



## Colorado Charter Schools Annual Conference

February 25-27, 2026  
Denver Marriott Tech Center



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# Game Changers

## 10 Strategic Communications Tips That Turn Challenges Into Wins

**Randy Barber**

**Past President, Colorado School Public Relations Association**

**Chief Communications Officer, Boulder Valley School District**

Evergreen (E)

February 27, 2026 | 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Enrollment and Communication



Colorado League of  
Charter Schools



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We make it our priority to **advocate** for high-quality public charter schools across Colorado.



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# Game Changers

**10 Strategic Communications Tips That Turn Challenges Into Wins**

# 10



**Randy Barber, APR**  
COSPPRA Past President  
randy.barber@bvsd.org  
303-507-6694

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[www.cospra.org](http://www.cospra.org)

the leader in school communication  
**nspra**

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# 10 Game Changers

- 01 Solid foundation
- 02 Seat at the table
- 03 Strategic communications planning
- 04 **Research**
- 05 **Planning**
- 06 Helpful communications & marketing structures
- 07 **Implementation**
- 08 The power of a waterfall
- 09 **Evaluation**
- 10 **Accreditation**





**Create a solid foundation**

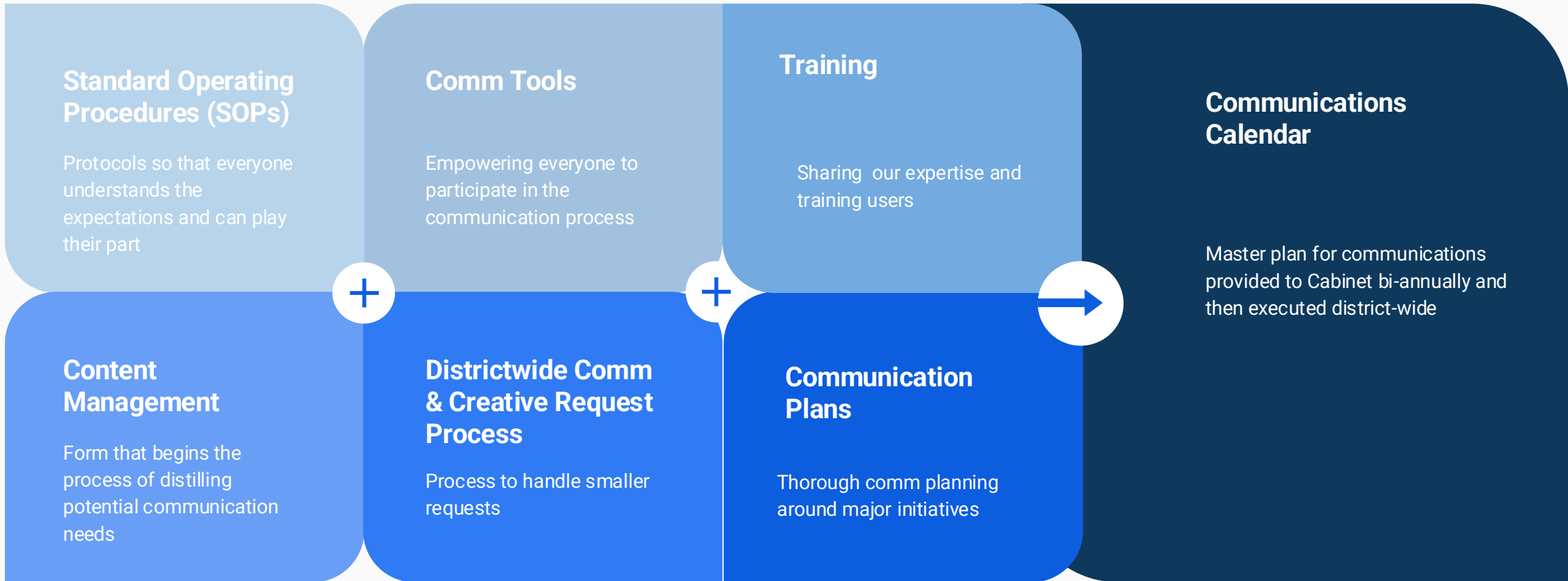
# Principles of PR

By Arthur W. Page

1. Tell the Truth
2. Prove it with action
3. Listen to the student/parent
4. Manage for tomorrow
5. Conduct public relations as if the whole district depends upon it
6. Realize a company's true character is expressed by its people
7. Remain calm, patient and good-humored



