

“Chatting up Chatsworth”



TOWNSHIP OF
Chatsworth
Neighbours by Nature

Communications Plan

February, 2017

This Communication Plan, “Chatting Up Chatsworth” establishes a seeks to improve communications throughout the Township by establishing a coordinated approach to reach a greater audience. Council and Staff are committed to establishing and maintaining effective two-way communication with residents, ratepayers, local businesses, community groups and visitors. To achieve this we will:

- Set a minimum standard for communicating**
- Engage citizens sooner and provide information that is timely, accurate, clear, accessible and responsive.**
- Create new channels for dialogue through social media to distribute information**
- Support opportunities for engagement to inform public**
- Report publicly on our progress**

Goal One:

Chatting up Chatsworth's Brand – who are we?

- **Create a Township of Chatsworth Brand - include public engagement**
- **Engage in Council discussions - is the brand appropriate - does it need to be updated? Reaffirm and communication Chatsworth's brand, its' functions and identity**
- **Ensure Chatsworth's brand is on all outgoing messages**
- **Create a consistent look to Council information, communication material, activities, services and products, outgoing email**
- **Standardize written correspondence (done)**
- **Empower staff to be “brand ambassadors”**

Goal Two:

Chatting Up with Staff and Council – Improve Internal Communications

- **Host staff meetings, lunch and learn or tailgate talks to keep staff abreast of Council decisions and initiatives more timely**
- **Ensure Staff and Council are aware of emerging issues and provided with appropriate public response - include satellite locations (ie. community centres, post office, etc.)**
- **“Close the Loop on Communications” - make sure front line staff and Council are provided with information and updates on current issues**
- **Inform staff of matters that affect them before informing the public**

- **Raise awareness of “who does what”**
- **Create opportunities for cross–departmental projects to increase collaboration**
- **Provide training and resources for all employees to improve their communication skills**
- **Council highlights posted on staff bulletin boards, CAO newsletters/memos**
- **Establish annual communication priorities for each department (such as winter operations plan, upcoming election, budget, etc.)**

Goal Three:

Chatting up the Issues and Know How to Respond to Them

- **With every new project, develop an “issues list” identifying the potential for problems to arise and how they might be handled**
- **Determine in advance who will be the spokesperson on particular issues or projects**
- **Prepare employees to be ready to respond to issues and inquiries when things go wrong including establishing protocol and “boundaries” on who responds or speaks on behalf of the Township.**
- **Through training and behavioural change, improve the communications capacity of staff at all levels**

- **Develop the message and be more proactive in getting it out**
- **Develop question and answer resources and update regularly**

Goal Four:

Chatting Up the Public – Develop a public engagement strategy to guide the Township through public consultation processes

- **Understand that citizens want to be heard - we need to listen**
- **Coordinate events in conjunction with public gatherings**
- **Identify barriers that exist to current public participation**
- **Ask ourselves “how does this affect the public” in all decisions**
- **“Take it to the street”**

- Host conversation cafes
- Use website quick polls
- Adopt a social media policy and equip employees with training for best practices and guidelines for sharing information.
- Ensure staff and Council directory is up to date and easy to find

Goal Five:

Chatting Up Chatsworth in New Ways – Increase the number of communication gateways

Communication tools and gateways are constantly changing. Opportunities to use various forms of social media should be realized as soon as possible. Popular social media channels like

Facebook, Twitter and You Tube engage citizens of all ages. The desire for online dialogue is ever growing and as a Service Industry, we must adapt to these tools.

Current Tools:

Owen Sound Sun Times (paid advertising, and only those subscribing receive the information

Radio - used for emergency purposes only

Website - needs updating

Utility and Tax Billing - brief messages can be included

Annual Newsletter - limited space, same look every year, needs updating

Add:

- **Website - What's Happening and Council Highlights, Public Notices to be more visible**
- **Facebook**
- **Twitter**
- **Reformat Newsletter - mail on its own**
- **Create an email list for newsletter**

