Communications Platform and Communications Academy Launch

AMY STORK & JULES WILLIAMS, SOLID GROUND CONSULTING
"A true conservationist knows that the world is not given by her father, but borrowed from her children."

—JOHN JAMES AUDUBON (modified)
Amy Stork has more than 20 years of experience as a consultant, executive staff, and volunteer leader in the nonprofit and public sectors. Amy’s areas of practice include organizational assessment, strategic planning, staffing planning, leadership development, executive coaching, and mediation.
Jules Williams

Facilitator, Solid Ground Consulting

Jules Williams, APR, MA, is an engaging facilitator and strategic communications professional with 13 years of in-house, agency and consulting experience. Jules provides award-winning integrated marketing communications counsel and training to maturing, mission-driven organizations.
Today you will...

• Learn/review terminology
• Learn about the RCD communications platform
• Practice communications skills
• Gain tools and resources
• Learn about upcoming Communications Academy
Building the Communications Platform
The Big Picture Goal

Increase the reach and influence of RCDs:

- Increase visibility of RCDs.
- Build awareness and support for resource conservation in California.
- Build political influence and understanding for the work of RCDs.
Communications planning process

**Discovery:**
- Board Discussion
- 20 Interviews: RCDs/Partners
- CARCD Conference Chat
- District Manager call

**Distillation:**
- Synthesize Info
- Workshop
- Refine

**Activation:**
- CARCD Communications Plan & Tools
- RCD Communications Platform
Branding concepts

- **PROMISE**: Why You Exist
- **ATTRIBUTES**: How You Act While You Deliver Your Promise
- **VALUE**: What You Do To Fulfill Your Promise (Services)
- **POSITION**: Relative to others

Brand Identity

- **Visual**: (Logo, Colors, Fonts, Style, etc.)
- **Verbal**: (Message, tone)
- **Interpersonal**:
- **Physical**: (location, appearance)
Key Findings:

Brand promise – Why you exist

Balancing Humans and Nature

• The RCDs’ unique promise is their genuine commitment to balancing human and natural resource needs (particularly on private lands).

• RCDs genuinely care about the land (natural resources) and people.

“RCDs have the unique job to help people help their lands... comprehensive and integrated services to steward the land, all under the goal of helping people.”

“They are unique in that they recognize that conservation is not exclusion. We need to use the landscape for economic purposes, food, fiber, clean air.”
Key Findings:

Brand value – Your services

Addressing the natural resource issues facing our community, today

• Multi-generational legacy of trust and credibility, esp. with ag.

• Programs that address what matters most to each community.

“RCDs can adapt to the changing needs of their communities because they live locally and understand the dynamics.”

They can be flexible because it is part of their structure to be so.”
On-the-ground work, technical expertise

- Flexible, efficient partner.
- Knowledge and expertise.
- Able to work at many scales.
- Strong connection to landowners.

“I talk about the importance of having community input at the local level. To share with federal and state agencies about the impacts."

Other organizations don’t have that connection at the local level in rural communities.”
Trustworthy partner/resource: a “bridge”

- Non-regulatory.
- Local, public governance.
- Non-partisan.
- Authentic, relational approach.

“RCDs have the heart of a servant and pursue their work from a personal place that allows them to be authentic and vulnerable, earning them the trust of landowners.”

“RCDs can translate liberal visions of environmentalism into conservative visions of on the ground sustainability.”
“Go-to resource”

- The “go-to resource” message is an aspirational promise that exceeds most RCDs’ current capacity.
- Use with caution.

“We need to not oversell ourselves – that is a weakness of RCDs – you can’t call yourself the go-to entity if you can’t live up to it.

“We are so small on relative scale and funding that we cannot be the go-to...”
Using the RCD Communications Platform
What is a communications platform?

- A standardized set of message concepts, key words, and story/image ideas,
- Designed to reach key audiences,
- Using the ideas and images that matter to them,
- In order to motivate their support,
- So you can reach your goals.
Examples of RCD Communications Goals

• Build awareness / understanding among ________________.

• Increase funding for the RCD from ____________.

• Develop internal skills, tools, and systems to support more effective communication.
Branding concepts

PROMISE
Why You Exist

ATTRIBUTES
How You Act While You Deliver Your Promise

VALUE
What You Do To Fulfill Your Promise (Services)

POSITION: Relative to others

Brand Identity

Visual (Logo, Colors, Fonts, Style, etc.)

Verbal (Message, tone)

Interpersonal

Physical (location, appearance)

Brand Experience

Position: Relative to others
Why RCDs Exist

Our Brand Promise

To help our communities care for the land, water, soil, air, plants, and wildlife.

The RCD’s unique value is its focus on the community AND natural resources.

Starting with the brand promise means always starting with WHY, so people understand the context for everything else you tell them.
Why We Matter

Key Messages

• Ideas you want your audience to understand and remember.
• The power comes from consistency.
• Use words, images, and more to carry key messages.
• Use facts, stories, examples to support.
Key Message #1

The RCD helps our local community care for the land, water, soil, air, plants, and wildlife.