# Comprehensive Communication Plan





**A seat at the table**



# In the room where it happens

- Trusted advisor
- Skilled practitioner
- Landmine spotter
- In tune with the heart of the organization

# Do you have a Communications network?





**The importance of a plan  
in strategic communications**



# Strategic Communications is vital to our organizations

- Building trust
- Fostering community engagement
- Proving Return on Investment
- Supporting student success



Research

### Why 8% of BVSD Parents Do Not Plan to Continue Enrolling Their Child in BVSD

Please describe the reasons why you do not plan to continue enrolling your child in Boulder Valley School District schools.

#### Prominent Themes

- Ideology/Curriculum (42%)
- School Culture and/or Safety (30%)
- Seeking Different Programs for Child (23%)

"Curriculum. I do not want school teaching my children liberal political ideology."

-Female, 45-54, Income > \$150K, Director District F

"Student need for more individualized attention."

-Male, 45-54, Income > \$150K, Director District C

"Unfortunately as a student I was dismissed constantly and got pushed aside until I was able to just barely graduate. Your school district focuses mainly on gifted students and if you are struggling, unfortunately you are left behind."

-Female, 35-44, Income \$50-\$100K, Director District E

"Not focused enough on math, science, too much of a focus on liberal agendas."

-Male, 45-54, Income > \$150K, Director District G

### Why 68% of Non-BVSD Parents Will Consider Enrolling Their Child in BVSD

Please describe the reasons why you will consider enrolling your child in a Boulder Valley School District school.

#### Prominent Themes\*

- Reputation/Quality of Education (46%)
- Location/Convenience (41%)
- Programs and Opportunities Available (13%)
- Financial Reasons (12%)
- Value/Believe in Public Education (11%)

"I believe in the public school system, I know BVSD schools are high quality."

-Male, 35-44, Income > \$150K, Director District B

"We live here, we think there are good options where our kids can get a quality education, and we cannot afford private school."

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"I love everything I've learned about BVSD (curriculum, inclusivity, care for the kids). I also feel it's important that the kids have access to music and extracurricular activities, which they don't currently have at their school. Now having a home in BVSD, I would love for my kids to be able to go to school with their friends in the neighborhood."

-Female, 35-44, Income \$50-100K, Director District F

"I've heard there are some excellent schools in the district and I live here."

-Male, 35-44, Income > \$150K, Director District C

\*Percentages will add up to greater than 100% because many respondents offered multiple reasons.

Boulder Valley School District Community Survey, Jan. 2023, 1-12th, v1-2023.pdf

# Research helps define the problem and audience

**WHO** do we want to reach?

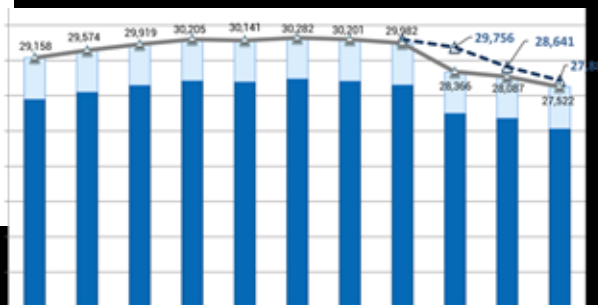
**WHAT** do we want people in each public to DO?

**WHAT** messages do we want to communicate to each public that will:

- Increase knowledge?
- Change opinions?
- Encourage desired behavior?



Neighboring Districts	Adams 12 Five Star Schools	Adams County 14	Brighton 27J	Golden County RE-1	Jefferson County R-1	St. Vrain Valley RE/LJ	All Other
2013-14	433	339	29	-91	53	404	185
2014-15	667	296	43	-103	41	333	161
2015-16	806	238	49	-89	81	215	175
2016-17	918	162	65	-60	76	237	179
2017-18	934	106	70	-97	38	229	190
2018-19	999	66	67	-106	58	216	142
2019-20	965	70	65	-112	42	162	152
2020-21	974	64	19	-84	99	76	151
2021-22	905	61	99	-90	66	55	202
2022-23	1025	59	25	-85	67	71	121
2023-24	1052	53	50	-79	129	110	175



## Why 8% of BVSD Parents Do Not Plan to Continue Enrolling Their Child in BVSD

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# Research helps define the problem and audience

What information do you have available?

