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The goal of our communications program is to advance the school’s mission and strategy—both by conveying who we are in clear and compelling language and by deploying content to effectively reach, motivate, and influence the appropriate audiences.

Like the “Gold & Gems” in Blake’s couplet, the elements of our communications—photography, design, videography, careful language choice—should draw attention to the meaningful and socially productive work happening at the school and ultimately inspire our audiences to join with us in advancing our larger mission.

Great work happens at the school. This communications guide will help us all share the news of that work across media—web, social, print, presentations, video, email—to amplify the school’s efforts and inspire our community.
Begin at the beginning: a clear understanding of the school’s mission.
The mission of the Yale School of Management is to educate leaders for business and society.

“The school is unique in that we weigh the business and society parts of our mission equally. Nearly every social problem demands an engagement with the world of business, and likewise, enduring success in business requires nuanced understanding of myriad social factors. Our students learn to evaluate issues with both perspectives in mind.”
—Kerwin K. Charles

The mission remains our lodestar. It is widely embraced by students, faculty, alumni, and staff, and a focus on the mission connects our efforts with the school’s historical ambitions.

The Opportunity

Over the last decade, there has been a broad movement toward our point of view. Young workers, including our prospective students, want a greater sense of purpose in their careers and increasingly choose to work at companies that align with their values. Consumers look for companies to do more than make a profit. The stakeholder model of capitalism, which accounts for the impact of corporations on their communities, has been widely embraced.

“There are two-thirds of consumers now choose, switch to or boycott a brand based on societal issues, up from 51 percent in 2017.”
—2018 Edelman Earned Brand

The large challenges that society faces—the climate crisis, racial justice, income inequality, immigration—are all issues that have a distinct relevance for business, but can’t be solved by any one sector working in isolation. Furthermore, each of these mega-issues is urgent and intertwined with the others. Every leader of the coming decades will need a confident grasp on how these issues affect their organization, as well as how to contribute to progress in every decision they make.

“If we’re to tackle any question, we must simultaneously think about a set of other problems, right now. One cannot say, ‘Well, let’s talk about climate change later.’ A massive part of the Arctic ice cap just broke off, the melting of which will raise sea levels by several inches. There is no waiting for next time to think about race in this country or in your organization.”
—Kerwin Charles

Our focus on both business and society, derived from our founding mission, gives our graduates a better way to understand the real terrain of today’s business world, to steer organizations toward enduring success, and to ultimately make a positive difference throughout their careers.
The “&” lens

Our communications use the “and” in the mission, visually represented as “&,” to convey the distinctive fitness of our mission for this moment and the benefits for leaders in all kinds of roles and industries of a broader understanding of the world.

The & is a small symbol—but it contains multitudes. It signals that SOM programs and people are always concerned with their connections to a larger social context and that they undertake endeavors with the dual goals of succeeding and contributing to the wellbeing of broader communities. By keeping seemingly contrasting goals, stakeholders, and domains of knowledge in mind, despite tension, our approach leads to a fuller and more realistic appreciation of the whole. The & connects to the history of a school that originally offered a Master’s of Public and Private Management. The & aligns with all the programs at the school that go well beyond conventional definitions of business—think education, social impact, healthcare, development economics, etc. The & reflects our take on traditional business disciplines, like finance and economics, which we have always understood as essential tools for impact. The & also reflects the longstanding broad-ranging intellectual interests of SOM faculty and students. The & can be found throughout our activities—in our curriculum, in our community, in the research done by our faculty, in the personal stories of why people come to the school.

“The ‘and’ tells us that a relation of identity and difference obtains between the paired items, or that they entail, need, or presuppose each other.”
—Robert Harrison, Entitled Opinions, December 30, 2020

The original pairing in the mission—business & society—serves as a model for an approach to management that keeps a broad perspective in mind, sees connections between organizational metrics and impact on the community, and bridges industries and sectors. Throughout this book, you will find additional pairings that we can use to illuminate ways that the inspiration of the mission informs programs and activities. The & is the living heart of the mission.

