



Communications Tool Kit : Level Up Communications Guide For Nonprofits By Applying The MarComFly Communications Maturity Model

The MarComFly Communications Maturity Model is a simple tool that helps organizations understand where they are with communications, identifying what's working, what's missing, and where to focus for advancements. It helps identify the current state of communications efforts so teams can align on priorities and plan next steps to level up. This tool helps leadership, communications staff, and technology teams get on the same page. It makes the case for why communications should be a strategic priority for marketing, advocacy, digital channels, client trust, stronger community, partner relations and funding. This document is a resource for communications and awareness building. Organizations may use the recommendations to benefit their programs and their impacts.

It Starts With An Assessment

The MarComFly Communications Maturity Assessment is a quick, self-guided tool designed to help organizations evaluate their current communications capacity. Participants answer a series of Yes or No questions based on real practices within their organization. Each response earns a score, which maps to one of seven levels—ranging from Level 0: Aware to Level 6: Optimized. After completing the assessment, users receive immediate results, a scoring guide, and tailored recommendations. These results help spark internal conversations between leadership, communications teams, and IT staff. It sets a clear starting point for aligning strategy, improving systems, and elevating communications as a key driver for impacts.

Take It To The Next Level Of Operational Excellence

Below is an overview defining the levels of maturity in the model, each with a brief description to help you understand your organization's current communications capacity. You'll also find practical recommendations for improvement at each stage.

Definitions of Levels

Level 0: Aware

No documented communications plan or defined budget. Leadership acknowledgement and general agreement that strategic and tactical communications are a priority and a stated commitment to put one in place within the current year.

- Leadership acknowledges the importance of communications but has no formal plan.
- No defined budget or dedicated staff for communications.
- Limited or inconsistent branding and messaging.
- No formalized outreach campaigns, media relations, or legislative engagement.
- Communications efforts are reactive rather than strategic.
- No use of technology tools for managing communications efforts.

To Advance to Level 1:

- Establish leadership commitment to developing a basic communications strategy.
- Identify and allocate minimal resources (staff time, budget) for initial efforts.
- Create a basic inventory of current communication channels.

- Develop a simple framework for messaging consistency.
- Document key stakeholders and potential audiences.
- Begin drafting a documented strategic communications plan to outline initial goals.

Level 1: Baseline

Documented communications plan with specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for outreach and defined budget. Calendar of events for activities to support impacts and reports. List of defined services provided and audiences served.

- A documented communications plan with SMART goals is established.
- A basic budget for communications is allocated.
- A content calendar for activities, reports, and impact storytelling is initiated.
- A basic list of key services and target audiences is documented.
- Website and social media accounts exist but may be underutilized or inconsistent.
- Leadership and staff begin incorporating communications into strategic discussions.
- Some outreach efforts are made, but engagement is limited.
- A formal, agency-wide project management policy and process is in place.

To Advance to Level 2:

- Develop a basic brand guide including logo usage, colors, and fonts.
- Ensure all digital platforms (website, social media) are regularly updated.
- Standardize messaging across channels.
- Begin collecting and documenting impact stories.
- Establish a basic process for media outreach and press releases.
- Refine and expand the documented communications plan to guide branding and outreach efforts.

Level 2: Branded

Established brand kit, logo, key taglines, website, templates for communications documents and core social media. Defined audience personas and key messages mapped to each one. Consistency of brand evident across communications channels and materials.

- A consistent brand identity is established, including a brand kit (logo, color scheme, messaging).
- A basic website with essential information is active and updated regularly.
- Communications templates for press releases, newsletters, and social media posts are developed.
- Audience personas are defined, and key messages are mapped to each.
- Social media presence is growing with regular posting and engagement.
- Basic media relations efforts begin, such as press releases and occasional media outreach.
- A documented process for sharing success stories and impact reports is introduced.

To Advance to Level 3:

- Establish clear KPIs for measuring audience engagement.
- Introduce a basic CRM or tracking system to monitor outreach efforts.
- Begin active media engagement, including outreach and collaboration.
- Train key staff members on branding, messaging, and storytelling.
- Increase social media engagement through scheduled, interactive posts.
- Expand the strategic communications plan to include engagement strategies and partnership initiatives.