**Primary:** Data you connect through your own surveys or observations.

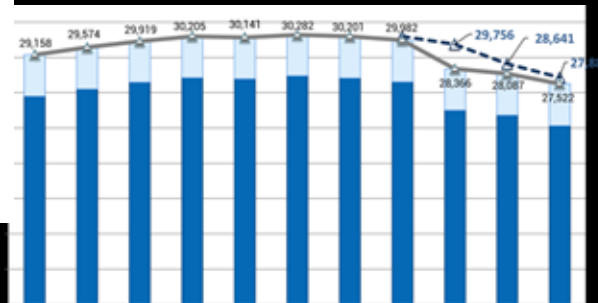
**Secondary:** Data available from others, including research, statistics

**Formal:** Systematic, structured process using scientific methods, peer review, etc.

**Informal:** Flexible, unstandardized, and often personal



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Planning

# Set goals and then create a plan to reach them

**Goals** *What do we ultimately want to accomplish?*

Longer-term, broad, global and future statements of “being”

**Objectives** *What specific, measurable changes will help us achieve our goal?*

Shorter term than goals and define what opinion, attitude or behavior you want to achieve from specific publics

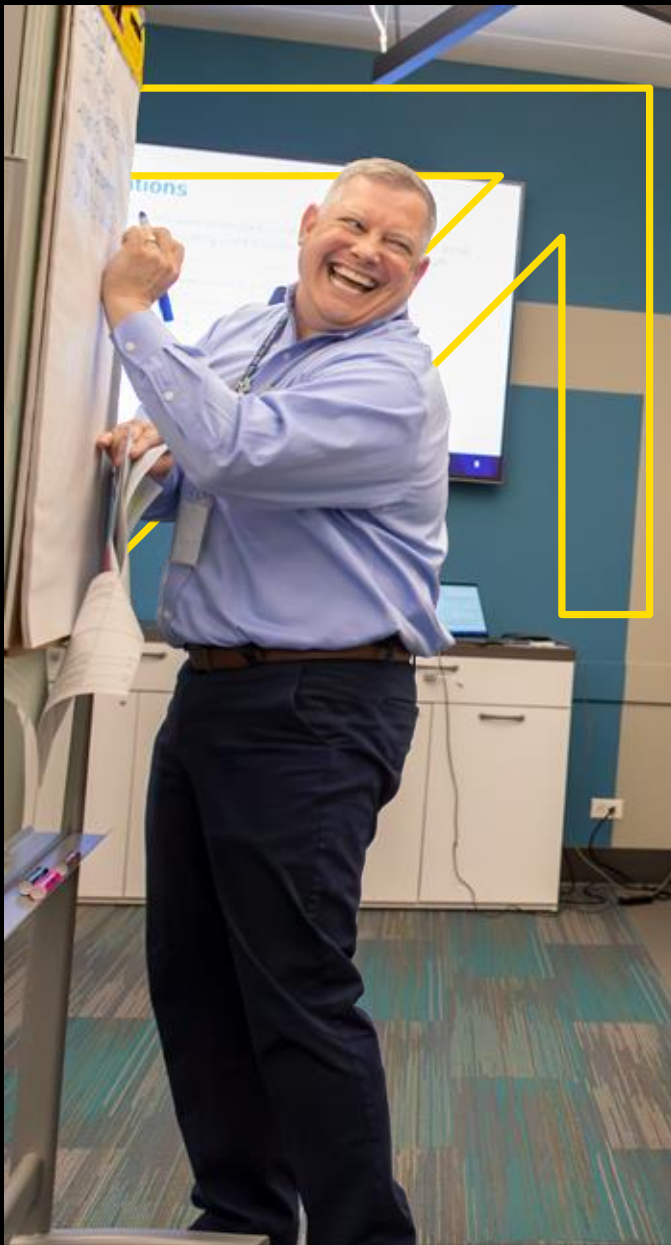
- **S**pecific (both action to be taken and public involved)
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**ealistic (or relevant or results (outcome) oriented)
- **T**ime-specific

