can be revised based on new information, a change in the audience, and unexpected responses. It is good to be flexible and ready to change direction if necessary.

Practices

Every type of media has proven practices that make them more effective. In many cases the audience has specific expectations about the medium and how it is going to work and respond. For instance, web design and display have particular standards and guidelines that should be followed or the users will get lost trying to find the information they want. Consult the best practices for different media below:

Websites:

Best Practices:

- Main message/call to action high on the home page
- Main navigation along the top of the screen
- Easy, intuitive interface that provides any information in just 2-3 clicks/taps
- Search tool for properties
- Social media icons in the footer
- Responsive design that works on tablet/smartphone/laptop



Email:

Best Practices:

- State your purpose clearly in the subject line
- Be clear and concise and brief as possible in your content
- Don't share your entire mailing list with every recipient - use an email platform
- Make sure all your recipient addresses are correct
- Avoid sending attachments, but link to content or pages on your website
- Use an email signature that includes your name and contact information, and Fairlawn branding
- Understand that emails can be forwarded so know that whatever you send can go to others outside of your mailing list

Social Media:

Best Practices:

- Develop a strategy. Social media needs consistent posting - sometimes daily. Plan a calendar.
- Use a platform that is widely used by your audience (Linked in, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
- Keep an eye on metrics (re-posts, likes, comments) to know if your posts are connecting.
- Encourage interaction and sharing amongst the group.
- Post when your audience is most likely online.
- Never use Fairlawn social media for anything other than company-related activities.

Print:

Best Practices:

- Follow the guidelines of the Fairlawn brand and voice.
- Don't overcrowd your layout with content.
- Proof everything! Printing and mailing costs can be very expensive.
- Never use copyrighted or trademarked photos, or other media assets without attribution.
- Design for your audience. QR codes for younger audiences, larger print for older audiences.
- Consider digital media options as a lower-cost alternative or utilize both for maximized communication and engagement.



Proof

Measure Your Communication Plan

After your communication plan has been executed, you can measure its success by seeing if the desired outcomes were met or achieved. We look at this by asking:

- Were the goals met?
- Was the message well received and understood?
- Was the call to action successful?
- Was the message delivered promptly?
- Were the metrics successful?
- What can we improve/change next time?

Follow Up

After the measurement above, depending on the communication or campaign, it may be time to continue follow-up or the next steps for this specific communication.

- Is a follow-up necessary?
- If necessary, what next steps need to be taken?

Conclusion:

Teams and individuals charged with delivering content and information about Fairlawn have the responsibility to:

- Know and understand their audience
- Know and understand Fairlawn's mission, vision, values, brand, and voice
- Know and understand applicable and appropriate guidelines and requirements for all types of communication media

Use this Communications Plan, the Digital Brand Guide, and other Fairlawn resources to strengthen any communications effort and share the mission and vision of Fairlawn.

Digital Brand Style Guide

Overview, messaging, fonts, colors, logo downloads...

<https://brands.cleardesign.group/fairlawn>

Further questions?

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