

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 29, 2013

Item 1, Report No. 45, of the Committee of the Whole (Working Session), which was adopted, as amended, by the Council of the City of Vaughan on October 29, 2013, as follows:

By approving the following:

That Communication C4 from the Director of Corporate Communications, dated October 29, 2013, be received.

1 CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The Committee of the Whole (Working Session) recommends:

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Director of Corporate Communications, dated October 22, 2013, be approved;**
- 2) That staff report to the October 29, 2013 Council meeting with an organizational chart for Corporate Communications and comments from Information and Technology Management (ITM) on the use of Vaughan On Line (VOL); and**
- 3) That the following Communications be received:
C1. Presentation material, entitled, “*The Way Forward*”, and
C2. Strategy Report, entitled, “*The Way Forward: A Corporate Communications Strategy*”.**

Recommendation

The Director of Corporate Communications, in consultation with the Executive Director, Office of the City Manager, recommends:

1. That the presentation and strategy report titled: “The Way Forward: A Corporate Communications Strategy” be received;
2. That the Strategy positioning the City of Vaughan as a two-way communications organization – both internally and externally, be adopted;
3. That Corporate Communication staff convene a meeting with internal stakeholders to discuss the goals and objectives outlined in the strategy, the approach, and the Phase One work plan; and
4. That the staffing and organization of the department be realigned as to provide best-in-class corporate communication services which will maximize the opportunity to fulfill the strategy’s goals, objectives and actions, and;
5. That any financial requirements to implement the strategy be considered during the annual budget process.

Contribution to Sustainability

The Corporate Communications Strategy supports a key component of the Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan to create a vibrant community through civic engagement.

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Economic Impact

Elements of the strategy are reliant upon two Additional Resource Requests (ARR) that have been submitted for 2014. The first ARR is a conversion of a vacant senior position into two junior level communications co-ordinators, who will assist in the delivery of the many new tactics and communications initiatives that are outlined in the strategy. The second ARR for a web content manager, which was previously recognized for potential funding in 2016, is being requested to move to 2014 to support the delivery of the strategy. As outlined in the strategy, the demand from stakeholders for increased web and online communications initiatives has increased, and will continue to increase in the near future. The City's corporate website is essential to the operations of departments within the City and is the largest communications channel available, receiving on average 100,000 visits per month. The web content manager will assist all departments across the organization in ensuring web content is current and concise, as well as manage the delivery of the other online communication channels within the strategy.

Potential costs of Phase Two may include programming dollars and additional personnel. Costs will be determined when the analysis of Phase One of the Strategy is complete. At that time, new funding requirements will be requested through the City's annual budget process.

Communications Plan

The Corporate Communications Department will inform other City departments and key stakeholders about the Communications Strategy's strategic purpose and direction through presentations to teams, staff and senior management after it is approved by Council.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present to Council a multi-phased communications strategy that will align corporate communications to the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan and our corporate values.

Background/Analysis

In 2002, the mandate of the then newly-established Corporate Communications Department was presented in the strategic plan, *Mastering Communications Excellence*, approved by Council on June 24, 2002. Over time, the department's goals and objectives did not evolve to meet the challenges of a rapidly-changing communications landscape and the growth of the City.

The attached Corporate Communications Strategy is the first comprehensive and multi-phased communications strategy for the City of Vaughan. This document serves as a model of how best to support the delivery of two-way communications between the City of Vaughan and its citizens.

The goals and objectives outlined in the strategy align communications to the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan and our corporate values. In addition, it supports a positive internal corporate culture, while, at the same time, turning the communications research collected into actionable items.

The role of communications in municipal government continues to quickly change and evolve. With the wide adoption of new technologies, the communications process has progressed beyond traditional print and broadcast methods to include communications channels that are more responsive, accessible and broadly-based. This Communications Strategy serves as a working framework for understanding and responding to these changes.

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The main objectives for developing a communications strategy are:

- to provide a framework for the Corporation on how the City can best exchange information with the public;
- to maximize the use of technology and build upon the benefits of social media and new media channels (digital, web, mobile); and
- to align communications channels with the way citizens prefer to communicate with local government.

Based on industry best practices, market research and current communication trends, as well as input from internal and external stakeholders, the Communications Strategy outlines a new vision, framework and plan that will guide the communications function at the City of Vaughan for the next two years.

This Communications Strategy will be executed in a multi-phased approach. Phase One will begin in 2013 and conclude in 2015 and will include several actionable items that will be employed to reach the goals and objectives outlined in the plan.

Near the conclusion of Phase One, an analysis of communications measurements will help form the next phase of this strategy – the Five-Year Communications Plan. This plan will map out the future framework and vision of the City of Vaughan communications function, building on the success of the 2013-2015 Communications Strategy.

The Communications Strategy has been developed with:

- Public input through a survey on preferred methods of communications
- Input from Council and senior management
- A departmental review and SWOT analysis, including an environmental scan of best practices in municipal government communications
- Review of citizen surveys to identify issues impacting the City

The purpose of the Corporate Communications Strategy is to identify the opportunities and actions that will lead to more robust and citizen-focused communications to strengthen the City's brand and reputation. The following priorities have been identified:

- Promote the City brand and build credibility
- Engage the community through citizen-focused communications
- Develop an engaged and informed workforce

At the City of Vaughan, the emphasis on open, transparent and accessible government is supported by the City's commitment to two-way communications. This Communications Strategy provides the process for evaluating and employing communications products and services that effectively engage the larger community and positions the Corporate Communications department to successfully deliver on its mandate.

A strategic approach to communications requires the alignment of communications activities and outputs with the overall strategic goals of the Corporation.

These efforts are directly aligned with the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan and its vision statement to realize "A city of choice that promotes diversity, innovation and opportunity for all citizens, fostering a vibrant community life that is inclusive, progressive, environmentally responsible and sustainable."

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Communications Research

Communications research was conducted using a four-step approach, including both quantitative and qualitative data-gathering, and consisted of the following components:

- Online survey – Corporate Communications conducted an online survey to collect data and satisfaction levels. 752 surveys submitted.
- Telephone poll (automated) – 1,000 automated calls were placed, polling residents on their communications preferences.
- Focus group – Residents participated in a workshop as a method of collecting qualitative and quantitative data on communications tools and practices. 10 members (2-hour session).
- Conference call – A conference call was held to further discuss topics raised by the focus group. 10 participants.

In addition to these components, surveys were distributed at Vaughan festivals: Maple Fest, Thornhill Village Festival, Binder Twine and Woodbridge Fall Fair.

Results

Survey results indicate that most residents, across all age groups, are comfortable with technology and mobile devices and prefer increased electronic formats for information delivery along with supporting printed materials.

The research confirms that there is an opportunity and a need to move toward more technically advanced communications methods. Residents want to be informed and expect the City to effectively provide information in a format that makes it easy for them to engage where and when it is convenient for them.

- Nearly 6-in-10 (58 per cent) feel that there is a need for a more effective communications strategy – one that is more engaging and relevant to the residents.
- There appears to be a strong need for information about everything that is going on in the city, indicating that the existing efforts of disseminating information are not in line with residents' expectations.
- 89 per cent of residents feel it is important to receive regular communications from the City.
- Residents would like to see more social media (Twitter, Facebook).
- Mobile apps and a mobile friendly website are important. People are busy and want the ability to connect anywhere and at any time.
- Although electronic communications are preferred, hard copy is still an important component in the mix of communications.
- Top topics of interest are City programs and services, news, events, Recreation and Culture updates, and building projects and new development.
- Citizen engagement and inclusivity are important.

Devices and Technology

IN VAUGHAN:

- 72 per cent* of Vaughan respondents use desktop or laptop computers most frequently
- 38 per cent* of Vaughan respondents use smartphone and mobile apps most frequently
- 94 per cent* of respondents have the internet at home
- 1.5 million visits to the City's website annually

** Results collected through Communications research conducted in Aug-Sept 2013*

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ACROSS CANADA:

- 86 per cent of Canadians have internet access
- 37 per cent now have mobile internet, compared to 5% in 2001
- 95 per cent under 55 years of age have internet access, 47% have mobile access
- 67 per cent over 55 years of age have internet access, 16% have mobile access
- 92 per cent of Canadians have sought news from a computer
- Only 7 per cent of Canadians currently own a computer tablet
- Smartphone owners spend on average 2.5 hours a day on their mobile device
- 31 per cent of Canadians consider themselves active social media users
- 43 per cent find out about news and current events via social media/social networking

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020 Strategic Plan

The attached Corporate Communications Strategy is aligned with the City's strategic plan in demonstrating leadership and promoting effective governance by strengthening the City's image and identity through effective communications with City stakeholders.

Regional Implications

This strategy will allow us to better connect and share information with our regional and municipal stakeholders.

Conclusion

This Communications Strategy marks a new beginning for the City of Vaughan's Corporate Communications department. It sets out – for the first time – a comprehensive approach for the City to engage in two-way communications with residents that is based on stakeholder feedback, best practices, market research and communications trends.

To achieve this mission, the department is positioning itself to take a giant LEAP – Lead, Engage, Action and Position – into the future. These goals will guide the department as it moves forward, while focusing on four core principles: consistency, citizen-focused communications, continuous improvement and feedback, and support of the corporate culture.

This strategy also reflects the key objectives of providing a framework that will allow the City to best exchange information with the public, maximizing the use of technology while building upon the benefits of social and new media channels, and employing the communications tools that Vaughan residents prefer.

One of the key changes outlined in the strategy is a new “team” approach to communications. The department will be reorganized by areas of focus and specialty: media relations, eCommunications, marketing, and strategic communications. As well, communications specialists will be assigned to specific commissions in an effort to more effectively identify emerging issues and to keep the public informed on what matters to them.

A multi-phased approach will be employed to implement this multi-year strategy which will allow Corporate Communications to effectively measure its success. These results will be used, in part, to set the future direction of Corporate Communications through Phase Two, a Five-year Communications Plan beginning in 2015. Measurement is central to the success of this strategy and each action item will be measured semi-annually to ensure the team is on track to achieve its goals and objectives. Corporate Communications is committed to achieving the City's strategic goals, and will analyze measurement results to ensure it is meeting this commitment.

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This strategy represents a leap from the past for Corporate Communications. It outlines a new plan for supporting the mandate to deliver two-way communications between the City and its residents, while supporting the Corporation's commitment to open, transparent and accessible government.

Attachments

Attachment #1: 2013-15 Corporate Communications Strategy

Report prepared by:

Gary Williams, Director, Corporate Communications

(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)

DATE: October 29, 2013

TO: Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua, P.C., Mayor
Members of Council
Senior Management Team

FROM: Gary Williams, Director of Corporate Communications

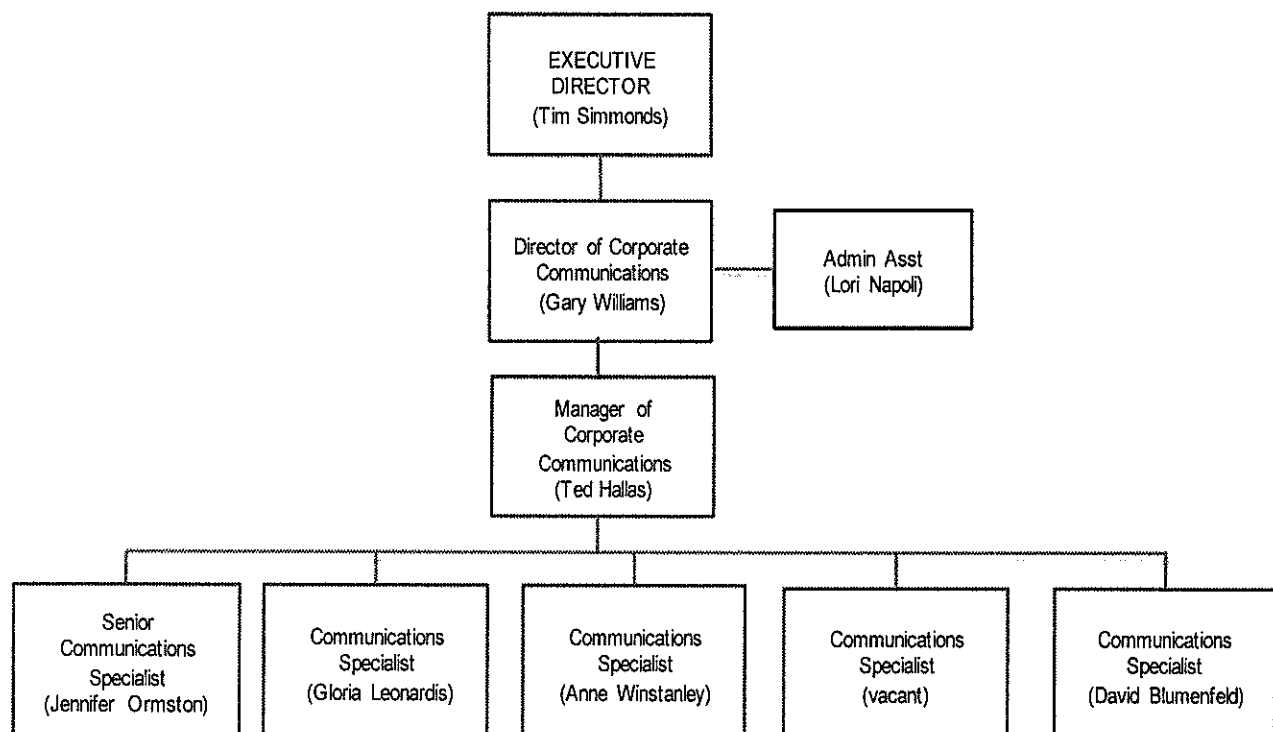
C	4
Item #	1
Report No.	45 (WS)
Council - OCTOBER 29/13	

**RE: COUNCIL MEETING – OCTOBER 29, 2013
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) REPORT 45, ITEM 1
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

The purpose of this memorandum is to address the recommendation from the Committee of the Whole (Working Session) held on October 22, 2013:

“That staff report to the October 29, 2013 Council meeting with an organizational chart for Corporate Communications and comments from Information and Technology Management (ITM) on the use of Vaughan On Line (VOL).”

Corporate Communications organizational chart:



Use of Vaughan On Line:

Vaughan On Line (VOL) refers to the City's official website. As the City's primary communications vehicle, the *vaughan.ca* website is an important piece of City infrastructure in communicating municipal service standards and up-to-date information on City programs and initiatives, as well as generating revenue through online services. In fact, a majority of communications generated by the City directs residents, businesses and visitors to the website as a primary source of information.

The City's new website, which was launched in January 2013, is the result of a four-year investment in the complete redesign and restructuring of the City's online presence.

In consultation with the Chief Information Officer and the Information & Technology Management (ITM) department, the current roles of the respective departments in managing the City's website are as follows:

ITM is responsible for providing and maintaining the technology infrastructure for the website and other eCommunications tools such as eNewsletters. This role is focused on the technical function of the website, including navigation tools and embedding functions such as video and multi-media.

Corporate Communications is currently responsible for the homepage content of the website, including the "look and feel", artwork, photos and videos. Other sections of the website that Corporate Communications updates include City News, Events Calendar, major projects index, and Disruptions and Closures. With the launch of the new website and its decentralized content management system, each City department is responsible for creating, posting and updating their own website content.

vaughan.ca statistics:

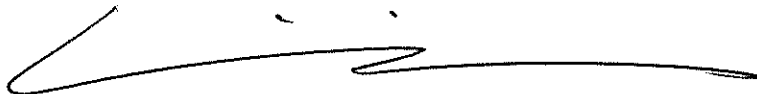
	2010	2011	2012
# of visits	1,036,058	1,222,317	1,341,763
Avg # of Pages per visit		3.12	2.92
Avg visit duration		1:42 (min)	1:36 (min)
% usage increase (2010 base)		+17.9%	+29.5%

Since the launch of the new website, the amount of posted information has increased dramatically. In the last eight months, the number of webpages has increased 46 per cent and the number of documents has increased by 45 per cent.