**Strategies** *How will we get there?*

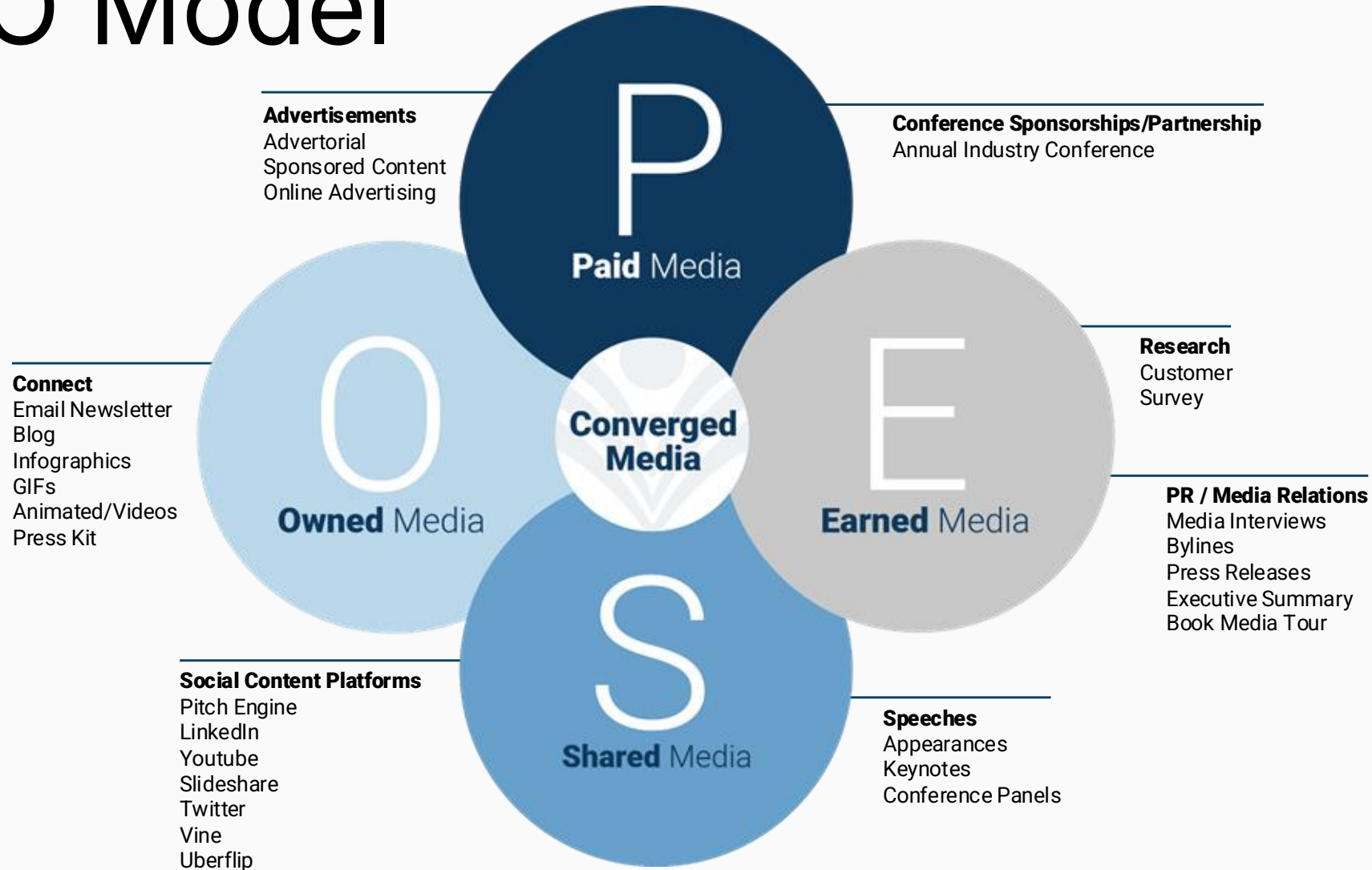
Provide the roadmap to your objectives

**Tactics/tools** *What concrete actions will we take to implement the strategy?*

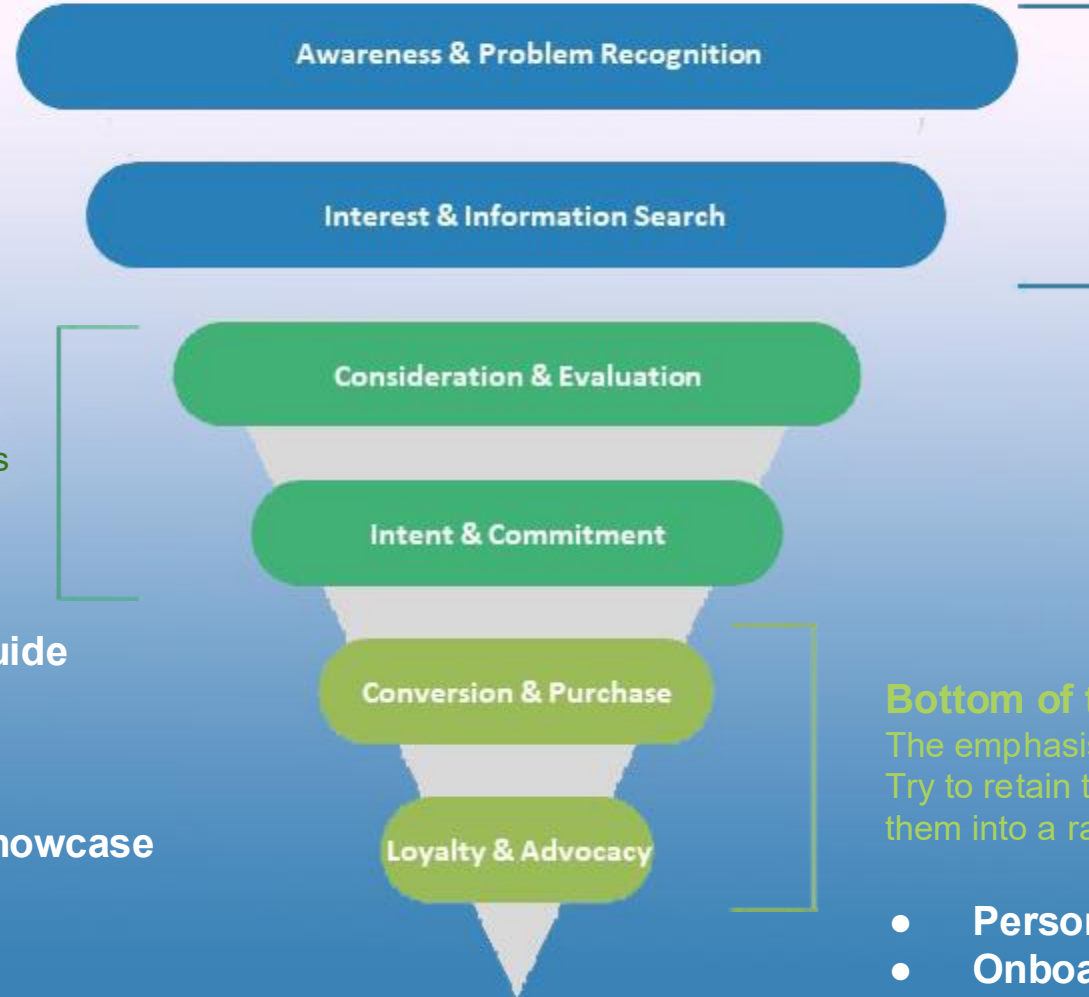
Specific elements of a strategy or tools for accomplishing a strategy



# PESO Model



# The Marketing & Sales Funnel



## Top of the Funnel

This is the lead generation phase. Marketing attracts potential customers and increases brand awareness.

## Middle of the Funnel

Marketing works alongside sales team. Provides valuable information that helps the customer make their decision.

- Brochure/Programming Guide
- Drip Campaigns
- Enrollment specialist calls
- School tours
- BVSD is the Place to Be Showcase

- Advertising
  - Niche
  - Social Media8
- Website & SEO

## Bottom of the Funnel

The emphasis is on great customer service. Try to retain the customer for life and convert them into a raving fan.