“The conjunction connecting business to society in SOM’s mission statement is indeed meaningful and carefully chosen. It reflects the view that the most intractable problems facing us on the planet will require the best ideas from all sectors of society and all kinds of organizations—for-profit, government, nonprofit, entrepreneurial, etc.—and from all regions of the globe. The conjunction also carries the recognition that business performance must be evaluated by using a wide set of criteria that include long-term social impact, and that business can be a force for societal good and well-being.”
—Anjani Jain

This book will help you talk about any aspect of the school through the lens of the &. How are we different from and better than our competitors due to our focus on the mission? It’s important to note that an essential first step to such communications is to actually be different and better. Our communications strategy builds on a deep and authentic commitment to the mission across programs.
How do we turn mission into motivating and consistent communications?
Every activity at the school should be viewed through the lens of the &, and how our mission-based approach makes us different from other institutions.

Our messaging framework is a tool to help you communicate about the mission, about specific programs, and about your activities and responsibilities in a consistent and effective manner. A disciplined approach to messaging can help us convey what is distinctive about SOM and its diverse programs to a range of audiences, and do so in a way that paints a cohesive and purposeful picture of the whole.

**Start with the &**

Think about how the mission and its distinctive emphasis on business & society motivates the activity you want to describe. How does the approach bridge a set of immediate concerns and a broader perspective on the big issues in the world, resulting in better outcomes for a broader array of stakeholders?

**Examples**

**What makes SOM different from other business schools?**
We are completely focused on making you a leader who acts to strengthen both business and society—no matter what area you end up working in. Our curriculum teaches you to see the connections; our faculty give you the rigorous intellectual tools to assess impact; our community welcomes and supports people who have strong values and want to make a difference throughout their careers.

**Why do you have an integrated curriculum?**
We believe you make better decisions when you take into account the many stakeholders affected by your actions, rather than looking at things through a single disciplinary lens. Our curriculum is built around engaging with real problems and accounting for the extended effects of leadership decisions on organizations, communities, and individuals.

**Why come to SOM to learn finance (or any other technical field)?**
By learning hard skills in a context where you also consider the human impact of business decisions, you will learn to both avoid the pitfalls of short-termism and siloed thinking and spot new opportunities in the nexus of markets and social movements. The ability to advance immediate objectives while aligning an organization with social needs becomes more and more important at higher levels of leadership.

**Why come to SOM to work in the social sector (or any socially motivated field)?**
Markets are a powerful force in society, and any effort to combat a significant social ill will benefit from deep understanding of and engagement with the world of business. In addition, much of the rigor of traditional business subjects can be applied in mission-driven organizations to ensure that you are maximizing your impact and benefitting the people you hope to help.
Add in a theme, or two, or three

**ENGAGED**

- success & impact
- justice & opportunity
- environment & wealth
- classroom & real life
- problems & solutions
- local & global

**RIGOROUS**

- rigor & heart
- data & humanity
- creativity & discipline
- analysis & passion
- intellect & grit
- tradition & innovation

**ATTUNED**

- self & community
- career & family
- Yale & New Haven
- teachers & mentors
- classmates & friends
- aspiration & collaboration

These three themes—engaged, rigorous, and attuned—provide an underlying structure for communications about the Yale School of Management. They don’t have to be recited verbatim, but they should help shape the way we describe both individual programs and the school as a whole. For instance, a brochure about the school will be divided into three sections coinciding with the three themes; while a description of the core curriculum in a particular degree program should emphasize the engaged theme.

The pairings associated with each theme can be used as headers for text or sections of a document.

**Overview of themes**

Here are some of the key features of our programs organized under the themes.
(The next section of this document provides much greater detail.)

**Engaged:** integrated curriculum, real issues, local & global

**Rigorous:** intellectual environment, faculty excellence and commitment, Yale University resources and tradition

**Attuned:** community (and communities), values, diversity, alumni and history
More engaged with meaningful issues, globally and in their communities
success & impact, justice & opportunity, environment & wealth, classroom & real
life, problems & solutions, local & global

Our approach to business education equips students with the critical skills they will
need to succeed in any business, and it teaches them to understand the broader
ramifications of their actions. Combining these skills and perspectives prepares
them to advance in their careers, build long-term organizational value, and make a
difference in their communities.

**Primary Example: Integrated curriculum**

Our curriculum takes a broad view of management challenges and teaches stu-
dents to draw on ideas from different arenas in solving the problems that afflict peo-
ple’s lives. Throughout our programs, the emphasis is on the ways organizations are
connected to the broader society, from local communities to the global market.

