

# 4 Communication: Planning and results

This chapter examines the planning of the event's communication actions so that they are as effective as possible for achieving results and better managing relationships. The planning considers the operational units involved and the valid strategies according to the target groups. The chapter demonstrates the importance of using a method of setting up and managing communication that considers all the elements to be effective in disseminating and raising awareness on issues and involving participants.

At the end of the chapter readers should be able to:

- Understand event communication planning methods and processes.
- Understand what the operational units of communication are and how tasks and functions are distributed.
- Understand how to develop the executive communication project and how to apply it operationally.
- Understand how to use communication strategies to make the implementation of the communication plan effective with respect to the objectives of the organizers and the expectations of stakeholders and participants.

## Communication planning

This chapter, which concludes the first part of this book, explains how to set up and implement a communication plan from a conceptual and operational point of view. After having framed the processes and actors of event communication in the previous chapters, our attention is now focused on how communication actions can be effectively designed in an operational way. The plan includes the various elements examined in the previous chapters, which are interconnected at the application level to enable the creation of value in the event.

As noted in Chapter 1, a communication plan acts at the micro level and has the purpose of linking actors, methods, and objectives that have been identified and defined at the macro and meso levels. They can then be translated at the operational level within an organic, systematic communication management process.

The first task is, consequently, the breakdown of an event's main objective, which depends on the choices that have been made at the macro level and integrated by listening to participants and stakeholders at the meso level to satisfy shared goals. The objective of the event is broad and complex. For this reason, it is broken down into operational micro-objectives that are more specific and targeted. They can be pursued in defined and measurable times and ways, but it is useful to proceed in order (Allen et al., 2022; Bladen et al., 2022).

First, it's important to understand the difference between goals and micro-goals. The general objective of an event coincides with the main purpose that the

organizers want to achieve by staging it, such as enhancing a cultural project (e.g., a conference dedicated to the role of robotics in improving the mobility of disabled people and supporting the chronically ill); raising people's awareness (e.g., a festival that showcases initiatives and lets people try out innovations that enable the adoption of sustainable behaviors in the interest of environmental protection); supporting the socio-economic development of a territory (e.g., a fair where local producers exhibit and sell their products); or promoting a cultural, social, or charitable initiative (e.g., creating a fundraising event to collect resources to restore an important public asset, redevelop a neighborhood, or buy defibrillators for a municipal sports facility). Any objective will be made explicit in the theme that the organizers have chosen and around which they have configured the identity traits that communication makes distinctive through the content it conveys.

After these aspects have been defined, the communication plan serves to set up the communicative actions that make the main objective known through information, awareness, education, attraction, and promotion activities. These actions seek to create adherence to the theme and the objective, interest in participating, and availability for involvement during the entire realization of the event, from pre- to post-event.

The decomposition into micro-objectives means linking each communicative action to the objective by creating a sort of sequence that considers the characteristics of the participants (e.g., evaluating whether it is better to inform or raise awareness first), as noted in Chapter 3. This articulation of the details of communicative actions allows the planners to set concrete actions for each micro-objective and foresee, for each one, times and means of communication, methods of implementation (how, when, and where), types of content, communication styles and strategies, the necessary human and economic resources, actions to control and measure effectiveness, improvement interventions during construction, and the definition of the expected results. Therefore, for each micro-goal, there is a specific project. Some are developed simultaneously, others in sequence. The goal is to realize each project in a way that helps achieve a positive partial result. The combination of the partial results, though not the simple sum, helps achieve the final result. If the communication plan works, the result coincides with the pursuit of the main objective. On this path, the task of communication is to identify and solve problems, negotiate meanings, stimulate actions, encourage the sharing and recognition of the value of the event, and satisfy the expectations of all the actors involved in the process, from the organizers to the stakeholders and all types of participants. For this reason, the evaluation of partial results can lead to timely adjustments of the various plans to achieve the overall objectives.

The operating scheme outlined here, which will be illustrated in detail in the next section, envisages two fundamental application dimensions. The first is strategic, and the second is tactical (Kelley et al., 2022).

The strategic dimension is dedicated to linking the results to the objective, both at the main level and in each operational (or micro) objective. Consequently, strategies indicate how a goal can be achieved and the most valid ways to achieve the expected result. They define the communicative actions that can be implemented and the tools and resources needed to implement them. The overall design of a communication plan includes a strategic plan and an editorial plan. The first iden-