Currently, Corporate Communications has a recognized additional resource request (ARR) for a new full-time position of Communications Specialist, Website Content Management. As part of the budget process, a request has been made to move this previously-recognized ARR from 2016 to 2014.

Requests have been made to Corporate Communications from several departments for assistance in creating and updating their website content.

Currently, Corporate Communications does not have the staff resources to provide website communications support to all departments, or review all content for brand consistency and effectiveness of user engagement. This new position will support all departments that maintain a major presence on the City's website and utilize e-communications.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Williams', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

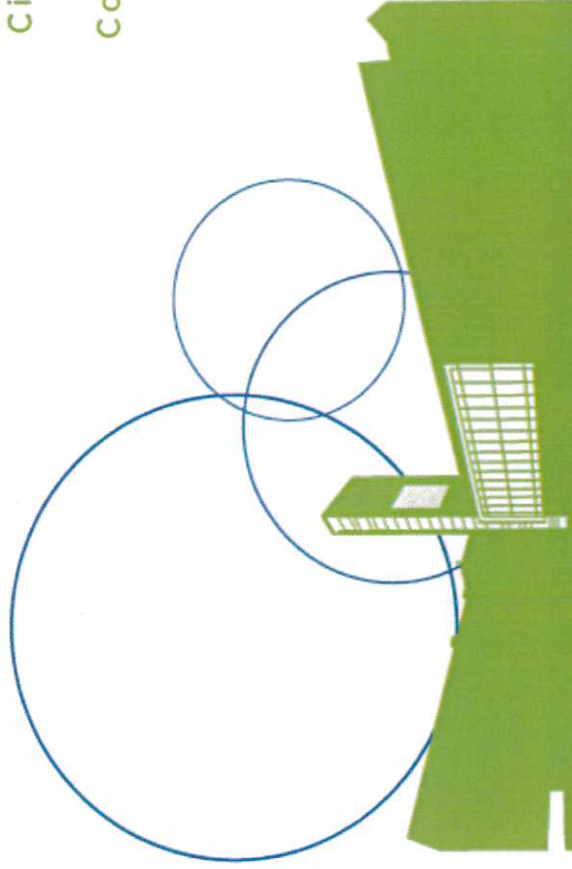
Gary Williams, Director
Corporate Communications

c.c. Barbara Cribbett, Interim City Manager
Tim Simmonds, Executive Director, City Manager's Office
Dimitri Yampolsky, Chief Information Officer

C1 - CW (ws)
October 22/13
Item 1

The Way

City of Vaughan
Corporate
Communications
Strategy



Forward



Communications Field Is Evolving

- 10 years since the last communications strategy was launched
- Many things have changed in this field over that time:
 - Residents prefer to receive information in a variety of formats, not just print
 - A major shift to “electronic” communications
 - A shift away from one-way communications
 - Demand for information 24/7
 - Quick and easy access to information



Consider this:

In 2000...

- 40 per cent of Canadians were internet users
- Social media did not exist
- Smartphones were not around

Now...

- 86 per cent of Canadians are internet users
- More than 10 million Twitter accounts in Canada
- 56 per cent of Canadians use a smartphone



Changing Lexicon



The Way Forward

The new Communications Strategy addresses these and other evolving trends in communications

- Provides a clear mission with goals and objectives
- Includes a multi-phased implementation approach
- Identifies multiple ways to effectively engage with the community
- Outlines a plan of action
- Includes comprehensive plan to measure success





Mission Statement

The City of Vaughan is a two-way communications organization - both internally and externally. The Corporate Communications department is committed to engaging our citizens and measuring our effectiveness in communications to ensure a broader awareness and understanding of City programs and services.



Communication Goals

Lead:	Engage:	Action:	Position:
Employ the right blend of best practices and innovative communication methods to become a leader in municipal communications.	Promote citizen participation – both online and off.	Take a proactive and efficient approach to communicating the Vaughan story to our stakeholders.	Position Vaughan as an emerging world-class city by building an effective, accessible system of two-way communications between City officials, residents and stakeholders.



Taking a **LEAP** forward

Major Themes

Three overarching themes are woven throughout the strategy:

1. Community engagement
2. Use of new technology
3. Telling the Vaughan story



Community Engagement

Mission to become a two-way communications organization

- Shift from communicating “to” to communicating “with” our key stakeholders
- Facilitating discussion and idea sharing

Strategy outlines several tactics to achieve this

- Examples include enhanced social media usage, new corporate mobile app, increased use of video, new corporate blog

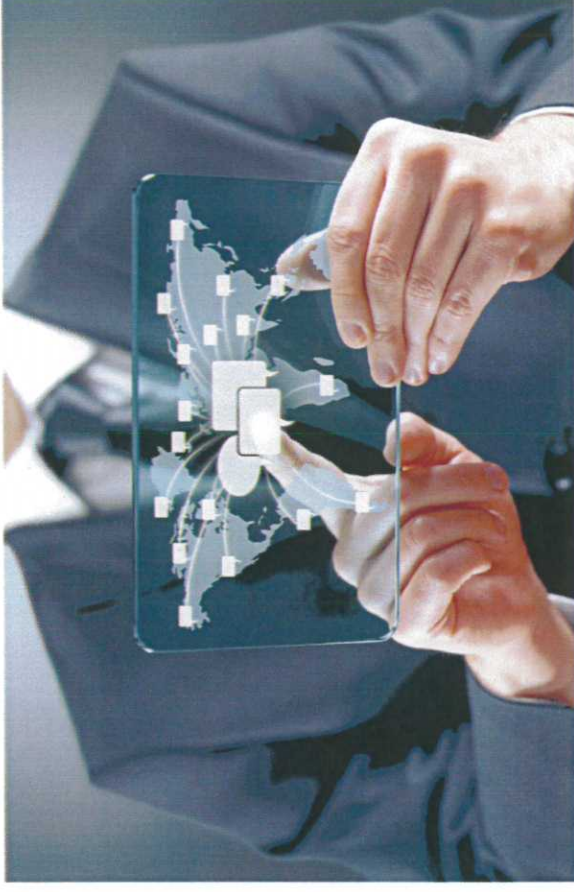


Use of New Technologies

- Corporate Communications will leverage new and emerging technologies to achieve mission and objectives
- Strategy outlines several tactics to achieve this
 - Examples include enhanced website, increase mobile and social media



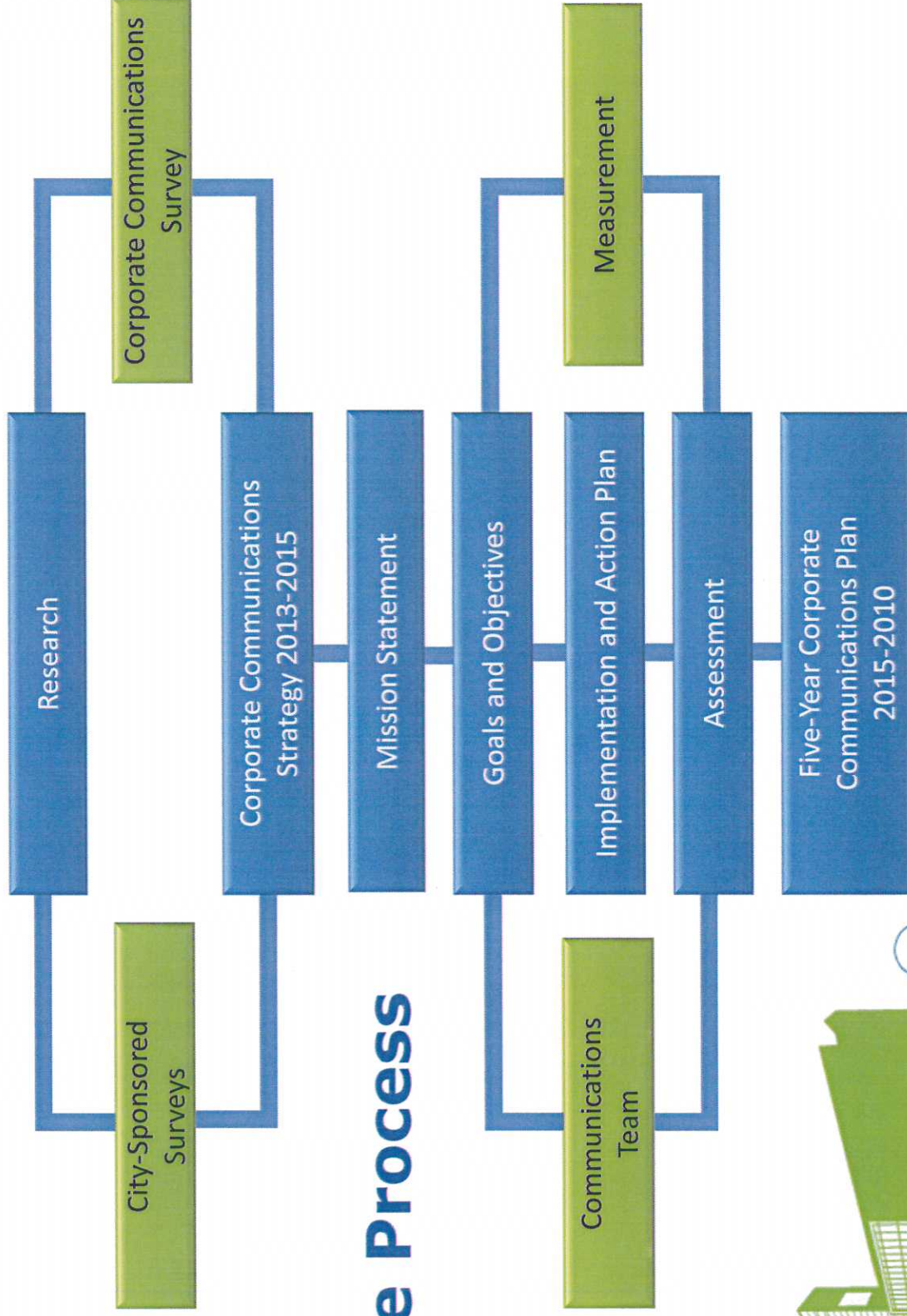
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Telling the Vaughan Story

- Sharing the Vaughan story with stakeholders is a key priority in the strategy
- We will work to achieve this goal through proactive media relations
 - Getting the information out in a timely fashion
- Increase our communications avenues
- Enhancing internal communication - employees are ambassadors for the municipality





The Process



Facts

- Vaughan residents provided feedback on this strategy by participating in an online survey, telephone poll, focus group and conference call in the summer of 2013
- **Key findings:**
 - It is important to receive regular communication from the City
 - Simple “get to the point” information needed
 - More social media and more opportunities to provide feedback
 - Mobile apps and a mobile friendly website are important
 - Electronic communications are preferred
 - Citizen engagement is important



Multi-phased Implementation

- Phase 1: Communications Strategy (2013-2015)
 - Has a number of actionable items to achieve goals and objectives
 - Measurement is a key component
- Phase 2: Five-year Communications Plan
 - Will map out **framework** and vision for the future of Vaughan's communications function
 - Will identify **gaps and needs** based on measurement
 - Build on **success** of the Communications Strategy



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Measurement

- Measurement will be a key focus for Corporate Communications over the next two years
- Department will review success indicators associated with each objective in all plans
- Feedback will be collected from internal and external sources
- The findings will be used to create a solid foundation for the Five-year Communications Plan



The Actions

Area	Actions
eCommunications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media, eNewsletters, website content, videos, corporate mobile app, online services
Media Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive approach, multi-media news releases, inquiry response
Council Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C3 mobile application, eNewsletter enhancement, major initiative support
Internal Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal communications campaign, steering committee, social intranet platform (Jostle), City Manager's communications plan
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain-language standards, corporate style guide, advertising strategy



Conclusion: Lead Engage Action Position

- Communications Strategy will position the City to continue to take the **LEAP** forward
- Positions us to become a **two-way communications** organization - both internally and externally
- Through the strategy, the City will improve **citizen engagement**, use new and effective technologies, and tell the Vaughan story
- Continually **measure our success** and adapt to the always evolving world of communications



Thank you



Questions



C2 - CW(ws)
October 22/13
Item 1

The Way Forward



City of Vaughan
Corporate
Communications
Strategy

LEAD ENGAGE ACTION POSITION

LEAP





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Corporate Communications Communications Strategy

Executive Summary

This is the first comprehensive and multi-phased Communications Strategy for the City of Vaughan. This document serves as a model of how best to support the delivery of two-way communications between the City of Vaughan and its stakeholders.

The goals and objectives outlined in the strategy align communications to the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan and our corporate values. In addition, it supports a positive internal corporate culture, while, at the same time, turning the communications research collected into actionable items.

The purpose of this Communications Strategy is:

1. to provide a framework for the Corporation on how the City can best exchange information with the public and internal staff;
2. to maximize the use of technology and build upon the benefits of social media and new media channels (digital, web, mobile); and
3. to employ communications tools that the citizens of Vaughan prefer and will use to receive and provide information to the City.



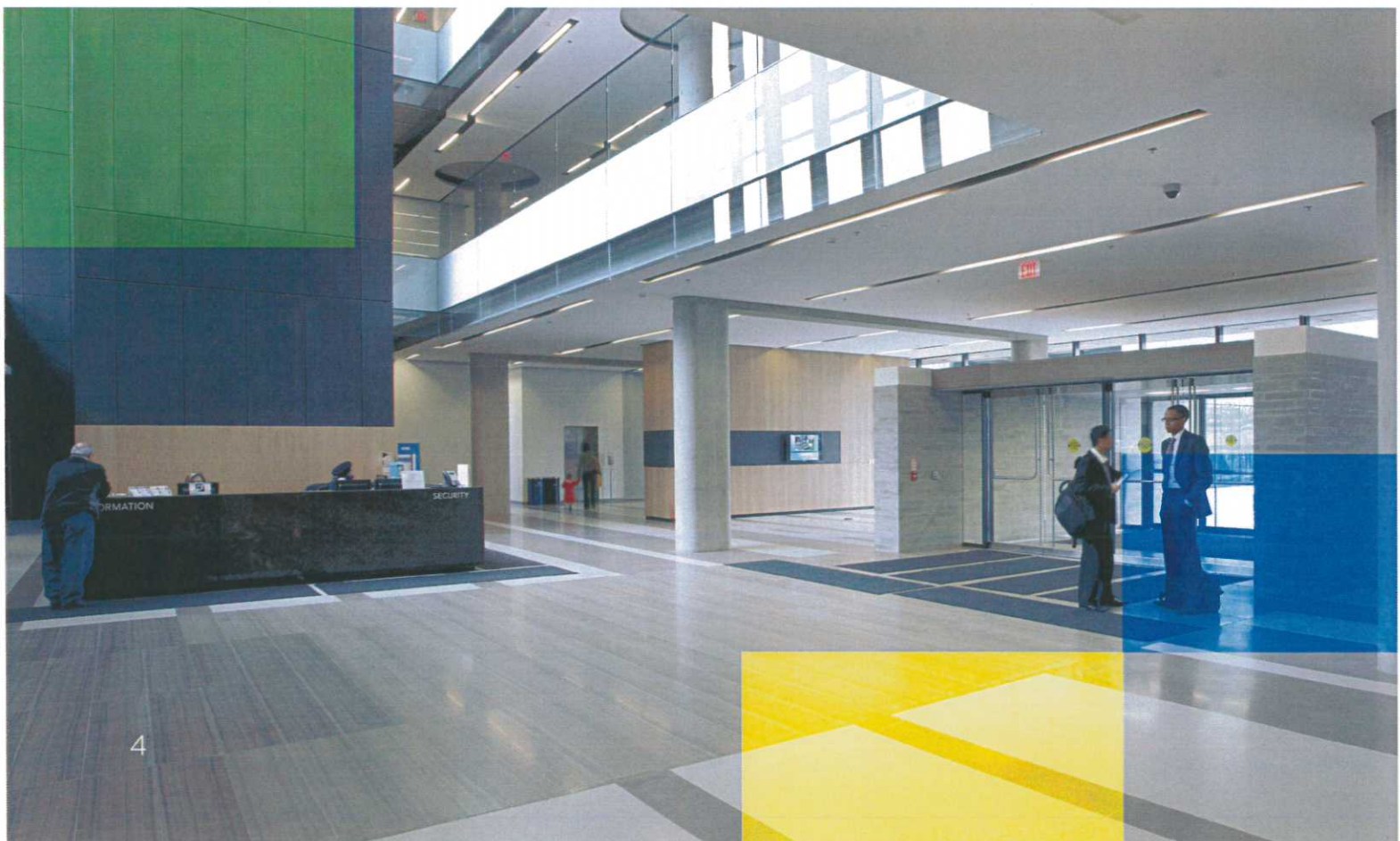
Based on industry best practices, market research and current communication trends, as well as input from internal and external stakeholders, the Communications Strategy outlines a new communications mission, framework and plan that will guide the communications function at the City of Vaughan for many years.