- The integrated MBA core curriculum uses stakeholder perspectives rather
  than disciplinary silos to organize information—giving students a lasting
  habit of broad thinking.

- The keystone course in the MAM program is structured around the UN’s
  Sustainable Development Goals and designed to foster students’ ability to
  think more holistically about global trends and the role of business.

- The GBS required course Global Business and Society Perspectives uses
  perspective taking and integration to teach students to apply management
  skills in realistic situations.

- Every course in the MBA core curriculum includes content that explicitly
  considers how business decisions reverberate in the broader society and
  how social forces affect businesses. Indeed, more than a quarter of class-
  room hours in the core are spent on topics related to CSR, ethics, social
  issues, and environmental issues.

- Ethics and morality are woven into every program. The new Master’s in Asset
  Management, for instance, was created with an emphasis on ethical deci-
  sion-making and an investor’s responsibility to other stakeholders.

**Additional examples**

- Courses focused on major social challenges
  - Global Financial Crisis, Urban Poverty and Economic Development,
    Business and Environment, Global Social Entrepreneurship, Business
    Ethics, Public Health Entrepreneurship, Market Failures and Economic
    Policy in Developing Countries, Inequality and Social Mobility, Private
    Capital and Impact Investing
• Project-based assignments and classes that draw the real world into the classroom
  • We’re interested in real problems affecting real people; we don’t leave out the inherent messiness and moral ambiguity.
    • Yale SOM pioneered raw cases, which approach business and social problems by giving students real documents and interviews with stakeholders—rather than a tidy narrative.
    • In the MBA core class Power and Politics, students learn from an example right outside their doors by analyzing the power relationship between Yale and New Haven and making suggestions to improve the dynamic.
    • A raw case focused on how a financial company should market to Black and Latine/Latinx customers who have all too often been left out of the financial system; this case grew out of a class assignment in the Customer course.
• Local & global programs
  • We maintain focus on both the problems outside our doorstep and those around the globe. Students learn to solve problems and contribute value to whatever community they are a part of.
    • For example, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, students volunteered for state and city agencies and provided pro-bono consulting to New Haven-based nonprofits, executive MBA students raised money to provide masks to the poor in their home cities, and SOM faculty did groundbreaking research on the importance of masks in Bangladesh.
• Our grads make a difference at all levels/in all roles; we are equally proud of those who reach the top of the corporate ladder as those who run nonprofit organizations.
• SOM’s degree programs focused on issues like healthcare, sustainability, education, asset management, systemic risk, and global leadership reflect the school’s commitment to dealing with major challenges that go beyond business. Being at a school with leading thinkers in all these areas will benefit any future leader.
• We seek out people who are interested in important questions across all fields of inquiry.
  • Compared to peer schools, SOM’s MBA program enrolls substantially more students who studied humanities and social sciences as undergraduates and who worked in nonprofit and government industries.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yale SOM</th>
<th>HBS</th>
<th>Booth</th>
<th>Stanford</th>
<th>Wharton</th>
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<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>Government/Education</td>
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</table>
Theme 2

RIGOROUS

More rigorous in capitalizing on the best data and ideas to make a difference
rigor & heart, data & humanity, creativity & discipline, analysis & passion, intellect &
grit, tradition & innovation

The tools of an SOM education are uniquely suited to building organizations in any
sector that improve lives, and to assessing and evaluating their impact. Rigor with
purpose; purpose with rigor.

Primary Example: SOM faculty excellence in areas tied to the mission
We turn the resources of a great university to better understanding the knotty prob-
lems that weigh on modern life and blight human flourishing. The school’s faculty
study and teach in areas with widespread relevance, including economic develop-
ment, behavioral science, healthcare, competition policy, data science, financial
stability, education.