- Personal touches from schools
- Onboarding activities
- Ongoing school-family relations



Implementation



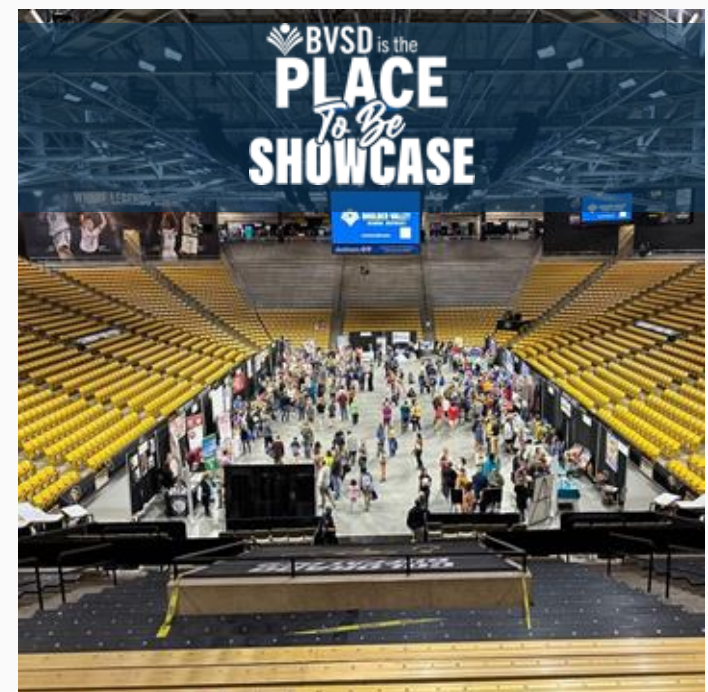
## Actions the organization is taking as part of the plan

- Timetables
- Budget allocations
- Accountabilities (who's responsible for making sure each step is accomplished.)
- Monitor results of actions and messages while keeping track of campaign milestones.

## Phase 1: Lead Up to Showcase

BVSD is the Place to Be Showcase - OE event at CU Events Center Oct. 9th

Date	Task	Assignment	Notes
8/11/2023	Save the Date on Social Media	Alejandra	Coming soon approach
8/11/2023	Web story Save the date	Randy	
8/18/2023	New Logo Package	Jade	Logo for overall campaign
8/30/2023	<a href="#">School Flier Templates</a>	Jade	Share google slide template designs for schools via Noteworthy
8/25/2023	<a href="#">Distribute Event Announcement Flier</a> (Friday Folder) To be sent week of Sept 28	Erin	To be distributed to families in schools/community/or dered from print shop
8/31/2023	BVSD Events Guide	Alejandra	Inclusion of Event
9/8/2023	Sept SPOT Send	Erin/Jade	Announce showcase to Families- Jade-need SPOT lead image with



# The power of a waterfall



- The Board
- Leaders
- Employees
- Parents & Students

Other important groups?



Evaluation

# Measure effectiveness of the program against objectives

## Five Objectives for Communications

- **Message Exposure**  
Intended audience is exposed to message in various forms
- **Accurate Dissemination of the Message**  
The basic message remains intact as it is transmitted through channels
- **Acceptance of the Message**  
The audience not only retains the message but also accepts it as valid and credible
- **Attitude Change**  
The audience believes the message, resulting in a mental or verbal commitment to change their attitude, opinion, or behavior
- **Change in Overt Behavior**  
Members of the audience change their actual behavior, such as purchasing a product, voting, or using a service



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of **pr**

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**apro**



# What is Accreditation In Public Relations (APR)?

- Professional credential
- Earned through a rigorous process
- Demonstrates:
  - ✓ Commitment to professional advancement and ethics
  - ✓ Broad and strategic public relations knowledge, skills and abilities
  - ✓ High professional level of experience and competence

<https://www.nspra.org/Professional-Development/Accreditation-in-Public-Relations>



# What APRs Say . . .

“The process increased my understanding of the planning and strategy that goes into creating successful public relations campaigns versus the ‘it just happens’ syndrome.”

- Carol Crawford, APR, Principal, Crawford Communications, San Francisco, Calif.

“The APR preparation provided a thorough review of the proper thought-processes involving public relations issues and strategic planning process. Additionally, my APR experience has strengthened my confidence in my ability to counsel senior management on all public relations issues.”

- Robert Stillwell, APR, Corporate Communications, NV Energy, Las Vegas, Nev.





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Your  
feedback  
helps us all  
move forward  
together**



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