We work on the natural resource issues that matter to our community today.
The RCD was founded to help farmers and ranchers tackle erosion and other problems on their land. **As natural resource issues change, we continue to evolve.**

**Today, we serve our community by, (e.g.)**
- helping landowners prepare for wildfire;
- helping farmers plant hedgerows;
- installing fish passage projects.
FACT:
Last year, the RCD distributed 100,000 seedlings to people affected by the 2016 wildfires.

STORY:
“Our property was devastated by the fire. It was so wonderful to go to the RCD last fall and receive hundreds of tree starts– and to get some help with planting, too!” – Jane Homeowner
Key Message #2

The RCD is a trusted resource for our neighbors.
We are non-regulatory, working with landowners on a voluntary basis. Our voluntary conservation programs include...

Our staff are skilled, knowledgeable people who live right here in our community. Our technical / implementation capacities are...

As a special district, the RCD is accountable to our local community for what we do and how we use resources. Our board includes...
FACT:
Last year, we helped farmers improve irrigation on 1,500 acres.

STORY:
“John from the RCD knows his stuff. He’s focused on getting it right, not telling me what I’m doing wrong.”
- Jim T. Grower

STORY:
“I serve on the board of the RCD because I want family farms to stay alive in Amador County.” – Grace W.
Key Message #3

The RCD is an **efficient, effective partner**. We are a **bridge** that links landowners, agencies, and other organizations to achieve shared goals.
We work at many scales – from the individual landowner to entire watersheds.

We partner with state, federal, and other agencies—leveraging outside dollars to meet the needs of our local communities.

As a special district, we are very versatile. We can receive grants, be contracted directly, or develop intergovernmental agreements to complete work on behalf of other public agencies.
FACT:
In 2017, the RCD brought in $4 for every $1 we received from county property taxes.

STORY:
“The RCD is an outstanding partner – after the flood, they wrote multiple grants for federal funding we wouldn’t have been able to secure on our own.”
Key Audiences

- County supervisors
- Partner agencies / funders
- Program participants
- Prospective directors
- State legislators
County Supervisors

Why they are important
• Appoint RCD directors
• May provide discretionary funding

Messages that matter
• Address our community’s issues
• Bring outside funds to county
• Efficient partner to county agencies

Best ways to reach
• In-person meetings
• Presentations/Tours / events
• Newsletters and website
• Local media
Other elements

- Key words
- Brand attributes
- Communication tools
Communications Academy
Course Overview

- **Schedule:** Every two weeks from January to March 2019
- **Format:** 60 min. live webinars via Zoom video conferencing
- **Tools & Resources:** Brand/Messaging Platform & Style Guides, Communications Action Plan & Workbook, Glossary, Resource Guide, Tip Sheets
- **Learner Support:** Email and study groups
Lessons

- Week of Jan. 14 — WHY & WHAT: Setting and achieving simple goals
Lessons

• Week of Jan. 28 — WHO & HOW: Connecting with the right people and getting their attention
Lessons

• Week of Feb. 11 — HOW: Effective visual communications
Lessons

• Week of Feb. 25 — HOW: Informing your stakeholders
Lessons

- Week of Mar. 11 — HOW: Connecting with key players
• Week of Mar. 25 — WHAT: Putting plans into action
Getting strategic with communication

• Communicating at the last minute often misses opportunities, leaves people out or costs twice as much.

• Taking a few simple, intentional steps yields more participation and often costs less.
**Organizational Goal**
High level strategic goal that benefits entire organization, not focused on individual program.

**Communication Goal**
Measurable goal to change the behaviour of a specific audience.

**Target Audience**
Community Decision Makers
These people are...resourceful, connected, passionate, as well as overworked and underfunded.

**Key Messages**

1. The RCD is a flexible, cost-effective partner.
2. As a trusted, non-biased, non-regulatory agency we can convene many partners to bring innovative and cutting edge conservation methods to our communities.

**Tactics**

- Email News or E-blast
- Website
- Event: Day in the District
- 1:1 Meeting
- Media Outreach

**Timeline**

- **MAR***
  - Tactic step #1
  - Tactic step #2
  - Tactic step #3

- **APR***
  - Tactic step #1
  - Tactic step #2
  - Tactic step #3

- **MAY***
  - Tactic step #1
  - Tactic step #2
  - Tactic step #3

- **JUNE***
  - Tactic step #1
  - Tactic step #2
  - Tactic step #3

*Estimated timeline as of 1/1/19.

**Contact**
Name, email address, phone number.

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**Action Plan Sample**

- Differentiating Org goals vs. comms goals
- Prioritizing target audiences
- Customizing key messages
- Putting plans into action
Moving People

Unaware → Awareness → Acceptance → Action
Moving People Activity

- Remember your target audience and key message
- Identify where they are: 
  unaware, aware, acceptance, action
- List 2-5 ideas for tools to use in order to move this audience one step
Questions?

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Next Steps

Get PowerPoint presentation & tools
• Find on conference thumb drive

Register for Communications Academy
• Sign up right now!
• Or Email sara@carcd.org
Thank You!

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