Key priorities for producing the Communications Strategy include:

- Articulating the communications mission
- Building capacity and skill set within the Corporate Communications department
- Delivering a strategic communications program that is based on research and promotes the City's image
- Shifting from City-focused to citizen-focused communications
- Utilizing a system within Communications to gauge feedback, measure our success and continually enhance service levels

The emphasis on open, transparent and accessible government is supported by the City's commitment to two-way communications.

This Communications Strategy provides the process for evaluating and employing communications products and services that effectively engage the larger community and position the Corporate Communications department to successfully deliver on its mandate.





The Changing Role of Communications

The role of communications in municipal government continues to change and evolve. Empowered by new technologies, the communications process has progressed beyond traditional print and broadcast methods to include communications channels that are more responsive, accessible and broadly-based. Specifically, there are more opportunities to engage in two-way communications with citizens in order to facilitate comments and public input on City programs and initiatives.

In managing stakeholder expectations, there must be a recognition that a uniform target audience does not exist – the market consists of many different groups which have preferences for specific communications and how

they receive these communications (i.e. print versus electronic). Information can be delivered using one or more platforms to reach the widest audience.

New communications channels include streaming video, interactive websites, online services, mobile apps and social media networks. These technologies provide a solution to the need to deliver information in a timely manner and in an accessible format. In addition, there is the opportunity to improve public engagement through the use of online surveys, focus groups and virtual town hall meetings.

The process for employing communications products and services that effectively engage the larger community requires ongoing measurement and

evaluation. It is important to address changing demographics and the adoption of new technologies.

In order to better understand the market and the expectations of stakeholders, the communications function has expanded to include media monitoring, social media monitoring and tracking general trends and developments that could impact municipalities. Ultimately, the goal is to better understand the priorities of residents and local businesses as they relate to the delivery of City services. The emphasis on open, transparent and accessible government is supported by a commitment to two-way communications.

Aligning Communications with the Strategic Vision

A strategic approach to communications requires the alignment of communications activities and outputs with the overall strategic goals of the Corporation.

These efforts are directly aligned with the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan and its vision statement to realize "A city of choice that promotes diversity, innovation and opportunity for all citizens, fostering a vibrant community life that is inclusive, progressive, environmentally responsible and sustainable."

The main operational areas of corporate communications include:

- eCommunications including eNewsletters
- Website content
- Social media
- Media relations and media monitoring
- Issues management
- Council communications support
- Internal communications
- Client services in support of other City departments
- Marketing communications
- Advertising
- Public relations and environmental scanning
- Communications policy development



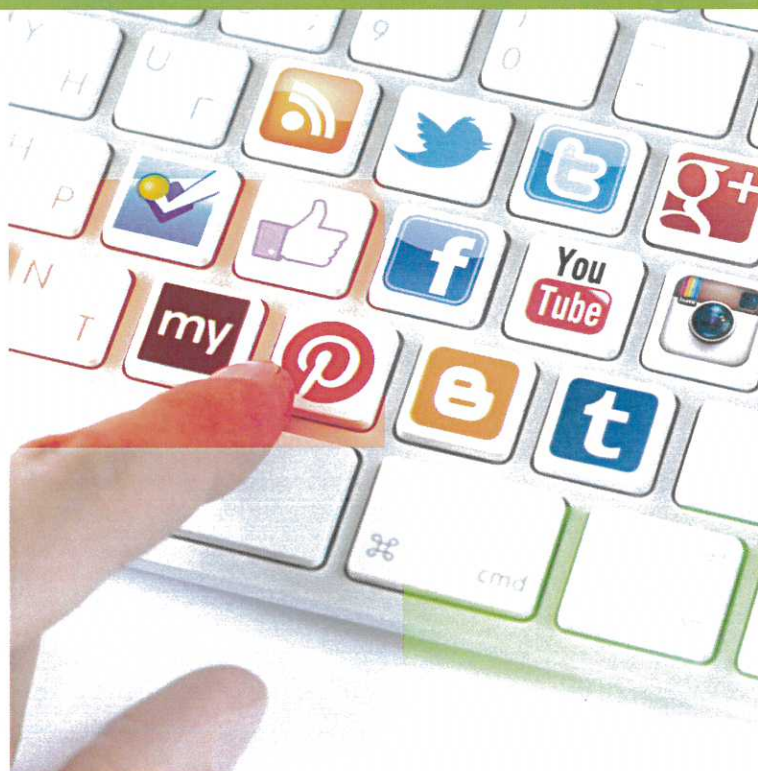
A strategic initiative in Vaughan Vision 2020 assigns the tasks of establishing a more effective model for community engagement and enhancing the City's public consultation strategy to Corporate Communications. This theme of community engagement is consistent with an emphasis on two-way communications. In addition, it is central to activities relating to branding, marketing, web-site management and social media.

eCommunications

Electronic communications, or eCommunications, includes all web-based technologies including websites, eNewsletters, mobile applications and social media platforms. These channels of communication allow the City to move beyond simply posting information about City programs and initiatives (one-way or broadcast communications) to facilitating a higher level of user interactivity including online comments (two-way communications) and online services.

As the municipality's main communications vehicle, the City's website **vaughan.ca** is funded as essential infrastructure to deliver online services to residents, businesses and other stakeholders. The Corporate Communications department has overall responsibility for website content management. The recent launch of a new website highlights the City's commitment to delivering service excellence to residents and providing more opportunities for civic engagement.

All eCommunications at the City will have
a common focus on community engagement
and support the commitment to employ
new technologies to improve communications
with residents, businesses and visitors.



A primary objective is to increase two-way communications by better integrating social media into the communications mix and promoting the use of this new communications channel to all stakeholders. Currently, the City has a corporate social media presence on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, administered by the Corporate Communications department. Corporate social media sites hosted by the City are promoted in all advertising and marketing efforts.

Media Relations: Telling the Vaughan Story

The goal of media relations is to tell the story of the City of Vaughan. The term "media relations" refers to establishing and maintaining a positive relationship between the City and the media for the purpose of communicating and promoting the City's programs and initiatives through the media. The City's primary communications vehicles supporting this activity are news releases, public service announcements and media advisories inviting the attendance of reporters at City events.

Inquiries from journalists on specific topics, and the City's response to these requests, present an opportunity to



improve media relations by providing updates and further information on City programs and initiatives.

Ultimately, all media relations are two-way communications. With the City's focus on community engagement and the media's efforts to generate public comment, this communications channel is rapidly evolving into a multi-part conversation.

Proactive media relations create opportunities to tell the City of Vaughan story to a wide audience through third-party communications. In addition to traditional media in print and broadcast, coverage of City activities can be provided by the ethnic media, media websites and blogs, social media networks maintained by media outlets, and specialty publications.

The media landscape is changing rapidly, and the City's approach to media relations must be responsive to the participation of the public who can now submit comments on news stories through social media and internet platforms. This flexible approach to media relations will serve to support the City's commitment to public engagement.

Communications Support for Council

The Corporate Communications department supports Vaughan Council in its efforts to engage and involve the community in City programs and initiatives.

Major initiatives are supported by producing and implementing communications plans that may include speaking notes, news releases, presentation materials and website content. In addition, this support role has been expanded to include other web-based technologies.

The Corporate Communications department is currently supporting the launch of a second-generation eNewsletter platform that will enhance this form of communication. In addition, there is an active program to increase the number of subscribers to the City's eNewsletters.

A new mobile application provides Vaughan Council with remote access to informational and monitoring services provided by the Corporate Communications department. The "Corp Comm Connects" web service includes news releases, media advisories, project briefing notes, news clippings, events, and key facts about Vaughan. This communications tool is being reviewed to determine possible additional services and content.



Internal Communications

The purpose of internal communications is employee engagement. This activity is essential to building a strong corporate culture that embodies the corporate vision and values of a high-performing organization supported by a motivated, progressive and dedicated workforce.

Internal communications initiatives are intended to:

- create a more structured, effective and measurable approach to communicating with staff;
- develop methods designed to better promote a positive and inclusive culture; and
- develop more creative and engaging ways to communicate with all employees.

This can be achieved by enhancing communications between the City Manager and staff, improving manager/supervisor communications skills and increasing the effectiveness of the City's intranet site through such improvements as adding a Social Intranet Platform.

All internal communications programs will be measured and evaluated. Methods of measurement can include employee surveys, providing a forum for staff comments in an employee eNewsletter, employee focus groups and intranet statistics.

Marketing Communications

The Corporate Communications department supports and manages marketing activities that engage the community and promote a positive City image.

Marketing communications support is provided to all City departments in order to communicate achievements and successes in the delivery of City services. These activities include the production of marketing and promotional materials, advertising placements and media buys, photography management, media sponsorship programs, branding and design consultation as well as writing and editing services.

In its brand management role, the department is responsible for providing marketing and advertising standards and best practices for developing and producing promotional material. All marketing materials produced by the City should meet the highest professional standards and have a consistent presentation. These guidelines help maintain and protect the City's brand identity and overall image.



INTERNAL Communications

THE CHALLENGE:

Engaging, informing and providing people-focused communications to employees

THE SOLUTION:

- Launch Internal Communications Strategy, including a new people-focused intranet platform
- Develop communications plan for the City Manager
- Form Internal Communications Steering Committee
- Increase two-way communications channels available to employees

EXTERNAL Communications

THE CHALLENGE:

Implementing new, preferred approaches to communicating with stakeholders as they move away from “traditional” communications

THE SOLUTION:

- Enhance corporate website and ensure content is relevant and up to date
- Launch mobile app
- Take proactive approach to media relations
- Increase two-way communications channels

Reputation and Corporate Branding

Corporate branding is much more than a well-designed logo. A municipal brand reflects and communicates the “image” of the city, capturing the essence of what makes a municipality distinct and remarkable.

The City’s brand messaging is focused on the story of Vaughan’s success as one of Canada’s fastest-growing urban centres, its diversity and multiculturalism, its high quality of life and its economic opportunities. Promoting the City brand is central to all communications and marketing activities.

A successful brand effectively communicates an “image” of the City that resonates with residents and local businesses. It reflects the “character” of the City.

Corporate standards for marketing materials help maintain brand integrity, establishing a consistent and compelling “look and feel” that is readily identified with the City.

The City’s logo is only part of the overall municipal brand. The branding message (the key messages that reflect a municipality’s “identity”) should be presented, to some degree, in every speech, presentation, program and service.





Brand promotion is most often driven by proactive communications. As such, it plays an important role in economic development, media relations, website content and social media activity. In fact, “strategic communications” can be defined as any activity or initiative that supports and promotes the corporate brand – that is, the reputation and image of the city.

To be effective, this branding approach should be integrated into all aspects of marketing. It should be compatible with the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan. Most importantly, it should provide common themes that resonate with residents, local businesses and all external stakeholders.

Branding helps differentiate Vaughan from other municipalities and communicate its status as one of Canada’s fastest-growing cities and a leading municipality in the Greater Toronto Area. This has been communicated as “The Vaughan Advantage” – a city evolving from a suburban community into a major urban centre with many world-class amenities; a diverse population where residents speak almost 100 different languages; and one of the lowest property tax rates in York Region.

It is often overlooked that internal communications directly supports the City brand. City employees are ambassadors for the municipality. Through the provision of effective internal communications products, services and advice, there is the opportunity to strengthen the City’s corporate culture.

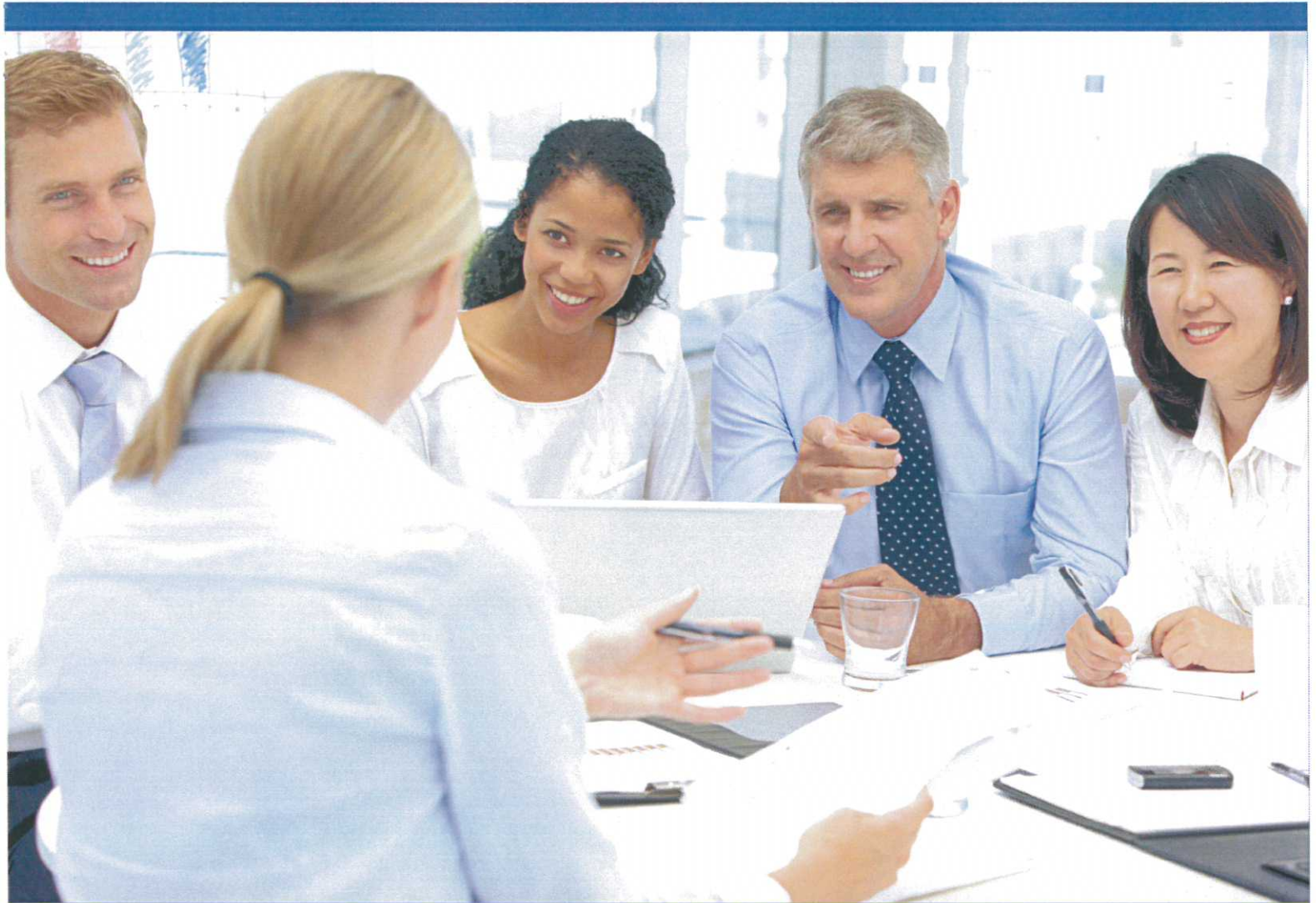
Visual Identity

The purpose of the City logo is to provide a consistent visual identity for the public to easily recognize and access City facilities, programs and services.