- Faculty devoted to both research and teaching prepare students to integrate
evidence-based decision making across their endeavors.
- SOM faculty study issues of deep relevance to both business and society,
including the sources of gender bias in organizations, effective responses
to the COVID pandemic, how to prevent financial crises, and how philan-
thropic efforts can do more good.
- Faculty across all disciplinary groups are using machine-learning tech-
niques to study meaningful challenges facing business and society.
- Students learn to use quantitative models to provide managerial insights
in courses including the MBA core course Operations Engine; Big Data
& Customer Analytics; Energy Systems Analysis; Social Media Analytics;
Artificial Intelligence, Innovation, and Markets

Additional examples
- Connection with Yale intellectual resources and traditions
  - We embrace the values of Yale University, including a belief in the value of
    open discourse.
  - We take pride in collaborating across intellectual terrain.
  - Operations faculty Edieal Pinker and Edward Kaplan have collaborated
    with faculty in the medical school and the School of Public Health to
    improve various aspects of healthcare management and delivery.
- Students benefit from access to leading thinkers and teachers across the
  university and participate in the intellectual life of Yale.
- Students in most SOM programs can take elective classes anywhere
  across Yale University.
• Quantitative courses
• Academic rigor of all courses and programs
  • We hold ourselves to the highest standards of academic integrity and social purpose across all programs.
• Career resources, opportunities, and paths in analytical fields
  • Our graduates excel in analytical and technical fields, such as consulting, investment banking, and marketing. They find the broad perspective on organizations and sense of purpose they imbibed in the SOM community give them an edge in technical roles.
    • In recent years, the top three industries for graduating MBA students have been consulting, finance, and technology. Students across all degree programs have secured competitive positions in analytical, technical, and strategic roles.
    • The school’s Career Development Office hosts recruiting events and supports job treks and other engagements with hundreds of organizations from all industries and sectors.
    • Yale SOM graduates have excelled in roles in all aspects of business, finance, and leadership.
Theme 3

**ATTUNED**

More attuned to the impact they have on all around them.
self & community, career & family, Yale & New Haven, teachers & mentors, class-mates & friends, aspiration & collaboration

We measure success by the impact individuals have on the teams, groups, organizations, and communities around them. Our academic programs and our distinctive community help those who hope to make a difference in the lives of many to turn their strongly held aspirations and values into effective action.

**Primary Example: Community of values**

We assemble students who bring a strong set of values to our community, and the Yale SOM experience is designed to help each of them hone and strengthen their sense of individual purpose. Being part of a community with this orientation serves as training for cultivating healthy communities in organizations of all sorts and scales.

- Through the Internship Fund, each class supports students who want to do internships in the nonprofit and public sectors. In 2019, the Internship Fund raised $260,000 and supported 30 students.

**Additional examples**

- We seek greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in our community and networks and in our society.
  - Our distinctive mission calls upon us to address systemic racism, in the society around us and in our own halls. We also strive to train leaders who will be ready to move organizations forward in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.
  - The school’s DEI efforts are proceeding on many tracks simultaneously, including recruitment efforts, curriculum review, new training and programs, the creation of an advisory committee focused on the issue, and publishing a new diversity report.
  - The school partners with numerous organizations seeking to increase the proportion of underrepresented groups in business schools, the professions, and the ranks of higher education more broadly.
  - The school’s case research team has created a suite of new cases, taught across the curriculum, in which DEI is a topic of the case and/or major characters in the case are from underrepresented groups.
• Programs at the school focus on diversity and equity.
  ▪ The Pozen-Commonwealth Fund Fellowship in Health Equity Leadership at Yale University gives healthcare practitioners the leadership skills and the deep understanding of teams, markets, and organizations necessary to tackle major inequities in the U.S. healthcare system.
  ▪ The Broad Center advances policies and trains leaders to help drive equity in public education systems in major American cities.
• The school’s faculty, including Dean Kerwin Charles, have produced numerous studies looking at issues such as historical differences in income between Black and White Americans, the glass ceiling in promotions, perceptions of the Black-White wealth gap, and how men receive more credit for innovations.
• The school’s collaborative ethos is visible across a range of areas, such as the way faculty teach negotiations and how students help each other prepare for the job search and interview process.
• Yale SOM is part of the broader Yale University community and SOMers connect with leading thinkers and ambitious students to found new companies and organizations, explore and research important topics with broad implications, and build professional networks.
• Our alumni share distinctive career paths—with a focus on making a positive impact in diverse roles and industries—and a sense of connectedness and mutual support.
  ▪ SOM alums remain closely engaged with each other, maintaining relationships with classmates over decades, and with the school, returning to recruit, speak, mentor, and volunteer.
  ▪ The school’s annual alumni giving rate surpasses that of any other school at Yale and almost all peer business schools, demonstrating their ongoing commitment to the success of the school’s mission.
Distinctive & better
By using the & and these three themes, we can clearly describe how our approach and programs are distinctive. It’s important to keep in mind that showing distinctiveness should be in service of demonstrating how our approach is advantageous to students and others at the school. Here are a few general points to keep in mind:

**Bigger picture for better results**
SOM graduates by inclination and training have a wider view of contingencies. They see the ways that individual decisions ripple out to have an impact on people not immediately involved, and they can better guide organizations toward long-term success by spotting the outlying risks and opportunities.

