



GCA BULLETIN 8

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| THE LEADER'S ROLE IN GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION

Effective leadership is a personal role that requires the blending of motivational, strategic and managerial skills to align focus, energy and drive, while creating a culture that encourages individual thinking and attainment. Ultimately, leadership is about pushing ideas and thoughts forward, shouldering responsibility and unlocking hidden drivers and aspirations to bring out the confidence in others. It also includes harnessing energy in a strategic way that inspires and unites a team towards achieving a common task.

In government communication, this leadership is provided by political principals such as ministers, mayors, premiers and senior administrators, directors-general (DGs), heads, heads of departments and municipal managers. This leadership is critical to formulating and implementing good plans and strategies to advance the objectives of government. The implementation of the Programme of Action (PoA), which is a well-coordinated and planned activity, is supported by communication. Communication in departments has to ensure that the public is informed about the work of government and the opportunities that are available to them. Significantly, such communication that achieves goals and objectives and ensures that the public understand the work of government needs strong and strategic leadership.

It is the leader's responsibility to define the strategic direction through the approval of a communication strategy that has a clear and concise plan, highlighting the communication approach and communication milestones. The leadership should ensure that the communication strategy strategically communicates the collective efforts of government in service delivery. The strategy should achieve the greatest public impact instead of broadening into every segment and area of governance. The leadership in government also focuses the departments on deepening their strategic position and communicates key messages, which are guided by the approved strategy to the public and within government to ensure that all stakeholders understand its work. The communication strategies have to include the comments of all stakeholders before being approved by the department's leadership.

Government communicators in departments have to create an environment which is conducive to the communication of government messages and ensure that the principals use the correct platforms to engage with the public. This means that principals in departments are the ones who will understand the work of government communicators, their successes and shortcomings. The involvement of DGs, mayors, premiers and ministers in communication also makes it possible to place government communication at the centre of government's work, and not as an add-on or afterthought.

It was within this context that the recent review of the Government Communicators' Awards (GCA) has highlighted that we cannot host the awards successfully without the active involvement of the leadership at the various levels of government.

To ensure that we receive the correct information and quality entries for the GCA, the GCIS will be writing letters to DGs, mayors, premiers and ministers requesting their participation in the GCA. Examining the issue of leadership, it is clear that in government, principals are responsible for driving the strategy to ensure optimum implementation of the PoA.

The other critical reason that requires the involvement of principals in government communication, is the financial implications that are inherent in plans and strategies. Strategies should be finalised before the beginning of April to allow the approval of the strategy and the financial resources that will support implementation. The financial resources follow and support the strategy and not the other way around.

Ultimately, government communication that deserves to be recognised, is communication that empowers and encourages the public to participate in governance and work together to improve their lives, by highlighting economic opportunities that democracy has made possible.

The GCA is the lifeblood of government communication and encourages communicators to value the opportunity to serve their fellow citizens, delivering on the promise of a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." Delivering on this promise takes effective, clear communication between the Government and the people, because government communication is the link that provides a voice for government.



government
communications

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