Level 3: Managed

Whether it's increasing brand awareness, generating funds, or boosting positive impacts, clear KPIs are documented to support goals. Data is benchmarked, tracked and monitored for tactical refinements. Technology stack (CRM) and process are in place for operational management and performance.

- Clear KPIs are established and tracked to measure communications success.
- Audience engagement is actively monitored and data is used for refinements.
- A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system or other tracking tools are in place.
- Multi-channel outreach efforts (email, social media, events) are consistent.
- Legislative outreach and advocacy begin to take shape with regular touchpoints.
- A dedicated communications staff member or consultant is in place.
- Partnerships with local media and community organizations are cultivated.
- The agency has formally adopted an agency-wide communication plan or policy deploying multiple methods such as periodic press releases, newsletters, media events, reports, social media, and other means of conveying positive agency news about its programs, activities, and overall success.

To Advance to Level 4:

- Expand content variety (videos, infographics, interactive content).
- Strengthen legislative and community partnerships for advocacy.
- Implement advanced analytics tools to refine engagement strategies.
- Conduct regular staff training on messaging and branding.
- Develop and distribute comprehensive impact reports.
- Update and refine the communications plan to ensure scalability and long-term sustainability.

Level 4: Integrated

Established multi-channel execution plan is active. Consider various content formats such as blog posts, videos, infographics, stories. online and offline platforms (social media, email, content marketing, advocacy, ads, search engine optimization (SEO). Data analytics and reporting capabilities are established (GA4). All channels compliment and support one another.

- Communications strategy is fully integrated across multiple channels (website, social media, print, email, events, paid media).
- Content marketing efforts include blog posts, videos, infographics, and interactive content.
- Advanced analytics tools (Google Analytics, social media insights) are used to track performance.
- Media relations are proactive, including pitching stories and op-ed placements.
- Legislative relationships are maintained with a strategic advocacy plan.
- Regular staff training on messaging, branding, and communications best practices is conducted.
- External partnerships enhance content reach and campaign success.
- Train teams and execute upon the following things, including Raising Donations, Stories for fundraising and grant justification, showing Data impacts.

To Advance to Level 5:

- Implement automated content scheduling and distribution tools.
- Establish a crisis communication strategy.
- Develop targeted messaging for specific audience segments.

- Leverage advocacy campaigns using digital tools.
- Seek recognition for agency efforts through awards and media features.
- Expand and evolve the strategic communications plan to include crisis management and rapid response strategies.

Level 5: Automated

Develop high-quality, relevant, repeatable and valuable content that resonates with your target audience. Schedule content launches ahead for automation. Schedule reports for automated delivery.

- High-quality, repeatable content workflows are in place.
- Scheduling tools are used for automated content distribution across platforms.
- Regular reporting and automated dashboards track communications performance.
- Legislative and community engagement tools (e.g., email automation, petition tools) are utilized.
- AI-driven content tools help generate drafts and analyze engagement trends.
- A formal crisis communications plan is in place.

To Advance to Level 6:

- Adopt AI-driven content creation and engagement analysis tools.
- Personalize audience communications based on engagement data.
- Strengthen advocacy campaigns at local, state, and national levels.
- Implement real-time monitoring of communications performance.
- Enhance storytelling with immersive and multimedia content.
- Ensure the strategic communications plan incorporates AI and automation strategies for next-level efficiency.

Level 6: Optimized

Communications is strategic, data-driven, and widely recognized for innovation and impact. The agency is a trusted voice and media leader.

- AI-enhanced strategies improve content creation, engagement analysis, and reporting efficiency.
- Personalized communications reach the right audience segments at the right time.
- National, state, and local advocacy campaigns leverage digital tools for grassroots organizing.
- Automated grant and funding opportunity alerts streamline financial sustainability efforts.
- Robust impact storytelling techniques capture and share program success effectively.
- Legislative and funding advocacy are deeply embedded in the agency's communications.
- Recognized as thought leaders, earning media coverage, speaking engagements, and policy influence.

Conclusion

This maturity model provides a roadmap for organizations to assess and improve their communications effectiveness. By progressing through the levels, organizations can build a strong, data-driven communications strategy that supports branding, advocacy, media engagement, and ultimately, sustainable community impact. Expand the strategic communications plan to include engagement strategies and partnership initiatives.