The City logo was redesigned in 2010 to reinforce and enhance the City’s image. It is intended to convey Vaughan’s progressive outlook while reflecting the essence of the City’s past.

The City’s logo is central to the corporate identity of the City of Vaughan. The corporate logo should appear on all printed and electronic corporate and marketing materials produced by City departments, including stationary, forms, signage, advertising, newsletters, published material, audio-visual productions, vehicles and staff ID cards. Use of the logo must comply with the written guidelines detailed in the approved Standards of Use Guide.



Mission Statement

The City of Vaughan is a two-way communications organization – both internally and externally. The Corporate Communications department is committed to engaging our citizens and measuring our effectiveness in communications to ensure a broader awareness and understanding of City programs and services.

Goals (LEAP)

Lead:

Employ the right blend of best practices and innovative communication methods to become a leader in municipal communications.

Engage:

Promote citizen participation – both online and off.

Action:

Take a proactive and efficient approach to communicating the Vaughan story to our stakeholders.

Position:

Position Vaughan as an emerging world-class city by building an effective, accessible system of two-way communications between City officials, stakeholders and residents.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

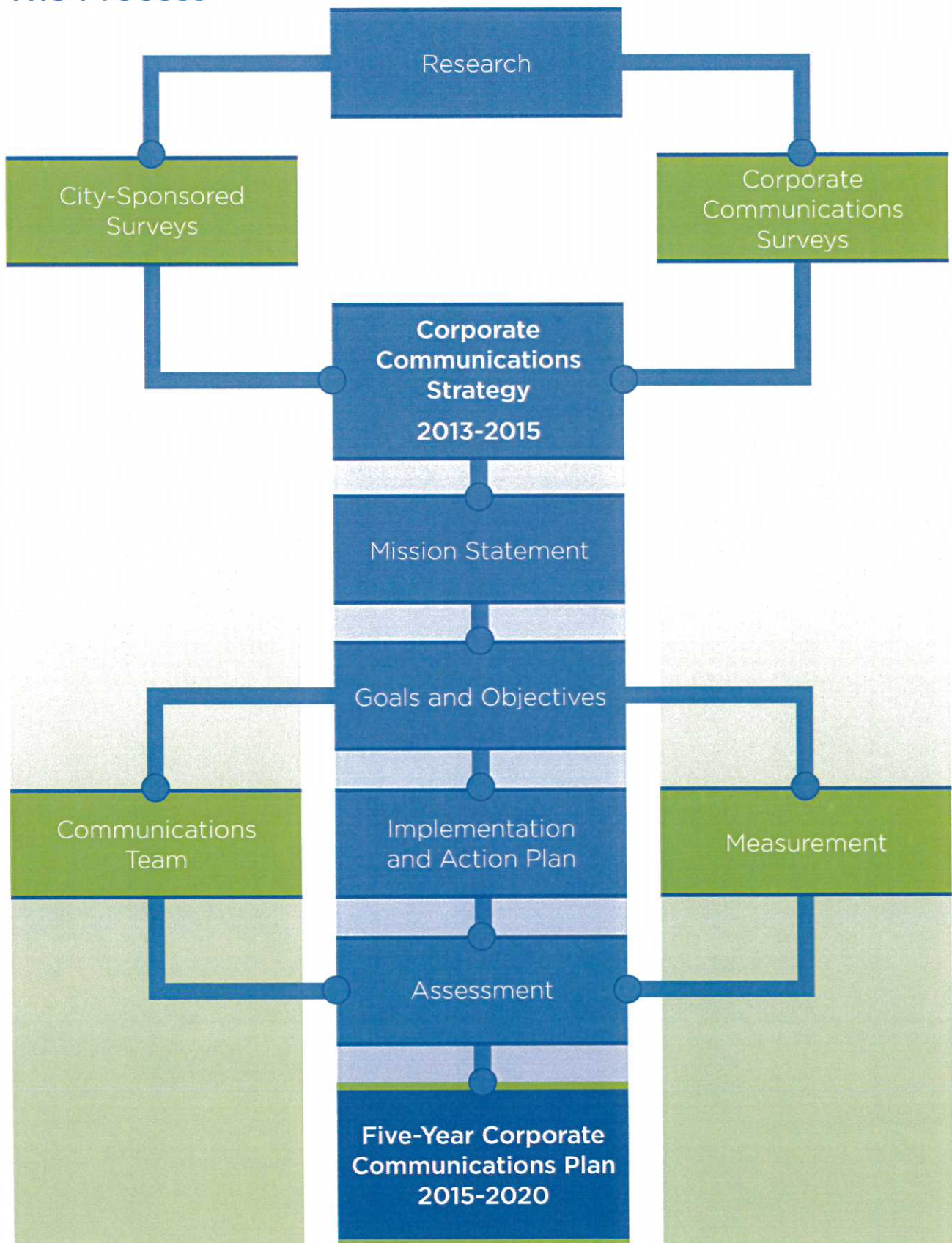
In order for the strategy to be effective there needs to be clear goals to support the mission that can be measured and obtained. The mission to become a two-way communications organization can only be realized if the City's communications continue to take a LEAP forward: lead, engage, action and position.

There are four core principles that guide the strategy and link with each of the goals, objectives and action items:

- **Consistency:** Communication is consistent, constant and correctly promotes the Vaughan brand.
- **Citizen-focused communications:** Communication is interactive, engaging, conveyed in plain language, and packaged in a vehicle that best meets the needs of the citizens.
- **Continuous improvement and feedback:** Communication is informed, measured and always refined by research and feedback.
- **Support the corporate culture:** Communication is driven internally by values and standards and is a responsibility of all employees while being led by Corporate Communications.



The Process





Multi-Phased Implementation

The Communications Strategy is being implemented with a multi-phased approach. Phase One, which will conclude in 2015, has several actionable items that will be employed to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the plan.

At the conclusion of Phase One, a review of the measurable results will help form the next phase of the strategy – the Five-Year Communications Plan. The Five-Year Communications Plan will map out the future framework and vision of the City of Vaughan's communications function, building on the success of the 2013-2015 Communications Strategy.

Implementing a multi-phased approach will allow the Corporate Communications department to fully analyze

the results of tactics employed during the two-year strategy. It will allow the department to review success indicators associated with each objective and collect feedback from internal and external stakeholders, creating a solid foundation to build upon.

At the end of the two-year Communications Strategy, the Corporate Communications department will be in a position to develop and implement a Five-Year Communications Plan that will support the City's mission of "Citizens first through service excellence," resulting in more engaged citizens with a broader awareness and understanding of City programs and services.

The Team Approach

Corporate Communications is headed in a new direction, breaking through “internal silos” to work better as a team. The team approach allows Corporate Communications to effectively and efficiently address issues as they arise and to proactively plan for ones that are on the horizon. It capitalizes on the strengths of each team member to deliver quality results, thereby keeping our stakeholders informed on the issues that matter to them.

Staff in Corporate Communications have been reorganized to take the focus off individuals and put more of an emphasis on the team. The new teams within Corporate Communications include:

Media Relations Team:

Responsibilities include: media relations; news clippings; issues tracking; environmental scanning; news tracking (municipal, regional, provincial); media list management.

Corporate Communications is committed to establishing and maintaining a positive relationship between the City and the media for the purpose of communicating and promoting the City’s programs and initiatives through our media partners.

Proactive media relations creates opportunities to tell the City of Vaughan story to a wide audience through third-party communications. In addition to traditional media in print and broadcast, coverage of City activities can be provided by ethnic media, media websites, social media, bloggers, networks maintained by media outlets and specialty publications.

eCommunications Team:

Responsibilities include: social media; website content management; multimedia/video; eNewsletters; Corp Comm Connects internal website.

The City’s use of social media has served to raise its public profile and better inform and engage the community. Unlike print and broadcast communications, social media

A photograph of a person wearing a blue shirt, seen from the chest up, writing the words "WE CAN HELP!" in large, white, capital letters on a whiteboard. The person is holding a white marker in their right hand, which is visible in the foreground. The background is slightly blurred, showing a green wall and a blue wall. The text "WE CAN HELP!" is written in a casual, hand-drawn style.

has transformed the way people interact by turning traditional one-way communications into online dialogues, which helps to further promote a two-way communications organization.

The City's social media strategy is evolving from merely disseminating information about City programs and initiatives (one-way or broadcast communications) to facilitating online comments to more effectively engage the community (two-way communications). In most cases, this social media content "links" to the City website, which continues to be the primary communications vehicle for the Corporation.

Mobile applications are becoming increasingly popular. Designed specifically for hand-held devices, this technology allows users to stay connected and create content from any location.

Marketing Team:

Responsibilities include: brand guidelines; advertising; photography management; creative design; departmental and committee support.

Marketing communications (advertising, brochures, website content, etc.) are used to communicate service levels and engage our stakeholders. Working with all City departments, the Marketing Team will improve the City's ability to deliver messages about key priorities while promoting the City's brand and image.

The establishment of corporate standards for all marketing materials is essential to maintaining Vaughan's brand integrity. A consistent product, both visually and within the messaging, is integral in maintaining Vaughan's reputation and professionalism.

Strategic Communications Team:

Responsibilities include: issues management; internal communications; protocol and policy; Mayor and Council communications support; departmental and committee support.

The issues management process ensures the City's position is clearly communicated through key messaging and/or corporate statements. The Strategic Communications Team supports the Mayor and Members of Council, Senior Management and various departments in the areas of reputation management and corporate protocols.

In terms of internal communications, employee engagement is essential to building a strong corporate culture that embodies the corporate vision and values of a high-performing organization.

Support for All City Departments

These teams will support the communications needs of all City departments that provide public information services.

Team members will be assigned a Commission and will work closely with its staff by:

- attending team meetings;
- becoming familiar with key projects;
- establishing a relationship with department staff;
- identifying priorities that need communications support; and
- bringing issues to the attention of Corporate Communications.

This approach will allow Corporate Communications to be at the forefront of projects and offer more effective and proactive services to clients within the Corporation.



Action Plan

In order for the strategy to be effective there needs to be clear goals and actions that can be measured. The mission to become a two-way communications organization can only be realized if the City's communications take a LEAP forward – Lead, Engage, Action, Position.

The Corporate Communications team is evolving, and now provides the Corporation with a broader range of tools to spread the Vaughan message. The new direction for the department – as outlined in this strategy – positions Corporate Communications to provide enhanced services to its key stakeholders, from residents and staff, to businesses and the media.

Lead: Employ the right blend of best practices and innovative communication methods to become a leader in municipal communications.

Team	Action	Time Frame		
		2013	2014	2015
Strategic Communications	Develop an internal communications campaign to promote the new communications vision and standards.	✓	✓	
Strategic Communications	Launch a new online tool (social intranet platform) to drive internal communications and support the corporate culture.	✓		
Strategic Communications	Implement a City Manager's Communication Plan to support the internal communication campaign.	✓	✓	
Strategic Communications	Establish an Internal Communications Steering Committee with representatives from each commission.	✓		
Marketing	Develop a multicultural communications strategy to better reach our diverse community.		✓	

Engage: Promote citizen participation – both online and off.

Team	Action	Time Frame		
		2013	2014	2015
Marketing	Develop more 'memorable' and 'engaging' communications by using innovative and creative means.	✓	✓	✓
Marketing	Use plain-language standards in City-wide information.	✓	✓	
eCommunications	Continuously look for opportunities to improve the corporate website, including enhancing the homepage, using more videos and exploring new online applications.	✓	✓	✓
eCommunications	Develop a Vaughan Mobile App that can be used as an internal and external communications tool.		✓	
eCommunications	Develop a more robust and comprehensive social media approach to further enhance our social media tools and engage more users. Leverage existing social media channels and launch new social media channels, including a blog.	✓	✓	
Strategic Communications and Marketing	Re-evaluate the 'Annual Report' format (print and electronic versions) in terms of frequency and news content.		✓	

Action: Take a proactive and efficient approach to communicating the Vaughan story to our stakeholders.

Team	Action	Time Frame		
		2013	2014	2015
All Staff	Develop and employ a measurement program to ensure the Corporate Communications vision and goals are continually evaluated.	✓		
All Staff	Develop a 'channel strategy' that clearly outlines preferred City communications channels/formats for different audiences.	✓	✓	
Marketing	Develop a proper intake process to better manage projects and find efficiencies.	✓	✓	
Strategic Communications	Align common strategic messaging by providing consistent key messages, templates and tools.		✓	
Media Relations	Manage a more robust and proactive media relations plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively promote the Vaughan story. Identify 'subject experts' in each department and fully media train/support these individuals. Enhance the media clipping service to include more analysis and broader reach. 	✓	✓	

Position: Position Vaughan as an emerging world-class city by building an effective, accessible system of two-way communications between City officials, stakeholders and residents.

Team	Action	Time Frame		
		2013	2014	2015
All Staff	Employ a new team approach to position Corporate Communications at the forefront of emerging issues and new projects. Assign internal clients/departments to specific communication specialists who are supported by cross-functional teams within Corporate Communications.	✓	✓	✓
Marketing	Establish common 'look and feel' elements to ensure consistent branding across the organization.		✓	
Marketing	Develop a comprehensive advertising strategy.		✓	
Marketing	Develop a marketing plan to promote corporate engagement opportunities to key stakeholders.		✓	
eCommunications	Employ a variety of methods to engage residents in two-way online dialogue. Methods, which will be chosen based on emerging trends in eCommunications and best practices, include live tweets from events, social media town hall meetings and 'ask the expert' features.	✓	✓	
eCommunications	Enhance the new Vaughan mobile app by adding new functionality and enhancing its features.		✓	



Measurement

As you can't improve what you can't measure, a critical success factor with the Communications Strategy is measuring the tactics that are employed.

Throughout the implementation phase of the strategy, each tactic will be measured on a bi-annual basis to achieve the overall goals and objectives which are aligned with the strategic goals within Vaughan Vision 2020: Service Excellence, Staff Excellence and Organizational Excellence.