**Ahead of the curve on ethics/stakeholder responsibility**
Business leaders are increasingly being asked to account for their impact on stakeholders and to account for their own ethics and contribution to their communities. SOM graduates start a step ahead by having trained in this approach.

**Enduring toolkit**
Our focus on values and essential management ideas gives our graduates a powerful and enduring compass for leading people and organizations across industries, sectors, and contexts. An SOM education is more than technical skills that need to be refurbished every few years; it is a mindset and commitment that can last a lifetime.

**Contributing to society in many forms**
We measure success by our graduates’ impact on society rather than solely focusing on their wealth accumulation. Our graduates have many routes to career satisfaction, including the reward of being part of a community that broadly contributes to solutions to societal ills.

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**A note on history: The founding story**
The School of Management was founded against all odds. In the 1960s and 70s, traditional business schools focused on profit and operational efficiency, and Yale wasn’t interested in creating another such school. Despite a hardened opposition, a band of believers knew there was a better way to educate leaders—purposeful, entrepreneurial, multisectoral, with a focus on how leaders can both advance organizational objectives and contribute to society. Their vision won out, and since the school opened its doors in 1976, it has produced thousands of alumni who act out this vision in organizations large and small across countries, industries, and sectors.

The school’s history can provide a dramatic way to frame the story of who we are today and help validate our commitment to our mission.
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Ideas and tactics that help us put the messaging into action
Our communications take place in a brutally competitive environment. We’re always competing on at least two fronts: 1- with Facebook, the Wall Street Journal, Buzzfeed, Instagram, Fox News, ESPN, the Brookings Institute, et al. for attention, and 2- with business schools and other graduate programs for people (students and faculty) and reputation.

In both cases, the initial and critical challenge is to break through and capture the attention of the audience we want to reach. However, we are easily outspent by a factor of thousands on our communications product by our first set of competitors. And all of our b-school competitors can, and frequently do, make nearly identical claims about their programs—whether true or not.

How do we stand out?

The short answer is:

Our message conveyed through stories that persuade and motivate presented with authenticity, values, and passion

**Storytelling**

“Narratives that cause us to pay attention and also involve us emotionally are the stories that move us to action.”

—Paul Zak

“Every character should want something, even if it is only a glass of water.”

—Kurt Vonnegut

Humans think in stories. We use stories to convey complex ideas, shared sense of belonging, and emotional context in the minimum possible amount of time. Conveying our message through stories has a number of benefits:

- Stories that engage lead to better recall than presenting plain facts
- Stories grounded in personal experience are more likely to reach “the other side”
- Stories that intrigue (or even captivate) are more likely to persuade
- Stories that engage motivate action
What makes an effective story?

Think, five-act structure for ten-second attention spans (or Joseph Campbell on TikTok). In other words, there are some classic structures to storytelling, visible across historical periods and cultural contexts, that we can make use of. Boiled down to their essence, our stories should have four steps:

- Grab attention
- Establish what’s at stake
- Escalate tension/conflict/import (involves uncertainty)
- Resolve

Sure, this basic structure has been around for millennia, but it’s seldom been wielded effectively. That’s because it’s not easy. To improve our chances of telling compelling stories, we should also think in terms of, in order of priority:

1. Character—who’s involved in the story and why should anyone care?
2. Plot—what does the character want and how do they try to attain it?
3. Message—what’s the key idea we want readers/viewers to take away?
4. Context (setting)—what does it feel like to be in the character’s shoes?

