

Draft Communications Approach

Title: Eastern Health Communications Approach
Date: January 17, 2008

Summary of Communications Challenge

- To guide Eastern Health through the public inquiry process, and regular communications challenges, in a manner that meets the public's expectations for change, signaling a new direction for the organization.

Communications Goals/Objectives:

Overall Goal

To begin to restore public confidence in Eastern Health and improve the organization's reputation

Supporting Goals

- To position Eastern Health as competent, caring, open and operating in the best interests of citizens
- To demonstrate meaningful and substantial change
- To obtain third party support.
- To minimize and/or balance criticism.

Guiding Principles

- We will demonstrate commitment to change and improvement
- We will take every practical action necessary to restore confidence
- We will practice open, honest and timely communication
- We will favour action over inaction
- We will respect the perspective and viewpoints of all our stakeholders

Background / Key Facts

- Eastern Health is the largest integrated health organization in Newfoundland and Labrador, employing more than 12,000 people and serving more than 290,000 citizens within the health region. The organization also offers high-level health care services province-wide.
- Eastern Health was formed with the merger of seven health organizations in 2005. The

organization extends from the St. John's region west to Port Blandford, including all communities on the Avalon, Burin and Bonavista Peninsulas. Contained within Eastern Health are more than 80 hospitals, health care centres, long-term care facilities and community care sites.

- Eastern Health is governed by a board of trustees who come from a variety of backgrounds: community, business, education, health care, municipal politics, law and other areas. Eastern Health receives its funding from the Department of Health and Community Services for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Eastern Health's vision is "Healthy People, Health Communities." Its core values are collaboration, confidentiality, excellence, growth, integrity and respect. According to a statement on its mission/vision/values: "Above all, Eastern Health values the delivery of quality programs and services in a caring manner."
- In May 2007, the government announced a Judicial Commission of Inquiry on Estrogen and Progesterone Receptor Testing for Breast Cancer Patients. Justice Margaret Cameron is the commissioner for the inquiry. Terms of reference state that the commission will:
 - "Inquire into why the estrogen and progesterone hormone receptor tests done between 1997 and 2005 in the Newfoundland and Labrador health system resulted in a high rate of conversions when re-tested;
 - Inquire into why the problem with the estrogen and progesterone hormone receptor tests was not detected until 2005, whether it could have been detected at an earlier date, and whether testing protocols during that period between 1997 and 2005 were reasonable and appropriate;
 - Inquire into whether, once detected, the responsible authorities responded and communicated in an appropriate and timely manner to those women and men who needed re-tests and those who were being tested for the first time;
 - Inquire into whether, once detected, the responsible authorities communicated in an appropriate and timely manner with the general public and internally within the health system about the issues and circumstances surrounding the change in test results and the new testing procedures;
 - Advise whether the estrogen and progesterone hormone receptor testing systems and processes and quality assurance systems currently in place are reflective of "best practice"; and
 - Make the recommendations that the commission of inquiry considers necessary and advisable relating directly to the matters of public concern referred to in paragraphs (a) to (e)."
- The commission is well underway, interviewing potential witnesses, and it is estimated that they will begin hearings in February of 2008. The commission is expected to deliver its final report to the Minister of Health and Community Services by July 30, 2008.
- There is also a class action suit filed with the Supreme Court of Labrador and Newfoundland on behalf of those women impacted by the ER/PR issue.

Perspective

Corporate reputation is a relatively misunderstood term. It is related to corporate image – the difference being that corporate reputation is the overall image developed over time. Corporate reputation is a collective representation of an organization's past actions. It gauges the organization's relative standing both internally and externally with its stakeholders.

Organizations are beginning to recognize the difference between image and reputation. It goes beyond advertising and traditional image management. To build an enduring and resilient reputation an organization must establish strong relationships not only with customers, but also, with other key stakeholders. After all serving the customer only goes so far. An organization also has to meet the expectations of its employees, shareholders, and the communities that it serves. Although attending to these key stakeholders is work enough, organizations cannot afford to ignore other specialized stakeholder groups like governments, analysts, and consumer advocacy groups, to name but a few. The opinions of all of these stakeholders affect the way that an organization is regarded, in essence its corporate reputation.

Everything we do contributes to that reputation – i.e. how the organization is viewed in the outside world. Above all, consistent messages have to be communicated. Therefore, Communications has a role to play as the guardian and consistency-manager of that reputation.