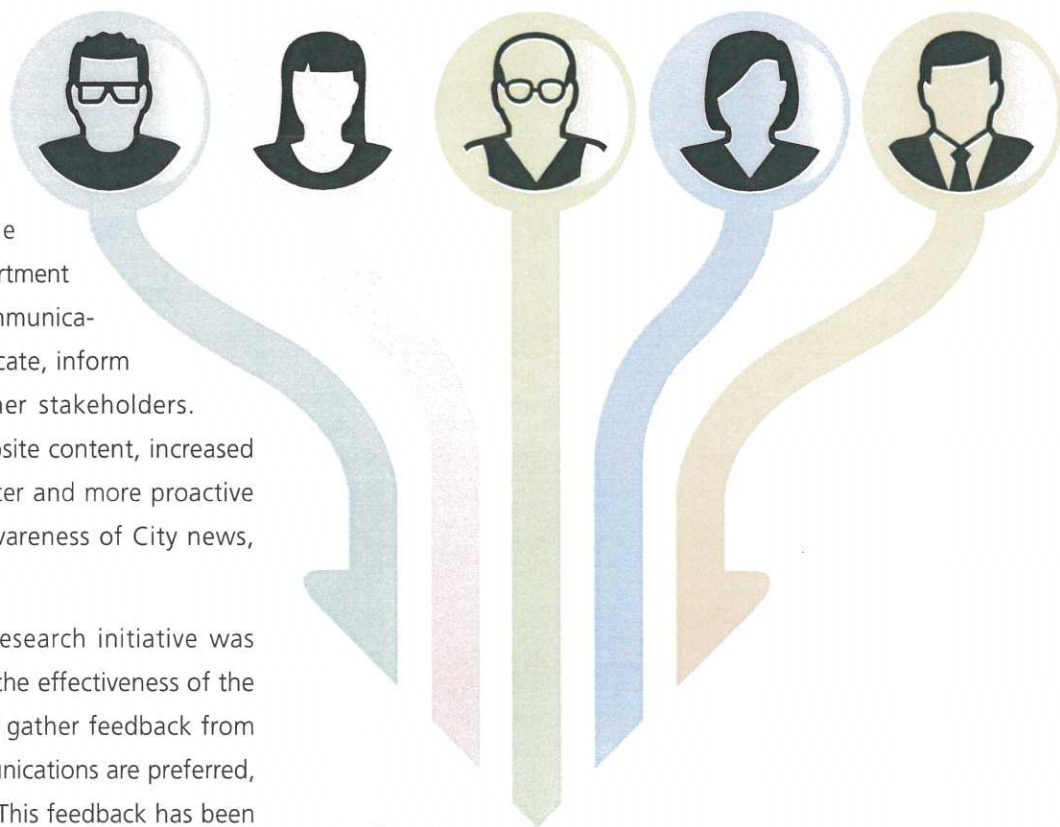
A strategy for measuring communications efforts is important for not only determining the success of these efforts by quantifying the value of those successes, but also for developing a plan that will continue to deliver consistent and credible results. A strategy for measurement also allows for the establishment of benchmarks that can be used for comparison at the conclusion of a communications strategy or campaign.

The goal is to provide information and communications tools that facilitate two-way communications. The objective is to gauge what communications channels are preferred by residents.

Establishing a Baseline

Over the past six months, the Corporate Communications department has implemented enhanced communications in order to effectively educate, inform and engage residents and other stakeholders. Initiatives such as improved website content, increased frequency of the City eNewsletter and more proactive social media have increased awareness of City news, programs and services.

A four-step communications research initiative was conducted in order to measure the effectiveness of the enhanced communications and gather feedback from residents regarding what communications are preferred, how often and in what format. This feedback has been incorporated into the Communications Strategy to ensure we are addressing the communications needs of the community.



Methodology

Communications research was conducted using a four-step approach including both quantitative and qualitative data-gathering and consisted of the following components:

Online Survey: Corporate Communications conducted an online survey to collect data and satisfaction levels. 752 surveys submitted.

Telephone Poll (automated): 1,000 automated calls were placed, polling residents on their communications preferences. Approximately 100 respondents.

Focus Group: Residents participated in a workshop as a method of collecting qualitative and quantitative data on communications tools and practices. 10 participants. 2-hour discussion.

Conference Call: A conference call was held to further discuss topics raised by the focus group. 10 participants.

In addition to these components, surveys were distributed at Vaughan festivals: Maple Fest, Thornhill Village Festival, Binder Twine and Woodbridge Fall Fair.

Vaughan Results

Survey results indicate that residents are generally satisfied with the City's communications efforts. Feedback further indicates that most residents, across all age groups, are comfortable with technology and mobile devices and prefer increased electronic formats for information delivery along with supporting printed materials.

The research confirms that there is an opportunity and a need to move towards more technically advanced communications methods. **Residents want to be informed and expect the City to effectively provide information in a format that makes it easy for them to engage where and when it is convenient for them.**

- Nearly 6 in 10 (58%) feel that there is a need for a more effective communications strategy – one that is more engaging and relevant to the residents.
- There appears to be a strong need for information about everything that is going on in the City, indicating that the existing efforts of disseminating information are not in line with residents' expectations.
- 89% of residents feel it is important to receive regular communications from the City.
- Residents would like to see more social media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook).
- Mobile apps and a mobile friendly website are important. People are busy and want the ability to connect anywhere and at any time.
- Although electronic communications are preferred, hard copy is still an important component in the mix of communications.



- Top topics of interest are City programs and services, news, events, Recreation and Culture updates, and building projects and new development.
- Citizen engagement and inclusivity (demographics) are important.

Research for this section was compiled from:

- data collected specifically for this Communications Strategy;
- 2010 Pollara survey;
- 2011 and 2012 Citizen Surveys conducted by Ipsos Reid on behalf of the City; and
- national research from The Ipsos Canadian inter@ctive Reid Report: 2012 Fact Guide.

Devices and Technology

In Vaughan

72% of Vaughan respondents use desktop or laptop computers most frequently

38% of Vaughan respondents use smart-phone and mobile apps most frequently

94% of respondents have the internet at home

1.5 million visits to the City's website annually

By Age Group:

Most Frequently...	Age (years)				
	18-25	26-39	40-54	55-64	65+
use desktop or laptop computers	43%	67%	18%	83%	85%
use smartphone and mobile apps	43%	53%	44%	20%	18%
use tablets	29%	42%	34%	23%	18%
cellphone and text messaging	14%	35%	36%	27%	18%



Across Canada:

- 86% of Canadians have internet access
- 37% now have mobile internet, compared to 5% in 2001
- 95% under 55 years of age have internet access, 47% have mobile access
- 67% over 55 years of age have internet access, 16% have mobile access
- 92% of Canadians have sought news from a computer
- Only 7% of Canadians currently own a computer tablet
- Smartphone owners spend on average 2.5 hours a day on their mobile device

General:

Mobile content allows for portability and access to information anywhere at any time.

Social media and online content allows for interactivity and the opportunity to provide feedback and comments in real time.

Information Delivery

In Vaughan:

60% of respondents prefer to receive City information and updates electronically

31% of respondents prefer to receive both electronic and printed communications

50-50 preference

indicated through conference calls for information delivered electronically or in a print format

Preferred electronic methods of receiving City information:

67% prefer email via eNewsletter

37% prefer accessing the website

17% prefer mobile apps

17% prefer social media

Across Canada:

- 31% of Canadians consider themselves active social media users
- 43% find out about news and current events via social media/social networking

General:

Most senior citizens prefer personal communication (i.e. face-to-face communication); however, internet usage among seniors is on the rise (currently 63%-76%). Some seniors do have difficulty navigating websites which can be attributed to poor website design including small font size, drop down menus and other design features that require fine-motor skills.

When it comes to public engagement, 39% of adults have taken part in some sort of political activity online, for example contacting a government official or speaking out in a public forum about an issue that is important to them. Interestingly, young adults are just as likely as older adults to engage in political activities; however, they are much more likely to do so via social networking sites.

Information Formats

In Vaughan:

- Current sources of information on City programs, news, services, events and initiatives
 - 55% newsletters and brochures
 - 52% City website
 - 43% City Update eNewsletter
 - 28% local papers

84% of Vaughan residents believe that it's important for the City to increase online-based services and communications to residents

68% of Vaughan residents would be interested in personally receiving more online-based services and communications

General:

More than 80% of Canadians like the idea of receiving automatic notifications about available government services that are relevant to them. **Experts agree that a balanced approach to communications is key, integrating traditional and new media into communications strategies to reach all audiences.**

Measurement Success Indicators

Based on best practices and preliminary research, the following measurements will be tracked during the two-year implementation phase of this Communications Strategy. At the conclusion of Phase One, analysis of the measurements will help form the next phase of this strategy – the Five-Year Communications Plan.

SERVICE EXCELLENCE

- Demonstrate excellence in service delivery
- Enable stakeholders to be engaged, educated and well-informed
- Establish and promote the City's brand

Measurement	Success Indicator
Increase the percentage of projects requested by clients in which Corporate Communications' advice is sought prior to the project beginning	75% of corporate projects requiring communications support request support at an early and appropriate time
Effectively educate, inform and engage City stakeholders	65% of residents surveyed are aware of City services, initiatives and programs
Provide regular communications to residents	65% of residents surveyed are satisfied with the frequency of communications
Increase the number of Directors, Managers and/or teams surveyed who report that Corporate Communications has been helpful in delivering required information to targeted audience	85% of those surveyed indicate Corporate Communications has been helpful

STAFF EXCELLENCE

- Demonstrate effective leadership
- Provide effective strategic messaging and two-way communication between the City and stakeholders
- Be a leader in providing effective and proactive communications

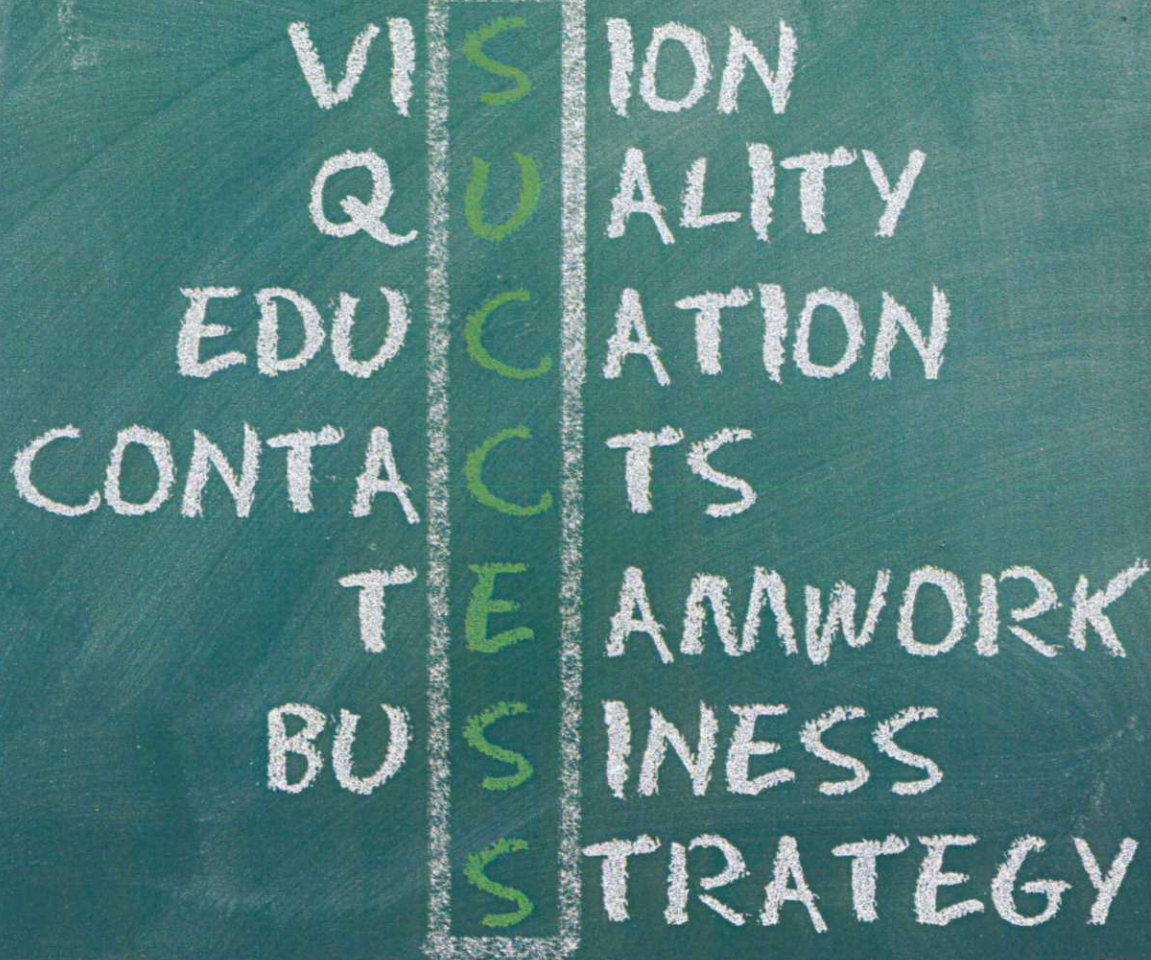
Measurement	Success Indicator
Increase the number of stories published about Vaughan initiatives, programs and events	25% increase each year
Increase the percentage of stories generated by City-issued news releases, pitches, PSAs and media advisories	75% of all Vaughan stories generated by a City source
Reduce the hourly cost per communications project delivered to internal clients	10% decrease each year in the hourly cost per communications project

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- Ensure a high-performing organization
- Ensure that online content is current, written in plain language and portrays the City brand
- Leverage technology to more effectively tell the Vaughan story

Measurement	Success Indicator
Increase online activity	20% more visitors to the City website
Increase social media activity	20% increase in number of subscribers to corporate social media
Increase online subscriptions	20% increase in number of subscribers to the City's eNewsletter





VISION QUALITY EDUCATION CONTACTS TEAMWORK BUSINESS STRATEGY

Conclusion

This Communications Strategy marks a new beginning for the City of Vaughan's Corporate Communications department. It sets out – for the first time – a comprehensive approach for the City to engage in two-way communications with residents that is based on stakeholder feedback, best practices, market research and communications trends.

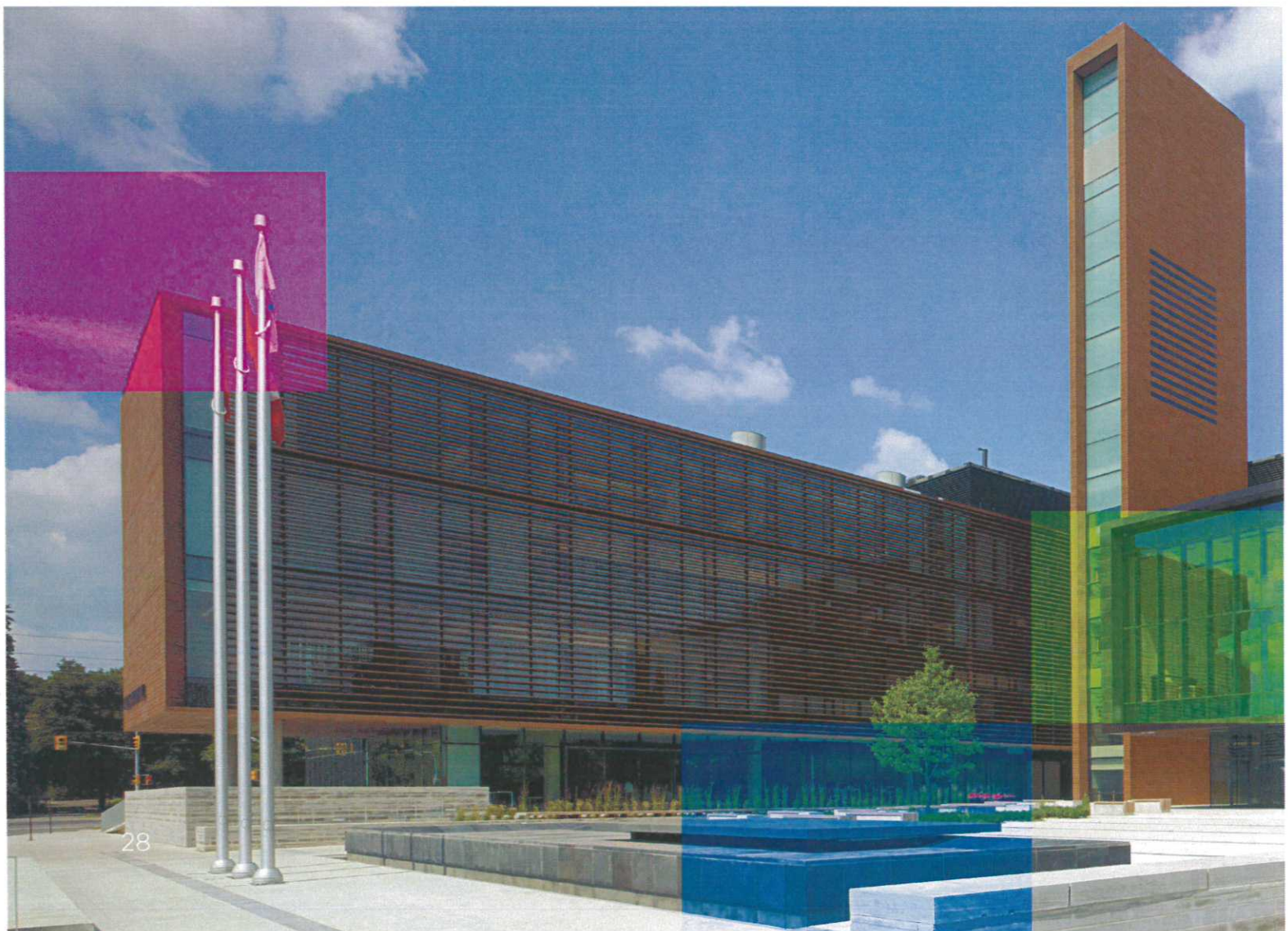
To achieve this mission, the department is positioning itself to take a giant **LEAP – Lead, Engage, Action and Position** – into the future. These goals will guide the department as it moves forward, while focusing on four core principles: consistency, citizen-focused communications, continuous improvement and feedback, and support of the corporate culture.

