

**Communications Department  
Strategic Plan  
February 2007**

*Communications Department Mission Statement*

To inform and engage citizens and employees about the issues and activities of the City of Spokane and to coordinate and facilitate communications from City departments to the public.

*CityCable 5 Mission Statement*

To provide the citizens of Spokane with informational programming detailing the issues and activities of local Government and community, and to assist City departments with electronic media expertise.

*Target Audience/Customers*

1. Citizens
2. Employees, City Departments, and City Council
3. Media
4. Special groups of stakeholders (business groups, neighborhood councils, City boards and commissions, education, etc.)
5. Residents in surrounding Cities, Spokane County, and region
6. Other local governments in Washington & Idaho

*Overall Goals*

- Coordinate information coming from the City to ensure **consistency** in messaging and branding.
- Increase **awareness** and **understanding** and encourage **participation** by the citizens of the City of Spokane in their government.
- Build **community pride** among citizens and positive identification with their home city.
- Enhance **community confidence** in local government and its official, elected and appointed.
- Increase **awareness, understanding and participation** of City employees in the goals and activities of the City.
- Build **corporate pride** among employees and positive identification with City government as a whole.
- Develop better relationships with the **news media** to enable them to be two-way communicators between City government and its target publics.
- Encourage and facilitate **two-way communication** as a corporate communications philosophy and provide the tools, training, and methods necessary to be successful.

### *Definition of Service*

Communications Department efforts focus on three major areas:

- Internal communications with employees.
- External communications with the public and media.
- Media relations.

Among other things, the Department develops and leads communications strategies to inform the public and employees. We deploy a multi-media strategy to try to reach citizens through their preferred method of receiving information. We produce a series of products, from programming on CityCable 5 to information on the City's web site to printed products and media releases.

### *The Communications Team*

The Communications Department is only one part of the Communications Team of the City.

- Specialty communicators are located within our departments, including Police, Parks, Libraries, and Solid Waste.
- Communications with key business and legislative stakeholders is managed by the City's Director of Legislative & Public Affairs
- Department directors also have some responsibilities for sending out some press releases, giving speeches, and providing media interviews, when appropriate.

Truly, the Communications Team of the City is all-inclusive—all employees are “ambassadors” for the organization.

### *SWOT*

#### **Strengths:**

- Knowledgeable, experienced personnel.
- Very responsive, with almost immediate response for many projects.
- Multi-media approach to communications.
- Good technology and equipment.
- Ability to act independently.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- Lack of coordination citywide of message, image, branding.
- Lack of understanding within the organization of the communications function.
- Information “hoarding” by departments.
- Lack of cross-training, back-ups for certain functions.
- Outdated web content and lack of resources to manage all content.

#### **Opportunities:**

- Opportunity to centralize/coordinate communications (Matrix recommendation)
- Form of government is conducive to evaluating what we do every 4 years or so.
- Can leverage technology for other uses.

## Threats:

- Congressional changes are being discussed that could impact the franchise that allows us to have CityCable 5 and equipment dollars.
- City funding for communications has decreased in the last few years.

## *Key Success Factors*

**Timeliness**—Receipt and distribution of information in a timely fashion is paramount to getting the word out about activities, events, issues.

**Accuracy**—Accuracy equals credibility.

**Consistency**—Consistency of information, messaging, and image is required to create a City brand.

**Responsiveness**—Must be able to respond quickly to emerging issues and emergencies. Citizens rely on the information they receive from their government, especially in times of emergency or crisis.

**Maintaining lines of communication**—Our ability to communicate relies on several lines of communication: CityCable 5, web site, email distribution of information, media relations. Must work to maintain those lines of communication at all times.

## *Goals & Strategies*

1. **Goal:** Centralize and coordinate communications, including messaging & image.

### **Strategies:**

- Create **City Communications Team**, consisting of all City communicators and hold monthly meetings (Also achieves Efficiency Study recommendation Comm-1)
  - i. First Tasks:
    1. Determine how to handle flow of information organization-wide
    2. Develop Crisis Communication protocol
- Work to implement communications reorganization strategy, moving Public Information Coordinator from Eng. Services to Communications and moving Graphic Artist from MIS to communications.
- Require all publications to go through Graphic Artist to ensure consistency of printed information.

2. **Goal:** Provide technology assistance to improve internal training opportunities.

### **Strategies:**

- Work with MIS and Human Resources to determine how CityCable 5 technology can assist with training—use of satellite dish to bring in training and use of video taping ability to create training programs that can be streamed via City web site to employees.

3. **Goal:** Continue to upgrade outdated equipment.

### **Strategies:**

- Replace audio system in Council Chambers.
- Replace projector in Council Chambers.
- Replace Metroguide scrolling text system.

4. **Goal:** Improve Division/Department Heads media skills and Council presentation skills.

**Strategies:**

- Host Department Head meeting with media training session (set for June).
- Provide more comprehensive media training for key individuals.
- Set up Presentation System training(s) for those who use Council Chambers and Council Briefing Center presentation systems.

5. **Goal:** Oversee initial stages of public access TV implementation and monitor public/educational access channel utilization and use of grant funds.

**Strategies:**

- Develop public access resolution and contract and work through City Council approval process.
- Develop educational access resolution and contract(s) and work through City Council approval process.
- Develop way to monitor use of grant funds and channel capacity.