

Marketing your Treatment Court with Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

What is IMC?

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is the concept that communication from an organization is coordinated, measurable, and targeted toward specific audiences. The organization determines which audiences to target, but the communication must start with the audience and work backwards – meaning, the content and the way it's conveyed and delivered must resonate with the audience, not the preferences of the organization or its leaders. IMC is about changing behavior, not just attitudes; while measuring attitudes can be helpful, measuring behaviors is more important and sometimes more straightforward. Finally, IMC considers every communication and point of contact. Everyone who works for the treatment court contributes to the court's IMC efforts. While the tasks of communicating about and selling your treatment court may be one person's responsibility, everyone is responsible for the court's brand and IMC.

Who should use these resources?

We recognize that most treatment courts don't have social media specialists or market research analysts, so much of the work of creating, coordinating, and measuring falls on professionals who already have a significant workload. That is why the NDCRC has developed these tools for those courts who want to promote the work of treatment courts, how they work, and who can use them.

In addition, treatment courts are part of their local communities, and communicating with these communities requires multiple strategies to reach a diversity of audiences.

Some resources for communicating with certain audiences (such as media or regulators) have already been developed. NADCP created Treatment Court Month and Veterans Court Month media kits with sample press releases, social media posts, letters to the editor, and more. These are extremely helpful and should be utilized as much as possible as part of an overarching IMC plan.

A Note on IMC Plans

Various templates exist for communication planning, but the essence of a strategic communication plan is research, planning, communication, and evaluation. The plan is also a circular process – your evaluation of your campaign will be part of your research for your next strategic communication plan.

For this resource, we adapted a planning template from Wilson, L.J. and Ogden, J.D.(2008). *Strategic Communications Planning for Effective Public Relations and Marketing*. Kendall-Hunt. It has all of the necessary steps you need to plan out your communication to market your treatment court, while recognizing that plans need to be flexible and adaptive to current situations.

Integrated Marketing Communication Planning Template

Research

Background

What does your treatment court do? What challenges does it solve? Planning begins with a one large paragraph synthesis of primary and secondary research providing background information on the effectiveness of treatment courts, funding, location and number of treatment courts, external environment, specific type of court, current court usage and participant rates, and current trends in opinions and attitudes. The company description section also uses demographic and psychographic data to identify and profile potential audiences that may be affected by the problem/opportunity, or could aid in its resolution/accomplishment.

The NDCRC produces many publications and resources that can help flesh out this Background section. [Painting the Current Picture](#) and [Data Digest](#) are two of the publications that provide much of the data to inform your communication plan. In addition, the NDCRC interactive map section of the website provides a mechanism to compare and contrast types, locations, and funding levels of treatment courts in the U.S. and territories.

Write your background statement in this space.

Situation Analysis

The situation analysis consists of two paragraphs. The first paragraph is a statement of the current situation and a description of the challenge or opportunity based on research. The second paragraph identifies potential difficulties and related problems.

Related problems might be items like limited resources (time, money, and staff) or underdeveloped relationships with partners. Describing these difficulties will help you when you articulate your SMART goals so that you have a clear grasp of the current situation.

Statement of Current Situation/Challenge/Opportunity

Paragraph describing potential difficulties and related problems

Core Problem/Opportunity

The core problem/opportunity is a one-sentence statement of the main difficulty or challenge – including potential consequences if not resolved or realized.

For example, “We have a new veterans’ treatment court but our community does not know much about veterans’ treatment courts and how they work, so it’s being underutilized” would be a one-sentence description of the main challenge.

Write your one-sentence statement of the main difficulty or challenge here.

Audience and Behavior

The guiding question for this section is “What behavior do you want your audience to take as a result of your IMC?”

To answer this, you will describe your key audience(s). This section includes a description of each audience that must be reached to achieve the goal and objectives. Who are you targeting? Who makes up your target audience? Who are your target segments, participants, professionals, legislators, funding sources? Four elements should be identified for each audience:

1. Demographic and psychographic profile – including habits, attitudes, and beliefs

2. Motivating self-interests – what might drive this audience to work with you and your treatment court
3. Status of current relationship with the organization and issue – occasionally, that relationship may be non-existent or hostile.
4. Third party influential and other opinion leaders – who has the credibility to speak to these audiences on your behalf?

The NDCRC website has a section called "[Resources by Team Role](#)". This section contains documents such as "The Role of Defense Counsel on the Drug Court Team" that can help you write the audience profiles and fill in the four elements for each audience.