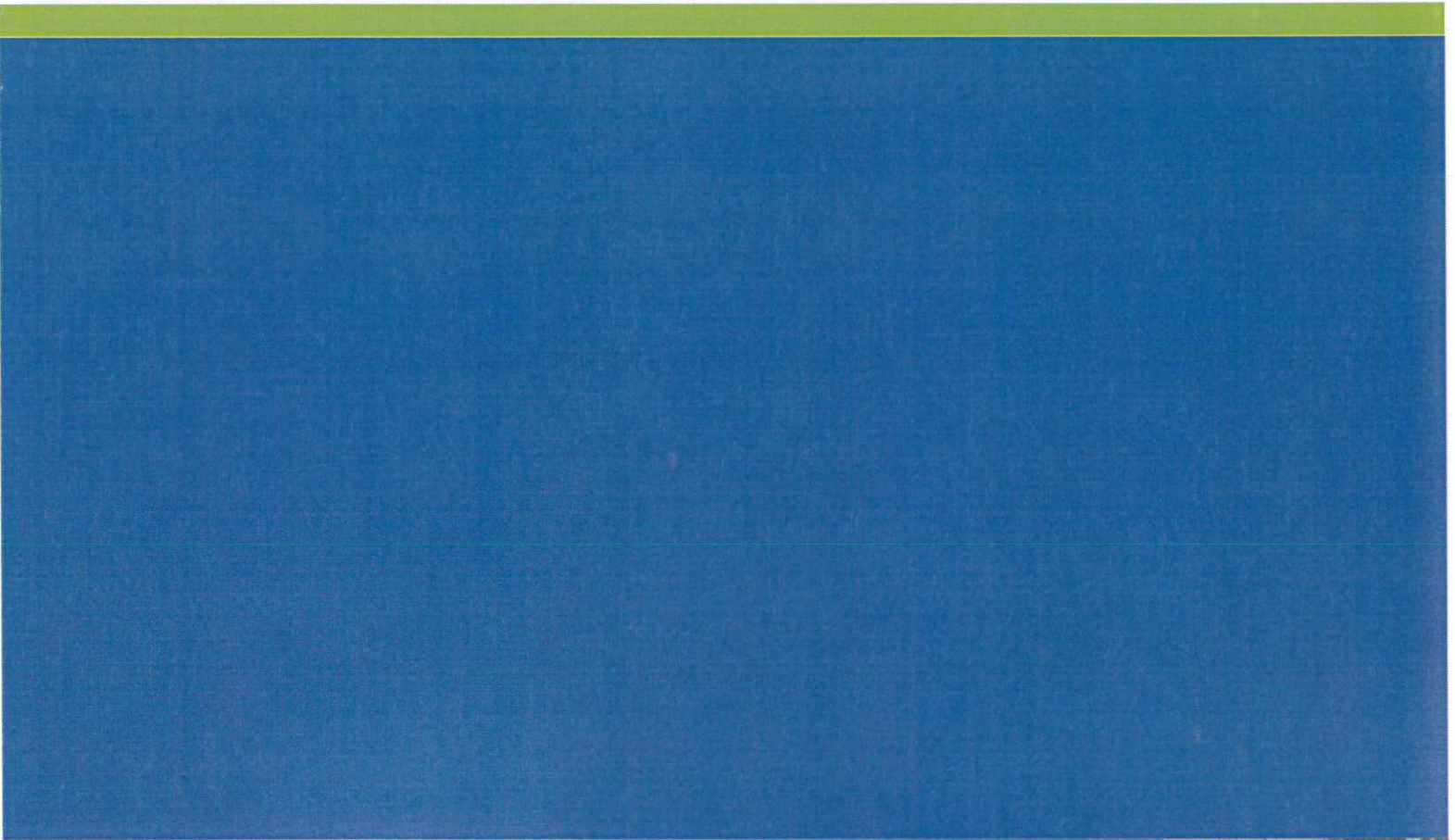
This strategy also reflects the key objectives of providing a framework that will allow the City to best exchange information with the public, maximizing the use of technology while building upon the benefits of social and new media channels, and employing the communications tools that Vaughan residents prefer.

One of the key changes outlined in this document is a new “team” approach to communications. Staff have been reorganized by areas of focus and speciality: media relations, eCommunications, marketing, and strategic communications. As well, communications specialists will be assigned to specific commissions in an effort to more effectively identify emerging issues and to keep the public informed on what matters to them.

A multi-phased approach will be employed to implement this two-year strategy which will allow Corporate Communications to effectively measure its success. These results will be used, in part, to set the future direction of Corporate Communications through a Five-Year Communications Plan beginning in 2015. Measurement is central to this strategy and each action item will be measured bi-annually to ensure the team is on track to achieve its goals and objectives. Corporate Communications is committed to achieving the City's strategic goals, and will analyze measurement results to ensure it is meeting this commitment.

This strategy represents a leap from the past for Corporate Communications. It outlines a new plan for supporting the mandate to deliver two-way communications between the City and its residents, while supporting the Corporation's commitment to open, transparent and accessible government







City of Vaughan, Corporate Communications Department
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive, Level 200
Vaughan, Ontario L6A 1T1
T. 905-832-2281 W. www.vaughan.ca



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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) – OCTOBER 22, 2013

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Recommendation

The Director of Corporate Communications, in consultation with the Executive Director, Office of the City Manager, recommends:

1. That the presentation and strategy report titled: "The Way Forward: A Corporate Communications Strategy" be received;
2. That the Strategy positioning the City of Vaughan as a two-way communications organization – both internally and externally, be adopted;
3. That Corporate Communication staff convene a meeting with internal stakeholders to discuss the goals and objectives outlined in the strategy, the approach, and the Phase One work plan; and
4. That the staffing and organization of the department be realigned as to provide best-in-class corporate communication services which will maximize the opportunity to fulfill the strategy's goals, objectives and actions, and;
5. That any financial requirements to implement the strategy be considered during the annual budget process.

Contribution to Sustainability

The Corporate Communications Strategy supports a key component of the Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan to create a vibrant community through civic engagement.

Economic Impact

Elements of the strategy are reliant upon two Additional Resource Requests (ARR) that have been submitted for 2014. The first ARR is a conversion of a vacant senior position into two junior level communications co-ordinators, who will assist in the delivery of the many new tactics and communications initiatives that are outlined in the strategy. The second ARR for a web content manager, which was previously recognized for potential funding in 2016, is being requested to move to 2014 to support the delivery of the strategy. As outlined in the strategy, the demand from stakeholders for increased web and online communications initiatives has increased, and will continue to increase in the near future. The City's corporate website is essential to the operations of departments within the City and is the largest communications channel available, receiving on average 100,000 visits per month. The web content manager will assist all departments across the organization in ensuring web content is current and concise, as well as manage the delivery of the other online communication channels within the strategy.

Potential costs of Phase Two may include programming dollars and additional personnel. Costs will be determined when the analysis of Phase One of the Strategy is complete. At that time, new funding requirements will be requested through the City's annual budget process.

Communications Plan

The Corporate Communications Department will inform other City departments and key stakeholders about the Communications Strategy's strategic purpose and direction through presentations to teams, staff and senior management after it is approved by Council.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present to Council a multi-phased communications strategy that will align corporate communications to the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan and our corporate values.

Background/Analysis

In 2002, the mandate of the then newly-established Corporate Communications Department was presented in the strategic plan, *Mastering Communications Excellence*, approved by Council on June 24, 2002. Over time, the department's goals and objectives did not evolve to meet the challenges of a rapidly-changing communications landscape and the growth of the City.

The attached Corporate Communications Strategy is the first comprehensive and multi-phased communications strategy for the City of Vaughan. This document serves as a model of how best to support the delivery of two-way communications between the City of Vaughan and its citizens.

The goals and objectives outlined in the strategy align communications to the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan and our corporate values. In addition, it supports a positive internal corporate culture, while, at the same time, turning the communications research collected into actionable items.

The role of communications in municipal government continues to quickly change and evolve. With the wide adoption of new technologies, the communications process has progressed beyond traditional print and broadcast methods to include communications channels that are more responsive, accessible and broadly-based. This Communications Strategy serves as a working framework for understanding and responding to these changes.

The main objectives for developing a communications strategy are:

- to provide a framework for the Corporation on how the City can best exchange information with the public;
- to maximize the use of technology and build upon the benefits of social media and new media channels (digital, web, mobile); and
- to align communications channels with the way citizens prefer to communicate with local government.

Based on industry best practices, market research and current communication trends, as well as input from internal and external stakeholders, the Communications Strategy outlines a new vision, framework and plan that will guide the communications function at the City of Vaughan for the next two years.

This Communications Strategy will be executed in a multi-phased approach. Phase One will begin in 2013 and conclude in 2015 and will include several actionable items that will be employed to reach the goals and objectives outlined in the plan.

Near the conclusion of Phase One, an analysis of communications measurements will help form the next phase of this strategy – the Five-Year Communications Plan. This plan will map out the future framework and vision of the City of Vaughan communications function, building on the success of the 2013-2015 Communications Strategy.

The Communications Strategy has been developed with:

- Public input through a survey on preferred methods of communications
- Input from Council and senior management
- A departmental review and SWOT analysis, including an environmental scan of best practices in municipal government communications
- Review of citizen surveys to identify issues impacting the City

The purpose of the Corporate Communications Strategy is to identify the opportunities and actions that will lead to more robust and citizen-focused communications to strengthen the City's brand and reputation. The following priorities have been identified:

- Promote the City brand and build credibility
- Engage the community through citizen-focused communications
- Develop an engaged and informed workforce

At the City of Vaughan, the emphasis on open, transparent and accessible government is supported by the City's commitment to two-way communications. This Communications Strategy provides the process for evaluating and employing communications products and services that effectively engage the larger community and positions the Corporate Communications department to successfully deliver on its mandate.

A strategic approach to communications requires the alignment of communications activities and outputs with the overall strategic goals of the Corporation.

These efforts are directly aligned with the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan and its vision statement to realize "A city of choice that promotes diversity, innovation and opportunity for all citizens, fostering a vibrant community life that is inclusive, progressive, environmentally responsible and sustainable."

Communications Research

Communications research was conducted using a four-step approach, including both quantitative and qualitative data-gathering, and consisted of the following components:

- Online survey – Corporate Communications conducted an online survey to collect data and satisfaction levels. 752 surveys submitted.
- Telephone poll (automated) – 1,000 automated calls were placed, polling residents on their communications preferences.
- Focus group – Residents participated in a workshop as a method of collecting qualitative and quantitative data on communications tools and practices. 10 members (2-hour session).
- Conference call – A conference call was held to further discuss topics raised by the focus group. 10 participants.

In addition to these components, surveys were distributed at Vaughan festivals: Maple Fest, Thornhill Village Festival, Binder Twine and Woodbridge Fall Fair.

Results

Survey results indicate that most residents, across all age groups, are comfortable with technology and mobile devices and prefer increased electronic formats for information delivery along with supporting printed materials.

The research confirms that there is an opportunity and a need to move toward more technically advanced communications methods. Residents want to be informed and expect the City to effectively provide information in a format that makes it easy for them to engage where and when it is convenient for them.

- Nearly 6-in-10 (58 per cent) feel that there is a need for a more effective communications strategy – one that is more engaging and relevant to the residents.
- There appears to be a strong need for information about everything that is going on in the city, indicating that the existing efforts of disseminating information are not in line with residents' expectations.

- 89 per cent of residents feel it is important to receive regular communications from the City.
- Residents would like to see more social media (Twitter, Facebook).
- Mobile apps and a mobile friendly website are important. People are busy and want the ability to connect anywhere and at any time.
- Although electronic communications are preferred, hard copy is still an important component in the mix of communications.
- Top topics of interest are City programs and services, news, events, Recreation and Culture updates, and building projects and new development.
- Citizen engagement and inclusivity are important.

Devices and Technology

IN VAUGHAN:

- 72 per cent* of Vaughan respondents use desktop or laptop computers most frequently
- 38 per cent* of Vaughan respondents use smartphone and mobile apps most frequently
- 94 per cent* of respondents have the internet at home
- 1.5 million visits to the City's website annually

** Results collected through Communications research conducted in Aug-Sept 2013*

ACROSS CANADA:

- 86 per cent of Canadians have internet access
- 37 per cent now have mobile internet, compared to 5% in 2001
- 95 per cent under 55 years of age have internet access, 47% have mobile access
- 67 per cent over 55 years of age have internet access, 16% have mobile access
- 92 per cent of Canadians have sought news from a computer
- Only 7 per cent of Canadians currently own a computer tablet
- Smartphone owners spend on average 2.5 hours a day on their mobile device
- 31 per cent of Canadians consider themselves active social media users
- 43 per cent find out about news and current events via social media/social networking

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020 Strategic Plan

The attached Corporate Communications Strategy is aligned with the City's strategic plan in demonstrating leadership and promoting effective governance by strengthening the City's image and identity through effective communications with City stakeholders.

Regional Implications

This strategy will allow us to better connect and share information with our regional and municipal stakeholders.

Conclusion

This Communications Strategy marks a new beginning for the City of Vaughan's Corporate Communications department. It sets out – for the first time – a comprehensive approach for the City to engage in two-way communications with residents that is based on stakeholder feedback, best practices, market research and communications trends.

To achieve this mission, the department is positioning itself to take a giant LEAP – Lead, Engage, Action and Position – into the future. These goals will guide the department as it moves forward, while focusing on four core principles: consistency, citizen-focused communications, continuous improvement and feedback, and support of the corporate culture.

This strategy also reflects the key objectives of providing a framework that will allow the City to best exchange information with the public, maximizing the use of technology while building upon the benefits of social and new media channels, and employing the communications tools that Vaughan residents prefer.

One of the key changes outlined in the strategy is a new “team” approach to communications. The department will be reorganized by areas of focus and specialty: media relations, eCommunications, marketing, and strategic communications. As well, communications specialists will be assigned to specific commissions in an effort to more effectively identify emerging issues and to keep the public informed on what matters to them.

A multi-phased approach will be employed to implement this multi-year strategy which will allow Corporate Communications to effectively measure its success. These results will be used, in part, to set the future direction of Corporate Communications through Phase Two, a Five-year Communications Plan beginning in 2015. Measurement is central to the success of this strategy and each action item will be measured semi-annually to ensure the team is on track to achieve its goals and objectives. Corporate Communications is committed to achieving the City’s strategic goals, and will analyze measurement results to ensure it is meeting this commitment.

This strategy represents a leap from the past for Corporate Communications. It outlines a new plan for supporting the mandate to deliver two-way communications between the City and its residents, while supporting the Corporation’s commitment to open, transparent and accessible government.