Managing Softer Issues

Essentially, what we are talking about here is making then right emotional connection, both with internal and external constituencies. To put it in the relationships jargon, we want to create an emotional bond between the organization and its employees, customers, and the public. Management has to understand that reputation, image, corporate values, etc. are emotional concepts and the job of Communications, working with others, is to make sure that the right feelings and emotional are generated.

The organization interacts with the public and its various components at two quite distinct levels – the first being its normal business activities; those that are expected. The second level at which it interacts, however, is arguably just as important. It is what the organization stands for in the minds of its customers and the public. It's the reputation, which is connected to how it does business, but is certainly not limited to that.

The organization has the potential to influence the broader reputation through its actions and activities in the community. Thus, its corporate communications, sponsorships, associations, philanthropy, etc. all have to be approached in a strategic manner and have to be consistent with the objectives that the organization has set for itself in terms of how it wants to be regarded by stakeholders.

Why is focusing on corporate reputation worth doing. The payback from a solid corporate reputation lies in closer relationships with the community, public, customers, etc. A positive reputation, the results of the organization's actions and activities in the community, represents an

insurance policy against negative events that may occur, but also is a very powerful corporate asset in terms of gaining the support of key members of the community.

Strategic Considerations

Eastern Health is heading into a public inquiry with very little goodwill from stakeholders. In fact, there is not one group of stakeholders with whom the organization has a solid relationship. There is a need to rebuild with all.

While the public have some confidence that they are receiving good care from individual providers, overall public trust in the system is low. People do not feel they are getting the full story from Eastern Health.

There is a perception that the organization has changed little since the ER/PR issue has emerged. There is a need to address this. Without pre-judging the inquiry recommendations, Eastern Health does need to initiate some decisions prior to the Commission of Inquiry getting underway. There is also an expectation that the CEO take control of the organization and begin working on a new direction.

Eastern Health's relationships with the government are frayed. Government's strategy may be to find out what the issues were/are and make as many changes as possible prior to the Inquiry. Eastern Health has to, likewise, anticipate some of the Inquiry recommendations and get to work on changing things.

Media do not go to Eastern Health as their first source of information. They rely on information from critics of the organization. There is a need to strengthen relationships with media.

The issues facing Eastern Health are complicated. There is no way to argue the issue with dates and numbers. Broader messages and actions are needed. The message of change has not resonated with the public. They do not think anything has changed at Eastern Health. There will be no willingness to listen to the organization's list of improvements until the organization shows it cares, acknowledges past outcomes, and demonstrates that it is moving forward with the best interests of patients foremost in mind.

Strategies

A four-phase communications strategy is recommended.

Phase one—Implement a quick hit strategy / new direction strategy

Initial list of approaches:

- Reorganize communications staff and resources to ensure most effective solutions can be delivered
- Make presentations to key groups to explain communications approach

- Conduct media training with CEO re issues
- Brainstorm potential areas of action
- Announce chief laboratory officer
- Work to be included in announcement of new oncology chair
- Provide update on changes to date (implementation of recommendations)
- Broaden membership on committee prepping for the inquiry with more neutral people
- Identify key groups who are neutral or receptive to Eastern Health
- Take leadership role on key issues (within the province and with counterparts across the country)
- Identify speaking opportunities for CEO
- Draft op-ed for release by CEO
- Take a stand on a specific issue of concern to the public (recruitment and retention of doctors and nurses, etc.)
- Consider new policies around access to information policy (i.e. quicker response times, routine disclosures that don't require applications and fees, etc.)
- Consider ideas such as the appointment of a "chief accountability officer" or "patient advocate/ombudsman"
- Announce specific staff training program – in ethics, disclosure, quality control, etc.
- Coordinate and conduct frequent media visits
- Develop response messages and approach re Supreme Court hearing

Phase two—Conduct thoughtful media relations for the Inquiry

Initial list of approaches:

- Create ER/PR story that is in sync with legal arguments
- Assign someone to monitor inquiry for issues
- Develop a protocol for responding (when to engage in interviews, when to issue a statement, who to contact for questions, etc.)
- Ensure mechanisms for informing the internal audience (i.e. through website and other tools)
- Determine key spokespeople
- Conduct spokesperson training
- Anticipate potential issues
- Develop key messages on expected issues (and Q&As)
- Help prepare opening and closing remarks for legal counsel

Phase three—Practice solid issues management

Initial list of approaches:

- Develop an issues management protocol
 - What constitutes an issue
 - Different categories of issues
 - How front line staff flag issues for communications and senior staff
 - Who speaks on what issues
 - Timelines for responding

- Flow of communications: those directly affected, key staff, government, health stakeholders, media, general public
- Appropriate forms of response (when to issue a statement, when to hold a news conference, when to simply return the media call, when to post info on the website.)
- Evaluation of how issues are handled
- Develop response messages and approach re government's database announcement
- Develop potential messages re other patient issues that could emerge (through normal course of testing and treatment in a large tertiary care facility)

Phase four—Promote good news and regular operations stories

- Develop list of announcements
- Develop list of feature type stories
- Develop a champion for pitching stories to media
- Develop a priority schedule for media training for “area specific” spokespeople (i.e. oncologists, physician recruitment, nursing, long-term care, children's health, health promotion, etc.)

Key Message Elements

- Eastern Health's commitment to quality care
- We care about our patients
- We recognize the need for change
- Commitment to full disclosure throughout the inquiry process
- Commitment to improvement
- Willingness to work with partners
- Need to monitor and update
- Specific ER/PR messages
 - We immediately initiated retesting because if even one patient could benefit we knew that was what we needed to do
 - Feel for the families affected
 - We took and take this issue very seriously
 - We identified the issue and took many steps
 - Patient care was the motivator
 - Sensitive disclosure to patients was a key priority
 - Made / and continue to make improvements

Key Audiences

- Board of Trustees
- Executive Management Team
- Directors
- Oncologists
- Cancer Surgeons
- Pathologists
- Laboratory Management & Technologists
- Other staff
- Volunteers

- Premier's Office
- Secretary to Cabinet (Health Issues)
- Department of Health and Community Services
- Other government departments
- MHAs
- Other health regions
- Cancer Society
- Lawyers for class action suit
- Breast Cancer Patients and Families impacted by the review
- Cancer care advocates
- Opposition politicians
- Other health regions (outside province, for example: Capital Health in Nova Scotia)
- Provincial health professional associations and unions
 - Association of Registered Nurses of NL
 - NL Medical Association
 - Laboratory Technologists Association
 - Etc.
- National groups
 - CMA
 - College
- Medical experts and researchers
 - Other health facilities
 - Universities
- Foundations
- Other health charities
- Media
 - Call in shows
 - Legislative media
 - Weekly newspapers
 - Editors / editorial boards
 - Specific columnists
 - Health specific media
 - Media outside NL
- General public served by Eastern Health region (particularly current cancer patients and their families)
- General public provincially

Priority Audience Approaches

Please note: There is a need for further narrowing of the key audiences with direct and specific approaches for each. The communications strategy drafted in August 2007 is a good start in this regard. At this point, the following assessment is based on our initial discussions of the audiences, and an attempt to find some commonalities within the smaller groups.

Internal

Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Board of trustees ▪ Oncologists ▪ Cancer Surgeons ▪ Pathologists ▪ Laboratory Management & Technologists ▪ Executive Management Team ▪ Directors ▪ Other staff ▪ Volunteers ▪ Other health regions
Considerations	<p>The internal audience is an important one. They need to understand the direction of Eastern Health, and need to feel supported with information. The internal audiences also have the closest contact to many other key stakeholders. They can act as ambassadors for the organization if they feel informed and involved. The groups outlined above have different perspectives and needs for information, which should be identified and differentiated. Demanding work schedules of the audiences also needs to be considered. .</p>
Key Message Areas	<p>You are important to the organization / we want to support you with information / here are the facts / we are committed to improvement / we want to involve you / we welcome your questions, feedback, comments</p>
Tools & Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make initial presentation to leadership ▪ Member of executive management team to be responsible for each internal group ▪ Develop tool kit of facts and messages ▪ Recruit key individuals to act as spokespeople on issues and opportunities ▪ Conduct media training with key individuals ▪ Develop regular communications tool for acting CEO (i.e. weekly e-mail)

Critics of Eastern Heath

Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cancer Society ▪ Lawyers for class action suit ▪ Breast Cancer Patients and Families impacted by the review ▪ Cancer care advocates ▪ Opposition politicians
Considerations	<p>There are a range of active critics of Eastern Health, many of whom are viewed as the first and best sources of information on the ER/PR issue. While these individuals will likely not be convinced to change their positions in the short-term, there is a need to pay attention to these audiences. There is a need to anticipate their criticisms and to develop a system for countering any mis-information that may exist.</p>
Key Messages Areas	<p>We understand their position(s) / we respect their right to express their views / we understand they have an important job to do / we will keep them informed of our initiatives</p>
Tools & Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tracking of comments and criticism from each group ▪ Develop responses as required ▪ Advance briefings on relevant new initiatives ▪ Assign key people within the organization to be the point person for each critic ▪ Find initiatives to work with some groups on, such as health promotion (most appropriate for health charities)