Audience #1:

Description of Audience #1:

Audience #1 – Demographic and Psychographic Profile

Audience #1 – Motivating Self-Interests

Audience #1 – State of current relationship with your treatment court and treatment courts in general

Audience #1 – Third party influential and other opinion leaders

Audience #2:

Description of Audience #2:

Audience #2 – Demographic and Psychographic Profile

Audience #2 – Motivating Self-Interests

Audience #2 – State of current relationship with your treatment court and treatment courts in general

Audience #2 – Third party influential and other opinion leaders

Audience #3:

Description of Audience #3:

Audience #3 – Demographic and Psychographic Profile

Audience #3 – Motivating Self-Interests

Audience #3 – State of current relationship with your treatment court and treatment courts in general

Audience #3 – Third party influential and other opinion leaders

Action Planning

Goals and Objectives

Your plan needs SMART Goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

“Increase awareness of our treatment court” is not a SMART goal. “Increase the number of referrals by 15% by 2025” is.

In an IMC plan, 2-3 SMART goals are achievable. More than that and your focus gets diluted.

SMART Goal #1:

SMART Goal #2:

Objectives are how you are going to achieve those goals. An objective for the above SMART goal might be “Establish a new partnership with defense attorneys’ professional association.” Another objective might be “Work with the media to get coverage of graduations.”

First Objective for SMART Goal #1:

Second Objective for SMART Goal #1:

First Objective for SMART Goal #2:

Second Objective for SMART Goal #2:

Key Messages

Key messages are audience-specific and appeal to the audience's self-interests. Your key message is a one- or two-sentence summary statement similar to sound bites.

Write a key message for one of your audiences:

Strategies and Tactics

Identify 2-3 strategies and tactics that align with solving your problem and meeting your SMART goals and objectives. **Strategies** identify approaches to send messages to each audience specific channels in order to motivate action. **Tactics** are communications tools and tasks required to support each strategy (what channels and platforms you use to reach your target audience(s) and achieve your goals?).

For example, "social media campaign highlighting Treatment Court Month" is a strategy. Tactics to support this strategy are:

Tools: NADCP's Treatment Month Toolkit, photos from court graduations

Tasks: Solicit testimonials from successful graduates, write social media posts, schedule throughout the month

Platforms: Facebook page, Twitter

Each strategy is supported by a number of tactics designed to convey key messages to a specific audience through the communications channel outlined in the strategy. At a minimum, under each tactic you should include: what communication channel? How will you communicate (i.e., platform)? What is the required timeline (i.e., how long will the communication take place?). Will it cost money?

Strategy #1:

Tactics to support the strategy:

Strategy #2:

Tactics to support the strategy:

Communication

IMC plans must be coordinated and cohesive so that you can meet your IMC goals. To help your plan be in alignment, you will put all of the information from previous sections into short statements in a table form. This table then confirms your plan and can be shared with others on the team.

Audience #1

Audience Description

Primary Messages

Influentials

Goal #1

Objectives for Goal #1

Goal #2

Objectives for Goal #2

Strategies

Tactics

Audience #2

Audience Description

Primary Messages

Influentials

Goal #1

Objectives for Goal #1

Goal #2

Objectives for Goal #2

Strategies

Tactics

Audience #3

Audience Description

Primary Messages

Influentials

Goal #1

Objectives for Goal #1

Goal #2

Objectives for Goal #2

Strategies

Tactics

Evaluation

How will we measure success?

Look at your SMART goals. How will you measure the achievement of those goals? If it's a SMART goal, the measurement should be built into the goal. In the example from the Action Planning section, "Increase the number of referrals by 15% by 2025," success can be measured not only by considering the percentage of increase but also the improvement of the partnerships that led to these referrals, the number of shares and likes on your social media posts targeting specific audiences, and the testimonials or feedback from those who refer clients to your court.

Consider using a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures.

Quantitative measures include surveys, polls, social media analytics, number of participants – anything you can count.

Qualitative measures include focus groups, interviews, social media comments, press coverage, feedback from participants – anything that gives you insight into people's experiences, behavior, or motivations.

Choose one of your SMART Goals. Write it here.

What will achievement of this goal (success) look like?

What *quantitative* measures can you use to evaluate this goal?

What *qualitative* measures can you use to evaluate this goal?

Appendices

Appendices complement your marketing communication plan's primary information. For example, this is where you would include your brand guidelines and social media plan and/or campaign. It is helpful for you and your staff to keep this in a central location so that everyone who needs access to logos, photos, social media plans can access it.