Plumbers,
Gasfitters and
Drainlayers Board

Communications and Engagement Strategy

This strategy sets out an approach for maximising engagement and promotional opportunities for the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board over the next three years.

Introduction

The Communications and Engagement Strategy helps to define and direct the Board's communication and engagement with the public, partners and stakeholders.

This strategy will help the Board to provide leadership by strengthening our engagement with our practitioners and our key partners and stakeholder communities. It will also help us to build and enrich our public profile, expand our networks and raise awareness of both our services and our contribution to the protection of the health of New Zealanders.

Scope

This strategy aims to update and refresh our current communications policies. It doesn't provide detailed stakeholder analysis or make recommendations about key events or upcoming announcements; rather, it sets out a roadmap for expanding our networks, telling our public story and strengthening our engagement with our existing audiences.

Objectives

Over the next three years, Board communications will focus on:

- building a greater public awareness, trust and confidence in what we do, the services we offer, and promoting our role
- boosting our engagement across with industry, in particular our direct communications with practitioners and our primary stakeholders such as the Workforce Development Council, Te Pūkenga, MBIE, and membership organisations
- establishing ourselves as the first port-of-call for media on certain issues like practitioner competence and public safety
- strengthening our connections with agencies and leaders within the broader industry.

Principles

The below principles set out how and when we will engage with our key audiences when there's something to say:

Digital first – where possible we should lead with social media, and our other digital platforms, when we're making an announcement.

No surprises – board members and our primary stakeholders should always be informed ahead of any public announcements.

Targeted – all communications must be written or developed with a particular audience in mind to reach the right people, with the right messages and the right channels.

Narrative-rich – all strategic communications, whether press releases, newsletters, or speeches, should tell our story, reflecting the Board's strategic objectives and priorities.

Deliberate – all Board decisions, activities, and engagements should be assessed for communications opportunities or challenges, and plans should be developed accordingly.

Our approach

We will achieve our objectives by:

1. developing, maintaining and sharing a comprehensive, clear and consolidated story about our role (public safety – why it's needed, how it's being done and progress)
2. establishing relationships and channels of communication with priority stakeholders to mitigate risks, leverage opportunities and share content and channels
3. ensuring communication is clear, accurate, relevant and timely
    - Clear – in plain English
    - Accurate – correct and current
    - Relevant – messaging targeted to current topics and issues
    - Timely – information delivered to the appropriate channels at the right time.
4. gathering, collating and supporting the effective flow of information between the Board and the industry
5. identifying and using channels that work for the Board and stakeholders
6. being proactive where possible, and agile and responsive where needed
7. continuously improving – incorporating lessons, new information and changing circumstances. The plan will be dynamic
8. evaluating and monitoring effectiveness of communications.

Channels

Our main channels include:

- our e-newsletter Info Brief, which covers our latest news and goes out to our practitioners
- direct notifications to our practitioners for anything urgent such as expiring licences or CPD updates
- focus groups with our primary stakeholders
- regular meetings with other key agencies, such as MBIE, Te Pūkenga, BOINZ and Master Plumbers
- our website
- media releases
- LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube.

Social media

Social media offers opportunities for us to engage with our audiences more directly, and in a more timely and personal way. Even more importantly, it is a cost-effective way to broaden our reach, tap into new demographics, and expand our networks.

Our social media channels will:

- ensure all major Board events, announcements, and other developments are promoted on social media
- share the latest industry news and trends
- commission technical content that is of interest to our online audiences and the public – to help us better target our online and social media content
- develop digital content, such as videos, imagery, and online campaigns to build our brand, and engage our target audiences in the work we do
- share the same handle - @pgdbnz - for consistency.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn has been our main social media platform and has grown steadily to over 500 followers. This platform is good for our business and regulation policy audiences.

Facebook and Instagram

In September 2023 we launched Facebook and Instagram accounts ahead of the public awareness campaign. These platforms are ideal for reaching a wide range of ages. We will aim to grow our followers on these platforms with regular and relevant organic and paid content.

Making good content

Content should always add value to the audience. Where possible we should consider what is important and relevant for our audience and 'what's in it for them' first. This way our messaging will be more relevant and engaging. If we only take a Board centric approach we risk disengagement.

Content should be considered, relevant and high quality. It should always:

- Exemplify our brand principles
- Add value to the audience
- Be the right content for the right channel
- Engaging/visual/written in a way that is simple and quick to understand.

Digital story telling

We want to increase the public awareness of the Board's functions and strategic work. We're seen as a regulatory body, which only gets involved when there are concerns about a practitioner. Yet there is a bigger-picture story to tell about how the work we do improves the standards of plumbing, drainlaying, and gasfitting work for kiwis and communities.

Digital story-telling is a way of shifting away from the reactive space we're in to proactively telling our story in a more engaging and interactive way. Social media and digital story telling work hand in hand when it comes to boosting online engagement; the use of imagery has been shown to increase social media engagement by about 30%, and videos even more so – up to 50%. What is more, mobile phone quality footage is more than acceptable in many situations.

Over the next year we will:

- create digital opportunities for the Board to engage with key audiences online – such as when attending key events or delivering important messages to the profession
- develop 'public facing' information campaigns with videos for practitioners and members of the public on how to access our services
- consider developing video content to embed on our website to give it a more interactive feel – suggestions include guidance on how to make a notification to the Board or how to apply for registration.

Info Brief

Our main channel for communicating with the industry is our monthly e-newletter. About 19,500 practitioners and key sector stakeholders receive the publication.

We use Hail to create the format and MailChimp to market the newsletters. This:

- provides us with detailed analytics about subscriber engagement, helping us to understand what is of interest to them as we develop future editions
- allows us to embed videos and our other digital creations
- makes the newsletter easy to navigate and keeps word-counts down with click-through and hyperlinks to further reading.

To improve our engagement numbers, we will:

- share the newsletter through our other channels
- have more variety in our content
- ensure that content is relevant and adds value
- share information from key stakeholders

Building our web content

We launched our new website in 2023 but there are areas that can still be improved. Our website is text and document heavy and developed with practitioners in mind as the main audience and the public as secondary. Throughout 2023-2024 we will:

- review the website's analytics to find out why people are visiting and what they are looking for
- revise 'public facing' content to make it more accessible
- look at options for making the website more interactive
- engage an external agency to test the new site for security vulnerabilities