The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes

Council Report

Report Number CORP2017-002

Date: January 10, 2017
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Place: Council Chambers

Ward Community Identifier:

Subject: **Corporate Communications Strategy**

Author/Title: Cheri Davidson, Manager of   Signature:
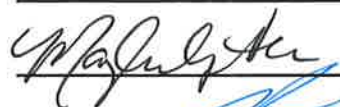**Communications, Advertising and Marketing**

Recommendation(s):

RESOLVED THAT Report CORP-2017-002, Corporate Communications
Strategy, be received.

Department Head: _____
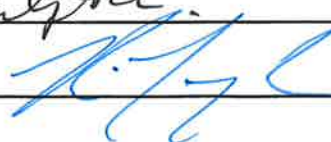
Corporate Services Director / Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

At the Council Meeting of January 26, 2016, Council adopted the following resolution:

CR2016-076

Moved by Councillor Martin, seconded by Councillor Elmslie,
RESOLVED THAT the presentation of CAO Taylor regarding the 2016 - 2019 Strategic Plan, be received;
THAT Report CAO2016-002, 2016-2019 Strategic Plan, be received;
THAT the City of Kawartha Lakes 2016-2019 Strategic Plan, as outlined in Appendix A to Report CAO2016-002, be approved by Council; and
THAT all future staff reports incorporate a replaced heading entitled:
RELATIONSHIP OF RECOMMENDATION(S) TO THE 2016 – 2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

This report addresses that direction.

The 2016 -2019 Strategic Plan includes the goal to foster "A Vibrant and Growing Economy" with a Top 10 Strategic action to "Develop and execute a Branding, Marketing and Communications Strategy."
This strategy will be delivered in two parts:
Part 1: Corporate Communications Strategy
Part 2: Branding and Marketing Strategy (to be delivered in 2017).

The Branding, Marketing and Communications Strategy will be a key driver in achieving the City's growth targets by creating the framework for the City to reach out to broader 'outside' audiences including:
- Potential residents
- Potential visitors
- Potential business operators, developers and other investors
- Talent pool of potential employees

At the same time, the Strategy supports the City's commitment to Customer Service Excellence and enhancing access to services by connecting with 'inside' audiences including:
- Residents (seasonal and year round)
- Business and community partners of the City
- Media
- Council
- Staff

Rationale:

The City of Kawartha Lakes Corporate Communications Strategy was written by staff and is built on the knowledge base acquired through a collection of in-house studies, public input, interviews, departmental input and municipal best practices.

The main objectives of the Corporate Communications Strategy are:
1. Ensure effective communications by aligning communication practices with the way City of Kawartha Lakes stakeholders prefer to communicate with their government.
2. Build capacity across the Corporation to listen and respond to our various audiences.
3. Enable City employees to be positive brand stewards by being fully informed and engaged with their workplace.

Action Based Strategy
The Strategy is action-based with clear deliverables over the next 3 years.

Year One (2017) can be characterized as the Year of Tool Development.
By the end of 2017, this Strategy assures that the City will have a stronger communication foundation in place with access to more robust on-line services. There will be three new City websites (Corporate, Tourism, Library) offering audiences the opportunity to interact with the City to the extent desired. The sites will also offer the City increased ability to target messaging to each audience and to cost-effectively reach a much wider demographic both inside and outside the municipality.
Year One will also realize the development of the **Branding and Marketing Strategy**. This is being created in close alignment with the **Economic Development Strategy**.

Year Two (2018) is dedicated to Refining and Expanding the Tool Kit
Actions include adjusting and refining the use of communication tools based on metrics from Year One. What is working and what isn't? What messages are getting through to which audiences? Where can we be more effective? New features will be added to the website, such as Open Data and targeted e-newsletters. Enhancing the use of social media and community based messaging to effectively communicate with stakeholders will continue to be a priority.

Year 3 (2019) is Looking to the Future of our Tools, exploring custom applications based on analytics and audience feedback.

The Communications Strategy will position the City to meet the needs and demands of its stakeholders. It will allow the City to be more effective in communicating information, thereby ensuring Council priorities are fully

implemented. The goals set out in the Strategy will support the City in building stronger connections on a year-round basis with its many audiences.

Other Alternatives Considered:
No other alternatives were considered. The Strategy is in alignment with the Municipality's Strategic Plan.

Financial Considerations:
Any additional investment required, as noted in the Strategy, will be considered in 2018 or 2019 budgets.