Attachments

Attachment #1: 2013-15 Corporate Communications Strategy

Report prepared by:

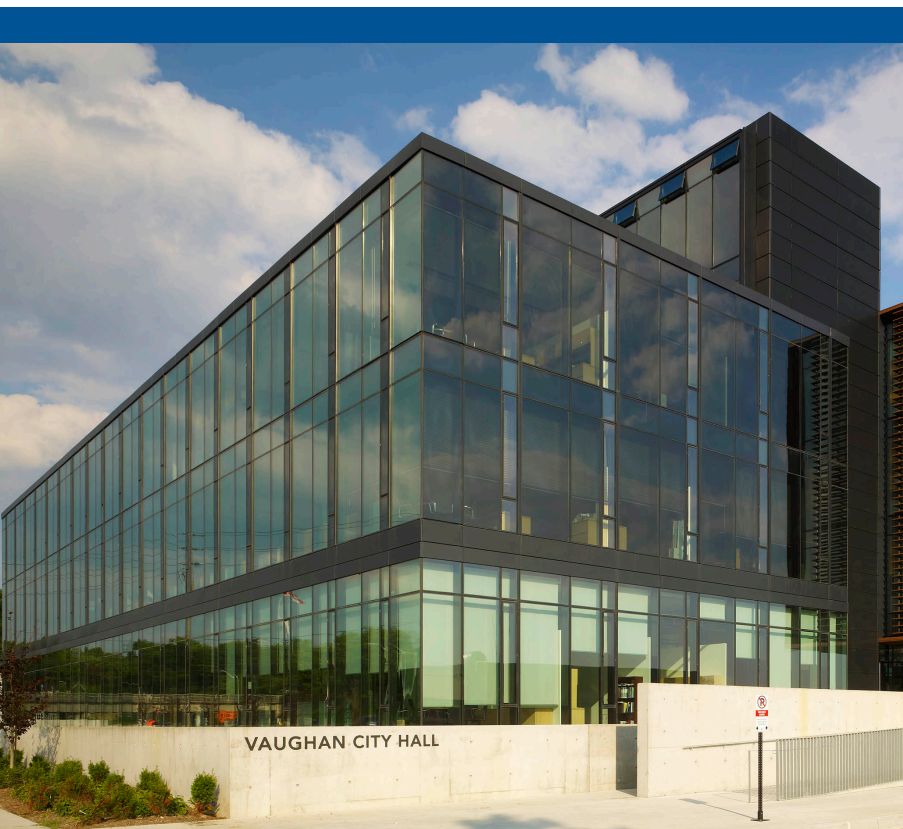
Gary Williams, Director, Corporate Communications

Respectfully submitted,

GARY WILLIAMS
Director of Corporate Communications

The Way Forward

A Corporate
Communications Strategy



LEAD ENGAGE ACTION POSITION

LEAP

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Executive Summary

This is the first comprehensive and multi-phased Communications Strategy for the City of Vaughan. This document serves as a model of how best to support the delivery of two-way communications between the City of Vaughan and its stakeholders.

The goals and objectives outlined in the strategy align communications to the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan and our corporate values. In addition, it supports a positive internal corporate culture, while, at the same time, turning the communications research collected into actionable items.

The purpose of this Communications Strategy is:

1. to provide a framework for the Corporation on how the City can best exchange information with the public and internal staff;
2. to maximize the use of technology and build upon the benefits of social media and new media channels (digital, web, mobile); and
3. to employ communications tools that the citizens of Vaughan prefer and will use to receive and provide information to the City.

Based on industry best practices, market research and current communication trends, as well as input from internal and external stakeholders, the Communications Strategy outlines a new communications mission, framework and plan that will guide the communications function at the City of Vaughan for many years.

Key priorities for producing the Communications Strategy include:

- Articulating the communications mission
- Building capacity and skill set within the Corporate Communications department
- Delivering a strategic communications program that is based on research and promotes the City's image
- Shifting from City-focused to citizen-focused communications
- Utilizing a system within Communications to gauge feedback, measure our success and continually enhance service levels

At the City of Vaughan, the emphasis on open, transparent and accessible government is supported by the City's commitment to two-way communications. This Communications Strategy provides the process for evaluating and employing communications products and services that effectively engage the larger community and position the Corporate Communications department to successfully deliver on its mandate.

The Changing Role of Communications

The role of communications in municipal government continues to change and evolve. Empowered by new technologies, the communications process has progressed beyond traditional print and broadcast methods to include communications channels that are more responsive, accessible and broadly-based. Specifically, there are more opportunities to engage in two-way communications with citizens in order to facilitate comments and public input on City programs and initiatives.

In managing stakeholder expectations, there must be a recognition that a uniform target audience does not exist – the market consists of many different groups which have preferences for specific communications and how they receive these communications (i.e. print versus electronic). Information can be delivered using one or more platforms to reach the widest audience.

New communications channels include streaming video, interactive websites, online services, mobile apps and social media networks. These new technologies provide a solution to the need to deliver information in a timely manner and in an accessible format. In addition, there is the opportunity to improve public engagement through the use of online surveys, focus groups and virtual town hall meetings.

The process for employing communications products and services that effectively engage the larger community requires ongoing measurement and evaluation. It is important to address changing demographics and the adoption of new technologies.

In order to better understand the market and the expectations of stakeholders, the communications function has expanded to include media monitoring, social media monitoring and tracking general trends and developments that could impact municipalities. Ultimately, the goal is to better understand the priorities of residents and local businesses as they relate to the delivery of City services. The emphasis on open, transparent and accessible government is supported by a commitment to two-way communications.

The main operational areas of corporate communications include:

- eCommunications including eNewsletters
- Website content
- Social media
- Media relations and media monitoring
- Issues management
- Council communications support
- Internal communications
- Committee support
- Client services in support of other City departments
- Marketing communications
- Advertising
- Public relations and environmental scanning
- Communications policy development

Aligning Communications with the Strategic Vision

A strategic approach to communications requires the alignment of communications activities and outputs with the overall strategic goals of the Corporation.

These efforts are directly aligned with the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan and its vision statement to realize “A city of choice that promotes diversity, innovation and opportunity for all citizens, fostering a vibrant community life that is inclusive, progressive, environmentally responsible and sustainable.”

A strategic initiative in Vaughan Vision 2020 assigns the task to the Corporate Communications department of establishing a more effective model for community engagement and enhancing the City’s public consultation strategy. This theme of community engagement is consistent with an emphasis on two-way communications. In addition, it is central to activities relating to branding, marketing, website management and social media.

eCommunications

Electronic communications, or eCommunications, includes all web-based technologies including websites, eNewsletters, mobile applications and social media platforms. These channels of communication allow the City to move beyond simply posting information about City programs and initiatives (one-way or broadcast communications) to facilitating a higher level of user interactivity including online comments (two-way communications) and online services.

As the municipality’s main communications vehicle, the City’s official website, vaughan.ca, is funded as essential infrastructure to deliver online services to residents, businesses and other stakeholders. The Corporate Communications department has overall responsibility for website content management. The recent launch of a new website highlights the City’s commitment to delivering service excellence to residents and providing more opportunities for civic engagement.

All eCommunications at the City will have a common focus on community engagement and support the commitment to employ new technologies to improve communications with residents, businesses and visitors.

A primary objective is to increase two-way communications by better integrating social media into the communications mix and promoting the use of this new communications channel to all stakeholders. Currently, the City has a corporate social media presence on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, administered by the Corporate Communications department. Corporate social media sites hosted by the City are promoted in all advertising and marketing efforts.

Media Relations – Telling the Vaughan Story

The goal of media relations is to tell the story of the City of Vaughan. The term “media relations” refers to establishing and maintaining a positive relationship between the City and the media for the purpose of communicating and promoting the City’s programs and initiatives through the media. The City’s primary communications vehicles supporting this activity are news releases, public service announcements and media advisories inviting the attendance of reporters at City events.

Inquiries from journalists on specific topics, and the City’s response to these requests, present an opportunity to improve media relations by providing updates and further information on City programs and initiatives.

Ultimately, all media relations are two-way communications. With the City’s focus on community engagement

and the media's efforts to generate public comment, this communications channel is rapidly evolving into a multi-part conversation.

Proactive media relations create opportunities to tell the City of Vaughan story to a wide audience through third-party communications. In addition to traditional media in print and broadcast, coverage of City activities can be provided by the ethnic media, media websites and blogs, social media networks maintained by media outlets, and specialty publications.

The media landscape is changing rapidly, and the City's approach to media relations must be responsive to the participation of the public who can now submit comments on news stories through social media and internet platforms. This flexible approach to media relations will serve to support the City's commitment to public engagement.

Communications Support for Council

The Corporate Communications department supports Vaughan Council in its efforts to engage and involve the community in City programs and initiatives.

Major initiatives are supported by producing and implementing communications plans that may include speaking notes, news releases, presentation materials and website content. In addition, this support role has been expanded to include other web-based technologies.

The Corporate Communications department is currently supporting the launch of a second-generation eNewsletter platform that will enhance this form of communication. In addition, there is an active program to increase the number of subscribers to the City's eNewsletters.

A new mobile application provides Vaughan Council with remote access to informational and monitoring services provided by the Corporate Communications department. The "Corp Comm Connects" web service includes news releases, media advisories, project briefing notes, news clippings, events, and key facts about Vaughan. This communications tool is being reviewed to determine possible additional services and content.

Internal Communications

The purpose of internal communications is employee engagement. This activity is essential to building a strong corporate culture that embodies the corporate vision and values of a high-performing organization supported by a motivated, progressive and dedicated workforce.

Internal communications initiatives are intended to:

- create a more structured, effective and measurable approach to communicating with staff;
- develop methods designed to better promote a positive and inclusive culture; and
- develop more creative and engaging ways to communicate with all employees.

This can be achieved by enhancing communications between the City Manager and staff, improving manager/supervisor communications skills and increasing the effectiveness of the City's intranet site through such improvements as adding a Social Intranet Platform.

All internal communications programs are measured and evaluated. Methods of measurement can include employee surveys, providing a forum for staff comments in an employee eNewsletter, employee focus groups and intranet statistics.

Marketing Communications

The Corporate Communications department supports and manages marketing activities that engage the community and promote a positive image of the City.

Marketing communications support is provided to all City departments in order to communicate achievements and successes in the delivery of City services. These activities include the production of marketing and promotional materials, advertising placements and media buys, photography management, media sponsorship programs, branding and design consultation as well as writing and editing services.

In its brand management role, the department is responsible for providing marketing and advertising standards and best practices for developing and producing promotional material. All marketing materials produced by the City should meet the highest professional standards and have a consistent presentation. These guidelines help maintain and protect the City's brand identity and overall image.

Reputation and Corporate Branding

Corporate branding is much more than a well-designed logo. A municipal brand reflects and communicates the "image" of the city, capturing the essence of what makes a municipality distinct and remarkable.

The City's brand messaging is focused on the story of Vaughan's success as one of Canada's fastest-growing urban centres, its diversity and multiculturalism, its high quality of life and its economic opportunities. Promoting the City brand is central to all communications and marketing activities.

A successful brand effectively communicates an "image" of the City that resonates with residents and local businesses. It reflects the "character" of the City.

Corporate standards for marketing materials help maintain brand integrity, establishing a consistent and compelling "look and feel" that is readily identified with the City.

The City's logo is the graphical representation of the City's brand, but it is only part of the overall municipal brand. The branding message (the key messages that reflect a municipality's "identity") should be presented, to some degree, in every speech, presentation, program and service.

Brand promotion is most often driven by proactive communications. As such, it plays an important role in economic development, media relations, website content and social media activity. In fact, "strategic communications" can be defined as any activity or initiative that supports and promotes the corporate brand – that is, the reputation and image of the city.

To be effective, this branding approach should be integrated into all aspects of marketing. It should be compatible with the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan. Most importantly, it should provide common themes that resonate with residents, local businesses and all external stakeholders.

Branding helps differentiate Vaughan from other municipalities and communicate its status as one of Canada's fastest growing cities and a leading municipality in the Greater Toronto Area. This has been communicated as "The Vaughan Advantage" – a city evolving from a suburban community into a major urban centre with many world-class amenities, a diverse population where residents speak almost 100 different languages and one of the lowest property tax rates in York Region.

It is often overlooked that Internal Communications directly supports the City brand. City employees are ambassadors for the municipality. Through the provision of effective internal communications products, services and advice, there is the opportunity to strengthen the City's corporate culture.

Visual Identity

The purpose of the City logo is to provide a consistent visual identity for the public to easily recognize and access City facilities, programs and services.

The City logo was redesigned in 2010 to reinforce and enhance the City's image. It is intended to convey Vaughan's progressive outlook while reflecting the essence of the City's past.

The City's logo is central to the corporate identity of the City of Vaughan. The corporate logo should appear on all printed and electronic corporate and marketing materials produced by City departments, including stationary, forms, signage, advertising, newsletters, published material, audio-visual productions, vehicles and staff ID cards. Use of the logo must comply with the written guidelines detailed in the approved Standards of Use Guide.

Mission Statement

The City of Vaughan is a two-way communications organization – both internally and externally. The Corporate Communications department is committed to engaging our citizens and measuring our effectiveness in communications to ensure a broader awareness and understanding of City programs and services.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

In order for the strategy to be effective there needs to be clear goals to support the mission that can be measured and obtained. The mission to become a two-way communications organization can only be realized if the City's communications continue to take a LEAP forward.

Lead: Employ the right blend of best practices and innovative communication methods to become a leader in municipal communications.

Engage: Promote citizen participation – both online and off.

Action: Take a proactive and efficient approach to communicating the Vaughan story to our stakeholders.

Position: Position Vaughan as an emerging world-class city by building an effective, accessible system of two-way communications between City officials, stakeholders and residents.

There are four core principles that guide the strategy and link with each of the goals, objectives and action items:

- **Consistency:** Communication is consistent, constant and correctly promotes the Vaughan brand.
- **Citizen-focused communications:** Communication is interactive, engaging, conveyed in plain language, and packaged in a vehicle that best meets the needs of the citizens.
- **Continuous improvement and feedback:** Communication is informed, measured and always refined by research and feedback.
- **Support the corporate culture:** Communication is driven internally by values and standards and is a responsibility of all employees while being led by Corporate Communications.

Multi-Phased Implementation

The Communications Strategy is being implemented with a multi-phased approach. Phase One, which will conclude in 2015, has several actionable items that will be employed to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the plan.

At the conclusion of Phase One, a review of the measurable results will help form the next phase of the strategy – the Five-Year Communications Plan. The Five-Year Communications Plan will map out the future framework and vision of the City of Vaughan’s communications function, building on the success of the 2013-2015 Communications Strategy.

Implementing a multi-phased approach will allow the Corporate Communications department to fully analyze the results of tactics employed during the two-year strategy. It will allow the department to review success indicators associated with each objective and collect feedback from internal and external stakeholders, creating a solid foundation to build upon.

At the end of the two-year Communications Strategy, the Corporate Communications department will be in a position to develop and implement a Five-Year Communications Plan that will support the City’s mission of “Citizens first through service excellence,” resulting in more engaged citizens with a broader awareness and understanding of City programs and services.

The Team Approach

Corporate Communications is headed in a new direction, breaking through “internal silos” to work better as a team. The team approach allows Corporate Communications to effectively and efficiently address issues as they arise and to proactively plan for ones that are on the horizon. It capitalizes on the strengths of each team member to deliver quality results, thereby keeping our stakeholders informed on the issues that matter to them.

Staff in Corporate Communications have been reorganized to take the focus off individuals and put more of an emphasis on the team. The new teams within Corporate Communications include:

Media Relations Team

Responsibilities include: media relations; news clippings; issues tracking; environmental scanning; news tracking (municipal, regional, provincial); media list management.

Corporate Communications is committed to establishing and maintaining a positive relationship between the City and the media for the purpose of communicating and promoting the City's programs and initiatives through our media partners.