The importance of being unfinished

“Incomplete tasks or unresolved questions engage—and sometimes hijack—attention.” —Prof. Zoe Chance

Often a goal of our content is to lead a user to want to engage further with us. One important tool we have is to raise a question or start a plot but not immediately resolve it. The “Zeigarnik effect” is the psychological description of this; the idea that we all focus our cognition and attention on tasks that have not yet been completed. Think of how many times you’ve finished a movie or book you didn’t really like just because you had to know how it ended. We can apply this approach in how we introduce news stories, blog posts, and profiles. We can also consider how to leave something unfinished when crafting teaser text.

“Zeigarnik effect” in action Which will lead to more engagement?

Option A: Aubrey wanted a career where she could apply her technical skills to make a difference in fighting institutional racism. At SOM, she found just what she was looking for.

Option B: Aubrey wanted a career where she could apply her technical skills to make a difference in fighting institutional racism. At SOM, she found that was both harder and more important than she ever realized.
The storytelling shift

Telling a story often feels riskier than making a rational argument. It requires attempting to elicit emotion, which can cause idiosyncratic responses, and acknowledging and even sustaining uncertainty. It also means thinking from a subjective and necessarily partial point of view. But the payoff will be that we more strongly and convincingly convey a sense of who we are as a school.

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<thead>
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<th>Argument</th>
<th>Story</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>Personal</td>
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<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Concrete</td>
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Telling an institutional story

An institution is made up of many different people united through some common purpose. An institutional story is composed of the many individual stories of the people affiliated with that institution.

Think of our institutional story as being like a mosaic. The messaging (lens, themes, and key ideas) provides the broad outline of the design, and the stories of SOM people and their ideas are the individual, brilliant tiles that provide the color and detail. The messaging without detailed stories would lack vibrancy; the stories without the messaging would lack compelling composition.

Seldom, if ever, will anyone read through our entire website, or study a brochure cover to cover, or frantically refresh to read every news story we publish. They’ll form impressions through stories encountered on Facebook, reading about a faculty member, checking for program information and finding related material. As long as we concentrate on ensuring that each piece of content we produce hits an important messaging point, we’ll advance our purpose with each encounter.

Persona-based narratives

Sometimes, we’ll want to think through the story-arc for a particular audience segment, in order to understand how that group may have specific interests and needs. For instance, a 37-year-old mid-career professional applying to the EMBA program will have differences from a college student looking at the GBS program. While the school’s core message stays the same, we want to account for these differences, as well.

Here’s an example of an overarching narrative for recruiting that can help us craft a sequence of stories and information for this segment:

You want a life of purpose and accomplishment. But the challenges of our age—including the climate crisis, the global pandemic response, and the imperative to root out injustice and racism in all our institutions—tower over your path. You know you won’t reach your highest aspirations if you can’t tackle both these
enormous issues and your immediate job. At Yale SOM, we specialize in the ways business and society interact and depend on each other—and we will teach you to engage with meaningful problems using rigorous analytical tools and a unique awareness of the broader impact of your actions. By studying here and joining our community, you will develop the skills to transform the world.

**Progress through progression**

When engaging prospective students and other audiences, we should think broadly about creating a progression in communications from first impression to the provision of detailed information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seize attention</th>
<th>Engage with stories</th>
<th>Rational argument</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bold/surprising design and content choices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compelling story intros</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthen identification and interest by telling stories about SOM people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide program details and data</td>
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The exact path will look different for each program and likely for each individual reader, but we should broadly aim to craft early-touch communications around big ideas and emotion and belonging, to then provide ample relevant stories, and then finally to give detailed descriptions. This approach could apply to a series of lead-nurture emails, to the path through our website from homepage down to program details, or to a scripted presentation. It reflects what we’ve heard from students in recent years: that they’re initially looking for whether a school feels right and only investigate and assess details of curriculum or career services late in their process. Another way to think of this progression is that we want to move from System 1 thinking, which prioritizes quick intuitive and emotional decisions, to System 2 thinking, where rational deliberation comes in.
Communications Strategy

Authenticity, Values, and Passion

Every communications project at the school should strive to embody the following qualities.

**Authenticity**

Seek the fine grain of reality in both content and design. We want to convey the honest experience of life at the school, including (just enough of) the blemishes.