Relationship of Recommendation(s) To The 2016-2019 Strategic Plan:
This report addresses the Municipality's commitment to a Vibrant and Growing Economy and is a strategic enabler for Municipal Service Excellence. It supports the commitment to develop and execute a Branding, Marketing and Communications Strategy.

Review of Accessibility Implications of Any Development or Policy:
N/A

Servicing Comments:

Consultations:
Senior Management Team
City Staff

Attachments:

Corporate
Communciations Strat

Please ensure that all attachments are forwarded with the signed report.

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City of Kawartha Lakes

Corporate Communications Strategy

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Accessible formats available upon request.

About the Strategy

The Strategy supports the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan, and will be a fundamental driver in achieving the City's corporate goals of creating a vibrant and growing economy, providing an exceptional quality of life and a healthy environment.

The Strategy has been developed by the new Communications, Advertising and Marketing division and outlines the goals and action plan for the City of Kawartha Lakes over the next three years, from 2017-2019.

The main objective for the Strategy is to build a framework for the Corporation to align communication practices with the way City of Kawartha Lakes residents and other stakeholders prefer to communicate with their government. Secondary objectives include building capacity to leverage media opportunities and enabling City employees to be fully informed and engaged.

Three unique communication challenges that have been considered are the vast geography of the municipality, fragmented media options and lack of access to high speed internet in some areas.

The City of Kawartha Lakes Corporate Communications Strategy is centred on the knowledge base acquired through a collection of in-house studies, public input, interviews, departmental input and municipal best practices.

Vision

An aware and involved **community**. Engaged and responsive City **employees**.
All stakeholders working together to shape the future of Kawartha Lakes.

Mission

Develop the framework for communications that provides access to information to
engage the City's various audiences while developing
internal communications capacity.

Guiding Principles

Listen closely to all audiences
by building in two-way
communication methods.

Take Responsibility

Every employee and member
of Council has a role to play
in listening to stakeholders,
incorporating feedback and
communicating effectively.

Respond to the needs and
interests of various audiences
with information that is **timely,
clear, accessible
and transparent**.

Collaborate wherever possible
to maximize resources and
effectiveness.

Audiences

Potential residents

Residents
(Seasonal and year round)

Potential visitors

WELCOME
TO CITY OF
KAWARTHA LAKES

Business and community partners of the City

Media

OPEN

Potential business operators, developers and other investors

Staff

Potential staff

Council

Goal One: Continuously improve the **quality of communication** tools available for audiences to connect with the City.

Actions:

Year ① 2017 — Tool development	Year ② 2018 — Refining and expanding the tool kit	Year ③ 2019 — Looking to the future of our tools
Develop the new City **websites** (corporate, tourism, library) to allow ease of access for all audiences. Provide additional online services such as e-commerce, subscription-based updates and mechanisms for two-way communication such as online chat, citizen engagement forum and more.	Continue to add new features and enhance existing platforms based on web analytics and user feedback. Ensure the website features are adequately staffed to support demand.	Explore custom mobile applications based on analytics and audience feedback concerning existing tools. **Investment $**
Develop and maintain **Website Governance Standards**, and implement across all administrators and active users. This will address security, access to post content, standards of language, archiving standards, process for upgrades/improvements, minimum response times and more.		
Seek out **local community opportunities** to share City messaging and engage residents. E.g. Community boards in libraries/arenas/service centres and popular gathering spots, articles in local publications and other grass roots opportunities to reach audiences at the community level.		
	Develop an **Open Data Policy** and integrate data sets into the City website and other open data websites as it becomes available.	
	Refine the frequency, content and delivery of communications based on metrics from year one.	
	Create **e-newsletters** for each applicable audience. Develop editorial content, design and timeline for each.	
Actively build subscriptions to various e-newsletters via communications and advertising plans and by incorporating sign-up reminders into City correspondence with various audiences.		
Create and implement a **Social Media Management Directive and Standard Operating Procedures**. Develop training to support the policy and cultivate new staff and Council capacity in this communication tool. Work toward standard practices in place across the organization.	Enhance the social media platforms and level of engagement among audiences.	Develop advanced metrics to measure success of social media based on best practices. Support ongoing staff training and development for social media excellence.
Collect and analyse all data from existing communications, across all departments, to inform the new **Branding and Advertising Strategy**.	Implement all applicable changes to communications tools based on the new Branding and Advertising Strategy to be developed in 2017. **Investment $**	

"Whether the communication is written or verbal, formal or informal, the question must be asked as to whether or not it was *effective*."

Carl Prichard

Goal Two: Ensure audiences receive information that is **easy to access, timely, clear and transparent**.