Government

Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Premier's Office ▪ Secretary to Cabinet (Health Issues) ▪ Department of Health and Community Services ▪ Other government departments ▪ MHAs
Considerations	<p>Eastern Health's connection to government is frayed. In fact, in many instances government has distanced itself from Eastern Health. Government's strategy may be to find out what the issues were and make as many changes as possible prior to the Inquiry.</p>
Key Message	<p>Understand your difficulties / only way for industry to survive / work with you on transitions / keep you informed / reasonable timeframes</p>
Tools & Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build contacts and relationships within each audience within government ▪ Ask for heads-up before key announcements ▪ Consider good news announcements to involve government in ▪ Develop tool kit of facts and messages

Media

Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Call in shows ▪ Legislative media ▪ Weekly newspapers ▪ Editors ▪ Health specific media
Considerations	The topic of ER/PR testing has been the subject of significant media coverage. Media have focused on issues of transparency, responsibility, and numbers of individuals affected – in addition to paying attention to the stories of those individuals. Third parties (outside of Eastern Health) are typically given more credence and consideration than Eastern Health itself. Time and effort must be taken to rebuild relationships with media.
Key Message	Eastern Health is committed to delivering quality care to patients / we welcome the inquiry / we are committed to improvement / we are committed to taking every step possible to improve the quality of our care and our communications to the public
Tools & Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant media releases ▪ Op-eds on Eastern Health's direction ▪ Media interviews ▪ Editorial boards ▪ Timely updates

General Public

Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General public served by Eastern Health region (particularly current cancer patients and their families) ▪ General public provincially
Considerations	The general public view health care as an important issue, with issues related to recruitment and retention of health professionals high on the list. While most have positive views about specific care providers, the organization ranks low on matters related to communications, openness and transparency. Trust is strongest with doctors and nurses, and much less so with "health officials and administrators." There is a need to rebuild trust and confidence in Eastern Health to where it should be for an organization of its nature.

Key Message Areas	Our first priority is the health and well-being of our patients / we are committed to making changes and improving for the future / we want people to have the facts about the ER/PR issue and we welcome the inquiry
Tools & Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specific handout for current cancer patients ▪ Backgrounder on the ER/PR issue ▪ Website and newsletter stories ▪ Media relations efforts ▪ Information in health care offices ▪ Advertising as required

Potential Allies

Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Other health regions (outside province, for example: Capital Health in Nova Scotia) ▪ Provincial health professions and unions* such as Association of Registered Nurses, NL Medical Association, etc. <i>*Though they may be critical, they share similar challenges on this issue and there may be potential to work together.</i> ▪ National groups (CMA, ▪ Medical experts and researchers (i.e. Mt. Sinai, universities, etc.) ▪ Foundations ▪ Other health charities
Considerations	There are organizations (and individuals) out there who may be potential allies for Eastern Health. That doesn't necessarily mean that they won't be critical from time to time, but it does mean that there is some common ground you can agree on. For example, the Canadian Medical Association will support Eastern Health's position on peer review. Likewise, the health professions may support specific programs and directions related to staff issues. Others may be able to provide outside, broader perspective on current issues at Eastern Health. The first step is to identify the areas where these groups can be supportive and approach them for a discussion of common interests.
Key Message Areas	You are an important partner / we want to talk with you about how we can plan and improve for the future / Our first priority is the health and

	well-being of our patients / we are committed to making changes and improving / we want people to have the facts about the ER/PR issue and we welcome the inquiry
Tools & Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ideas re collaboration opportunities ▪ Backgrounder / presentation on ER/PR issue and changes to date ▪ Meetings with key individuals

Summary of Potential Communications Tools

- News release
- Highlights fact sheet
- Speaking notes for CEO / senior staff
- Power Point Presentation for any media briefing / stakeholder briefing sessions
- Heads-up phone calls prior to announcements
- Mail out letter and package
- Key messages and Q&As for minister, premier and MLAs
- Stakeholder & media prep session
- Advertising
- Website

Evaluation

- Media monitoring
- Stakeholder feedback
- Electronic and print correspondence