Authentic communications can help establish trust with our audiences. Think of them as a first demonstration of trustworthiness that invites trust in return. Some of the drivers of trust include *the frequency and quality of communication, source credibility and expertise, having similar characteristics and shared values, the absence of opportunistic behavior, mutual disclosure, the build-up of a consistent history of positive interactions.* If we can establish and maintain trust, we're likely to see greater levels of engagement and cooperation.

*The more trust one is shown by others, the more oxytocin is released in the brain. High levels of oxytocin cause people to work harder to help the group achieve its goals.* —Paul Zak

**Implications**

- Avoid grand or sweeping statements of excellence. Avoid jargon and over-used expressions.
- Communicate in a voice (across all media) that is genuine, clear, honest, and direct.
- Seek out student voices and user generated content—blog posts, social takeovers, etc. Work with contributors to bring out their genuine experience.
- Tell stories that find the remarkable in the everyday, rather than only looking for superstars.
- Use photography that captures real moments, rather than posed or unrepresentative shots.
- Be honest about areas where we are not living up to the mission.

**Values**

Emphasize individual values and individual efforts to make a difference, both because we believe in values-based leadership, and because we want to show action rather than paralysis in the face of the overwhelming scale of problems. But it will also be important to place individual actions in the context of social trends—to shift frames between micro and macro.

Every example of an individual’s core values contains a challenge they are trying to overcome—and that can be a great hook for a story. We also see a broad movement
Communications Strategy

Toward consumers wanting to align with institutions and brands that share their values. (According to Edelman, 86% of consumers expect brands to take actions beyond their core business to improve the world, 68% say trust in a brand has become more important to them.) Telling stories that highlight the values of people in our community helps us resonate with these audiences.

**Implications**

- Ask profile subjects what they care about. Ask why they care about the mission. Also ask what challenges they face.
- Tell stories, for instance in video, about why people do what they do. What’s the backstory that motivates them?
- Connect faculty research and expertise to real-life challenges. Ask what issues motivate the researchers.

**Passion**

Seek to show the passion with which SOMers pursue their ambitions to make a difference in the world. Emotion will provide energy and help us get our message across. (For example, emotional ad campaigns dramatically outperform rational ads.)

**Implications**

- Allow people to talk about emotions; include both heartbreak and triumph to provide a full, believable picture.
- Use photography and videography that shows individuals and meaningful interactions; get closer.
- Don’t let formal perfection or institutional caution eclipse genuine communication.
How the Office of Communications can help you get your message out
First, have you read up on the mission? Really, that’s always the first step. It never hurts to read the first two sections of this book again. All our efforts should reflect a bone-deep sense of the school’s mission.

That done, you need a brochure or a website or a video. The Office of Communications collaborates with all departments at the school to produce such pieces, and we maintain resources (like this book) to empower individuals at the school to produce on-message materials. In general, we produce a set of core materials that embody the school’s mission and key themes and ideas. We also maintain critical communications platforms, such as the som.yale.edu website, and monitor trends in user behavior, analytics, and technology to inform efforts from across the school. We collaborate with departments on critical and high-impact projects and provide guidance and tools for each group to manage their tactical communications.

We’re always happy to consult, and we invite a conversation about your communications approach for your programs and activities.

You can contact anyone in the department directly or reach us through som.comms@yale.edu.

When Should Communications Collaborate on My Project?

School-wide projects:
- Originate with the Office of Communications.
- Shared with and reviewed by programs.
- Distributed centrally by comms.

Program-specific projects:
- Originate with programs/initiatives.
- Shared with and reviewed by comms.
- Distributed by individual programs.

School-wide
Brand & mission
Story-driven
Broad audience

Program-specific
Tactical
Informational
Narrow audience

Zone of collaboration
More resources

You can find everything listed below on the Office of Communications Confluence space.

**Editorial style guide**  How to abbreviate degrees, refer to graduates, and place commas.

**Design style guide**  Colors, fonts, logo usage, and more.

**Document templates**  Use the logo and other identity elements in presentations and documents.

**Website tutorials**  Create new webpages, add content, etc.

**Email templates**  Keep your email communications consistent with the SOM style.

**Event promotion tools**  Get your message into Enews and on the Evans Hall screens.

**Blogs and social media**  Advice and best practices for user-generated content.

**Media relations**  Share your news with reporters and publications.

**Marketing**  Leverage the power of digital advertising to reach critical audiences.
For more information, contact us at som.comms@yale.edu.