Actions:

Year **1** 2017 Tool Development	Year **2** 2018 Refining and expanding the tool kit	Year **3** 2019 Looking to the future of our tools
Create and continually keep current an **inventory of communication vehicles** to reach audiences including: paid/earned media, digital and social media, existing City publications, community/business group publications and others.		
Develop a **schedule of communications** to reach each audience under the guiding principles of timely, clear, accessible and transparent information. This schedule is developed in consultation with various City departments to ensure programs, events and new information are effectively communicated to meet department objectives.	Adjust and refine frequency, content and delivery based on results.	Introduce **new communication vehicles** as required in response to audiences' needs for information. E.g. Open data sets, new social media platforms, new e-newsletters, etc.
		Explore partnerships with community and business groups to assist in sharing City messages and soliciting feedback.
Use existing tools to **measure the reach and impact** of communications. Existing measurement tools include: Analytics from website, e-communications metrics, surveys and polls, community forums, social media, attendance at and success rates of various programs and events run by the City.		
Intentionally communicate each message in **plain language that is easily understood**.		

"How well we communicate is determined not by how well we say things but by how well we are *understood*."
Andrew Grove

Goal Three: Build media relations capacity across the organization.

Actions:

Year ① 2017 Developing capacity	Year ② 2018 Refining and expanding the tool kit	Year ③ 2019 Looking to the future of our tools
Create and execute a **Media Relations Management Directive, Media Relations Standard Operating Procedure, Social Media Management Directive** and **Crisis Communications Plan**.	Continue to operate under the Media Relations Management Directive and Procedures. Monitor and evaluate brand exposure annually.	
Regularly train designated staff spokespersons and target to re-train every three years.		
Identify and train a Crisis Communications Team in case of a large-scale emergency.		
Develop and maintain an **Issues Matrix** for Council, spokespersons and front line staff to be prepared to comment to the media and respond to public inquiry.		
Enhance local media relationships by providing more information on critical or complex issues through media packages, briefings and more face-to-face time with key reporters.	Develop new multi-media resources for press releases and media packages.	Explore new media best practices and integrate with communications strategy.
Proactively identify newsworthy stories across the City and present them in compelling ways to **local** media.		
	In collaboration with the Economic Development Strategy (2017) and Branding and Advertising Strategy (2017), develop a **targeted Media Relations Plan** to reach desired **outside** audiences (potential tourists, residents, investors) through **earned media** with a focus on regional/national/international media. **Investment $**	Based on results in 2018, explore the opportunity to increase internal capacity for media relations, or secure a partner on retainer to achieve objectives with **outside** audiences with a focus on regional/national/international media.

"Excellent public relations can help the rest of the organization be excellent."
James E. Grunig, Excellence in Public Relations and Communications Management

Goal Four: Improve the quality of internal communications.

Actions:

Year ① 2017 Leverage current tools	Year ② 2018 Tool development	Year ③ 2019 Shaping culture
Refine and consistently employ existing tools such as all-staff emails, printed newsletters, staff meetings, employee Intranet and SharePoint to keep staff abreast of corporate policy, procedures, projects and issues.	Alongside the Information Technology Strategy and Human Resource Management Strategy, develop parameters for a **technology solution to connect all employees, regardless of access to the network**. The solution would include incorporating proven best practices **for increasing employee awareness and engagement and shaping corporate culture**. Actively market the new tool to all staff via a variety of communication tools to ensure adoption. **Investment $**	Based on solutions implemented in 2018, measure the effectiveness of the new tool in increasing quality of communications, awareness level and engagement of staff. Define desired employee culture as supported by the Human Resource Management Strategy. Cross promote other communication tools (website, e-newsletters, social media) with this tool to leverage overall success. Compare results to qualitative findings from 2016 Employee Town Hall meetings with Human Resources.

Support staff in complying with current brand standards for logo use, consistency in formatting documents and procuring advertising and marketing materials. Educate **new staff** to be 'brand stewards' during the onboarding process. Educate **current staff** to be 'brand stewards' through regular communication and training of the above processes.
Encourage staff to **stay informed** of City issues and projects by subscribing to e-communications via the website. Encourage staff to **provide input** to the City using current two-way communication vehicles available to all audiences.
Intentionally communicate each message in **plain language that is easily understood**. Respect the time, role, responsibility and interest level of staff.

"An organization's culture and an organization's brand are really just two sides of the same coin."

Tony Hsieh

Communications

Definition: The strategic **management of relationships** between an organization and its diverse stakeholders through the use of a variety of communication methods to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals and serve the public interest.