Proactive media relations creates opportunities to tell the City of Vaughan story to a wide audience through third-party communications. In addition to traditional media in print and broadcast, coverage of City activities can be provided by ethnic media, media websites, social media, bloggers, networks maintained by media outlets and specialty publications.

eCommunications Team

Responsibilities include: social media; website content management; multimedia/video; eNewsletters; Corp Comm Connects internal website.

The City's use of social media has served to raise its public profile and better inform and engage the community. Unlike print and broadcast communications, social media has transformed the way people interact by turning traditional one-way communications into online dialogues, which helps to further promote a two-way communications organization.

The City's social media strategy is evolving from merely disseminating information about City programs and initiatives (one-way or broadcast communications) to facilitating online comments to more effectively engage the community (two-way communications). In most cases, this social media content “links” to the City website, which continues to be the primary communications vehicle for the Corporation.

Mobile applications are becoming increasingly popular. Designed specifically for hand-held devices, this technology allows users to stay connected and create content from any location.

Marketing Team

Responsibilities include: brand guidelines; advertising; photography management; creative design; departmental and committee support.

Marketing communications (advertising, brochures, website content, etc.) are used to communicate service levels and engage our stakeholders. Working with all City departments, the Marketing Team will improve the City's ability to deliver messages about key priorities while promoting the City's brand and image.

The establishment of corporate standards for all marketing materials is essential to maintaining Vaughan's brand integrity. A consistent product, both visually and within the messaging, is integral in maintaining Vaughan's reputation and professionalism.

Strategic Communications Team

Responsibilities include: issues management; internal communications; protocol and policy; Mayor and Council communications support; departmental and committee support.

The issues management process ensures the City's position is clearly communicated through key messaging and/or corporate statements. The Strategic Communications Team supports the Mayor and Members of Council, Senior Management and various departments in the areas of reputation management and corporate protocols.

In terms of internal communications, employee engagement is essential to building a strong corporate culture that embodies the corporate vision and values of a high-performing organization.

Support For All City departments

These teams will support the communications needs of all City departments that provide public information services.

Team members will be assigned a Commission and will work closely with its staff by:

- attending team meetings;
- becoming familiar with key projects;
- establishing a relationship with department staff;
- identifying priorities that need communications support; and
- bringing issues to the attention of Corporate Communications.

This approach will allow Corporate Communications to be at the forefront of projects and offer more effective and proactive services to clients within the Corporation.

Action Plan

In order for the strategy to be effective there needs to be clear goals and actions to support the mission that can be measured. The mission to become a two-way communications organization can only be realized if the City's communications take a LEAP forward.

The Corporate Communications team is evolving, and now provides the corporation with a broader range of tools to spread the Vaughan message. The new direction for the department – as outlined in this strategy – positions Corporate Communications to provide enhanced services to its key stakeholders, from residents and staff, to businesses and the media.

Lead: Employ the right blend of best practices and innovative communication methods to become a leader in municipal communications.

Team	Action	Time Frame		
		2013	2014	2015
Strategic Communications	Develop an internal communications campaign to promote the new communications vision and standards.	✓	✓	
Strategic Communications	Launch a new online tool (social intranet platform) to drive internal communications and support the corporate culture.	✓		
Strategic Communications	Deploy a City Manager's Communication Plan to support the internal communication campaign.	✓	✓	
Strategic Communications	Establish an Internal Communications Steering Committee with representatives/ambassadors from each department.	✓		
Marketing	Develop a multicultural communications strategy to better reach our diverse community.		✓	

Engage: Promote citizen participation – both online and off.

Team	Action	Time Frame		
		2013	2014	2015
Marketing	Develop more 'memorable' and 'engaging' communications by using innovative and creative means.	✓	✓	✓
Marketing	Use plain-language standards in City-wide information.	✓	✓	
eCommunications	Continuously look for opportunities to improve the corporate website, including enhancing the homepage, using more videos and exploring new online applications.	✓	✓	✓
eCommunications	Develop a Vaughan Mobile App that can be used as an internal and external communications tool.		✓	
eCommunications	Develop a more robust and comprehensive social media approach to further enhance our social media tools and engage more users. Leverage existing social media channels and launch new social media channels, including a blog.	✓	✓	
Strategic Communications and Marketing	Enhance the 'Annual Report' by increasing it to a twice-a-year printed publication, reducing the size and format, including more news and information and having an electronic version available.		✓	

Action: Take a proactive and efficient approach to communicating the Vaughan story to our stakeholders.

Team	Action	Time Frame		
		2013	2014	2015
All Staff	Develop and employ a measurement program to ensure the Corporate Communications vision and goals are continually evaluated.	✓		
All Staff	Develop a 'channel strategy' that clearly outlines preferred City communications channels/formats for different audiences.	✓	✓	
Marketing	Develop a proper intake process to better manage projects and find efficiencies.	✓	✓	
Strategic Communications	Align common strategic messaging by providing consistent key messages, templates and tools.		✓	
Media Relations	Manage a more robust and proactive media relations plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively promote the Vaughan story. • Identify 'subject experts' in each department and fully media train/support these individuals • Enhance the media clipping service to include more analysis and broader reach 	✓	✓	

Position: Position Vaughan as an emerging world-class city by building an effective, accessible system of two-way communications between City officials, stakeholders and residents.

Team	Action	Time Frame		
		2013	2014	2015
All Staff	Employ a new team approach to position Corporate Communications at the forefront of emerging issues and new projects. Assign internal clients/departments to specific communication specialists who are supported by cross-functional teams within Corporate Communications.	✓	✓	✓
Marketing	Establish common 'look and feel' elements to ensure consistent branding across the organization.		✓	
Marketing	Develop a comprehensive advertising strategy.		✓	
Marketing	Develop a marketing plan to promote corporate engagement opportunities to key stakeholders.		✓	
eCommunications	Employ a variety of methods to engage residents in two-way online dialogue. Methods, which will be chosen based on emerging trends in eCommunications and best practices, include live tweets from events, social media town hall meetings and 'ask the expert' features.	✓	✓	
eCommunications	Enhance the new Vaughan mobile app by adding new functionality and enhancing its features.		✓	

Measurement

As you can't improve what you can't measure, a critical success factor with the Communications Strategy is measuring the tactics that are employed.

Throughout the implementation phase of the strategy, each tactic will be measured on a bi-annual basis to achieve the overall goals and objectives which are aligned with the strategic goals within Vaughan Vision 2020: Service Excellence, Staff Excellence and Organizational Excellence.

A strategy for measuring communications efforts is important for not only determining the success of these efforts by quantifying the value of those successes, but also for developing a plan that will continue to deliver consistent and credible results. A strategy for measurement also allows for the establishment of benchmarks that can be used for comparison at the conclusion of a communications strategy or campaign.

The goal is to provide information and communications tools that facilitate two-way communications. The objective is to gauge what communications channels are preferred by residents.

Establishing a Baseline

Over the past six months, the Corporate Communications department has implemented enhanced communications in order to effectively educate, inform and engage residents and other stakeholders. Initiatives such as improved website content, increased frequency of the City eNewsletter and more proactive social media have increased awareness of City news, programs and services.

A four-step communications research initiative was conducted in order to measure the effectiveness of the enhanced communications and gather feedback from residents regarding what communications are preferred, how often and in what format. This feedback has been incorporated into the Communications Strategy to ensure we are addressing the communications needs of the community.

Methodology

Communications research was conducted using a four-step approach, including both quantitative and qualitative data-gathering, and consisted of the following components:

Online Survey: Corporate Communications conducted an online survey to collect data and satisfaction levels. 752 surveys submitted.

Telephone Poll (Automated): 1,000 automated calls were placed, polling residents on their communications preferences. Approximately 100 respondents (participant numbers were dependent on the question).

Focus Group: Residents participated in a workshop as a method of collecting qualitative and quantitative data on communications tools and practices. 10 participants. 2-hour discussion.

Conference Call: A conference call was held to further discuss topics raised by the focus group. 10 participants.

In addition to these components, surveys were distributed at Vaughan festivals: Maple Fest, Thornhill Village Festival, Binder Twine and Woodbridge Fall Fair.

Vaughan Results

Survey results indicate that residents are generally satisfied with the City's communications efforts. Feedback further indicates that most residents, across all age groups, are comfortable with technology and mobile devices and prefer increased electronic formats for information delivery along with supporting printed materials.

The research confirms that there is an opportunity and a need to move towards more technically advanced communications methods. Residents want to be informed and expect the City to effectively provide information in a format that makes it easy for them to engage where and when it is convenient for them.

- Nearly six-in-10 (58%) feel that there is a need for a more effective communications strategy – one that is more engaging and relevant to the residents.
- There appears to be a strong need for information about everything that is going on in the city, indicating that the existing efforts of disseminating information are not in line with residents' expectations.
- 89% of residents feel it is important to receive regular communications from the City
- Residents would like to see more social media (Twitter, Facebook).
- Mobile apps and a mobile friendly website are important. People are busy and want the ability to connect anywhere and at any time.
- Although electronic communications are preferred, hard copy is still an important component in the mix of communications.
- Top topics of interest are City programs and services, news, events, Rec and Culture updates, and building projects and new development.
- Citizen engagement and inclusivity (demographics) are important.

The following highlights include:

- data collected specifically for this Communications Strategy;
- 2010 Pollara survey;
- 2011 and 2012 Citizen Surveys conducted by Ipsos Reid on behalf of the City; and
- national research from The Ipsos Canadian inter@ctive Reid Report: 2012 Fact Guide.

Devices and Technology

IN VAUGHAN:

- 72% of Vaughan respondents use desktop or laptop computers most frequently
- 38% of Vaughan respondents use smartphone and mobile apps most frequently
- 94% of respondents have the internet at home
- 1.5 million visits to the City's website annually

By Age Group:

18 – 25:

- 43% use desktop or laptop computers most frequently
- 43% use smartphone and mobile apps most frequently
- 29% use tablets most frequently

26 – 39:

- 67% use desktop or laptop computers most frequently
- 53% use smartphone and mobile apps most frequently
- 42% use tablets most frequently

65+:

- 85% use desktop or laptop computers most frequently
- 18% use cellphone and text messaging most frequently
- 18% use tablets most frequently

ACROSS CANADA:

- 86% of Canadians have internet access
- 37% now have mobile internet, compared to 5% in 2001
- 95% under 55 years of age have internet access, 47% have mobile access
- 67% over 55 years of age have internet access, 16% have mobile access
- 92% of Canadians have sought news from a computer
- Only 7% of Canadians currently own a computer tablet
- Smartphone owners spend on average 2.5 hours a day on their mobile device

GENERAL:

Mobile content allows for portability and access to information anywhere at any time.

Social media and online content allows for interactivity and the opportunity to provide feedback and comments in real time.

Information Delivery

IN VAUGHAN:

- 60% of respondents prefer to receive City information and updates electronically
- 31% of respondents prefer to receive both electronic and printed communications
- Conference call research indicates a 50-50 preference for information delivered electronically or in a print format

Preferred electronic methods of receiving City information:

- 67% prefer email via eNewsletter
- 37% prefer accessing the website
- 17% prefer mobile apps
- 17% prefer social media

ACROSS CANADA:

- 31% of Canadians consider themselves active social media users
- 43% find out about news and current events via social media/social networking

GENERAL:

Most senior citizens prefer personal communication (i.e. face-to-face communication); however, internet usage among seniors is on the rise (currently 63%-76%). Some seniors do have difficulty navigating websites which can be attributed to poor website design including small font size, drop down menus and other design features that require fine-motor skills.

When it comes to public engagement, 39% of adults have taken part in some sort of political activity online, for example contacting a government official or speaking out in a public forum about an issue that is important to them. Interestingly, young adults are just as likely as older adults to engage in political activities; however, they are much more likely to do so via social networking sites.

Information Formats

IN VAUGHAN:

- Current sources of information on City programs, news, services, events and initiatives
 - 55% Newsletters and brochures
 - 52% City website
 - 43% City Update eNewsletter
 - 28% Local papers
- 84% of Vaughan residents believe that it's important for the City to increase online-based services and communications to residents
- 68% of Vaughan residents would be interested in personally receiving more online-based services and communications

GENERAL:

More than 80% of Canadians like the idea of receiving automatic notifications about available government services that are relevant to them. Experts agree that a balanced approach to communications is key, integrating traditional and new media into communications strategies to reach all audiences.

Measurement Success Indicators

Based on best practices and preliminary research, the following measurements will be tracked during the two-year implementation phase of this Communications Strategy. At the conclusion of Phase One, analysis of the measurements will help form the next phase of this strategy – the Five-Year Communications Plan.

SERVICE EXCELLENCE

- Demonstrate Excellence in Service Delivery
- Enable stakeholders to be engaged, educated and well-informed
- Establish and promote the City's brand

Measurement

- Increase the percentage of projects requested by clients in which Corporate Communications' advice is sought prior to the project beginning
- Effectively educate, inform and engage City stakeholders
- Provide regular communications to residents
- Increase the number of Directors/Managers/teams surveyed who report that Corporate Communications has been helpful in delivering required information to targeted audience

Success Indicator

- 75% of corporate projects requiring communications support request support at an early and appropriate time
- 65% of residents surveyed are aware of City services, initiatives and programs
- 65% of residents surveyed are satisfied with the frequency of communications
- 85% of those surveyed indicate Corporate Communications has been helpful

STAFF EXCELLENCE

- Demonstrate Effective Leadership
- Provide effective strategic messaging and two-way communication between the City and stakeholders
- Be a leader in providing effective and proactive communications

Measurement

- Increase the number of stories published about Vaughan initiatives, programs and events
- Increase the percentage of stories generated by City-issued news releases, pitches, PSAs and media advisories
- Reduce the hourly cost per communications project delivered to internal clients

Success Indicator

- 25% increase each year
- 75% of all Vaughan stories generated by a City source
- 10% decrease each year in the hourly cost per communications project

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- Ensure a High Performing Organization
- Ensure that online content is current, written in plain language and portrays the City brand
- Leverage technology to more effectively tell the Vaughan story

Measurement

- Increase online activity
- Increase social media activity
- Increase online subscriptions

Success Indicator

- 20% more visitors to the City website
- 20% increase in number of subscribers to corporate social media sites
- 20% increase in number of subscribers to the City’s eNewsletter

Conclusion

This Communications Strategy marks a new beginning for the City of Vaughan's Corporate Communications department. It sets out – for the first time – a comprehensive approach for the City to engage in two-way communications with residents that is based on stakeholder feedback, best practices, market research and communications trends.

To achieve this mission, the department is positioning itself to take a giant LEAP – Lead, Engage, Action and Position – into the future. These goals will guide the department as it moves forward, while focusing on four core principles: consistency, citizen-focused communications, continuous improvement and feedback, and support of the corporate culture.

This strategy also reflects the key objectives of providing a framework that will allow the City to best exchange information with the public, maximizing the use of technology while building upon the benefits of social and new media channels, and employing the communications tools that Vaughan residents prefer.

One of the key changes outlined in this document is a new “team” approach to communications. Staff have been reorganized by areas of focus and speciality: media relations, eCommunications, marketing, and strategic communications. As well, communications specialists will be assigned to specific commissions in an effort to more effectively identify emerging issues and to keep the public informed on what matters to them.

A multi-phased approach will be employed to implement this two-year strategy which will allow Corporate Communications to effectively measure its success. These results will be used, in part, to set the future direction of Corporate Communications through a Five-year Communications Plan beginning in 2015. Measurement is central to this strategy and each action item will be measured bi-annually to ensure the team is on track to achieve its goals and objectives. Corporate Communications is committed to achieving the City's strategic goals, and will analyze measurement results to ensure it is meeting this commitment.

This strategy represents a leap from the past for Corporate Communications. It outlines a new plan for supporting the mandate to deliver two-way communications between the City and its residents, while supporting the Corporation's commitment to open, transparent and accessible government.