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“Strategies for Effective Data Communication”

**Enhancing the Visibility and Image of  
Statistical Agencies**

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As the Head or a top level staff member of a Statistical Agency, what would you like to hear when various parties talk about your Agency?

“ Whenever we talk about statistics, we think about Agency XYZ. ”

“Whenever we need Statistics on subjects abc, def, ghi, ..., Agency XYZ comes to mind. Their statistics are relevant, trustworthy and ready for application.”

“If we have questions about the details of statistics, we have no hesitation in approaching Agency XYZ. Their staff know the stuff well and are so helpful !”

As the Head or a top level staff member of a Statistical Agency, what would you like to hear when various parties talk about your Agency?

“When Agency XYZ carries out a survey, we always support them, both in spirit and in terms of actual action. This is because they do their job professionally and they don’t waste people’s time. Whatever they do, there is a good purpose and we trust it is going to do good to all in the community”

As the Head or a top level staff member of a Statistical Agency, what would you like to hear when various parties talk about your Agency?

“When staff interviewers of Agency XYZ come to us we cooperate very willingly, because we know they have a worthy job to perform. Helping them is eventually helping our own selves. And, they are polite, they are sensitive to our situations in performing their task and they don’t appear in any way “bothering” us. “

As the Head or a top level staff member of a Statistical Agency, what would you like to hear when various parties talk about your Agency?

“Agency XYZ upholds the principle of integrity very well and their behaviour shows that all along. They never give us the impression of fiddling with figures. If there are problems, they will face the problems and work hard to solve them, not trying to sweep them away.”

# VISIBILITY

- The fact that your Agency comes ready to mind means that you have a good degree of visibility in the community;
- and hence **whatever you do carries weight**

# GOOD IMAGE

- The fact that **you come to people's mind in a good light means** that you have a positive image.
- This not only reflects that you have been working successfully. It also means that your future work will receive wide support and hence be much facilitated .

## How to earn good impressions from various groups of outside parties

- (1) Users of statistics
  - **relevance** is a most important issue

We need to have good communication with the various data user parties, be they legislators, government ministers and departments, the academia, the commercial and industrial sector, researchers or the general public, so that the varying needs can be differentially addressed.



**How to earn good impressions  
from various groups of outside parties**

- (2) Practice and Display of **integrity and impartiality**
- (3) Catering for both those who are **barely statistically literate** and those who are the **more sophisticated users**
- (4) Globalization: **use of international standards and practices:**
  - > necessary for data to be widely useful;
  - > commanding greater trust

## How to earn good impressions from various groups of outside parties

- (5) Timeliness in the **release of data** –
  - >> image of efficiency
  - PLUS....a good scheme of preliminary estimates, revised estimates, final estimates –
    - >> image of trustworthiness
- (6) Use of **new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) techniques** –
  - >> image of updatedness
  - while catering for those not catching up as fast --
    - >> image of use-friendliness

**How to earn good impressions  
from various groups of outside parties**

- **(7) User-friendly operational systems and procedures**

**AND**

**Friendly and helpful attitude of staff in servicing clients and customer and in data gathering work**

## How to earn good impressions from various groups of outside parties

- (8) Showing efforts to **minimize respondent burdens**
- (9) Stressing the safeguard of **privacy** and **confidentiality of information** pertaining to **individual persons, households and companies**
- (10) Where **administrative records** are used as source of raw data, let people know that their data rights are protected and that the data are used as one means to reduce burden on data subjects (less need for surveys)

## How to earn good impressions from various groups of outside parties

- (11) **The mass media**

If their impression of us is good, they tend to be very helpful in assisting us in gaining cooperation of various parties, especially survey respondents, to cooperate; and they will help us well in disseminate statistical results.

On the contrary, if they have a negative impression of us, they tend to be particularly critical and even cynical, resulting in impediments to our work.

Thus, we should take the mass media as partners and build up good working relationship with them, facilitating their work and commanding their trust.

## Avoidance of creating bad impressions

- “Doing nothing” (for fear of making mistakes) may represent “apathy”.
- “Doing things slowly, step by step” may represent “tardiness”
- “Doing things very carefully ; making the very least comments possible for the sake of carefulness” may represent “lack of confidence in one’s work” or “trying to evade responsibility”
- All these may arouse resentment and create negative impression of others on our Agency.

## Avoidance of creating bad impressions

- Staff at various ranks in the Statistical Agency all have a role in creating positive impressions and avoiding bad impressions on others.
- Their individual behaviour may also be taken by others as projecting on the behaviour of the Agency.
- Ignorance; being mis-informed; not showing respect and care for privacy and confidentiality of individual data --- creating very bad impressions

**Strategies and tactics  
to enhance visibility and image of Statistical Agencies**

- (1) Our **front-line staff and middle managers** are our ears and eyes. They can tap information from the community. Ask staff to feedback to us what they have seen and heard and encourage them to make suggestions in responding to the community's views
  
- (2) Staff are seen as our **informal spokespersons**. They should be knowledgeable of basic techniques and work approaches; and be kept informed of major developments of the Agency



## **Strategies and tactics to enhance visibility and image of Statistical Agencies**

- (3) **All staff** should be seen as **dedicated, enthusiastic, sensitive and considerate people** – examples from senior staff
  
- (4) Senior staff should make use opportunities of **public appearances** to demonstrate the capabilities of the Agency, how it can contribute to policy making and the social and economic developments of the community
  
- (5) Senior staff should maintain appropriate **relationship with ministers and legislators**, showing that we are there to help BUT meanwhile seen to be fostering the principles of **integrity and impartiality**

## **Strategies and tactics to enhance visibility and image of Statistical Agencies**

- (6) Building good relationship with **the mass media**
  - train up our statisticians in **communication and some journalistic skills**—the mass media are provided with easy to understand and interesting materials ;
  - let them know we are professionally competent and ethically sound
  
- (7) Building good relationship with staff at all ranks in **business organizations** —
  - Show senior staff we are there to help: demonstrate the usefulness of statistics so that they will use data and will cooperate in our data gathering work.
  - For more junior staff there, let them know we are mindful of the burden caused by reporting work and we always try to minimize it.

## **Strategies and tactics to enhance visibility and image of Statistical Agencies**

- (8) With the **Academia**—tapping their expertise; getting them to understand our work : they may be useful in providing “third party endorsement” when we are queried
  
- (9) Have an **Advisory Council** with wide representation –  
    We can get good advice;  
    We are seen **not to be operating in isolation** but are doing our work on the foundation of rich knowledge and wide consultation of needs and concerns.
  
- (10) Efforts devoted to **promoting statistical literacy**—in particular students and young people ; a good means to secure good image and long term support for our work



## **Strategies and tactics to enhance visibility and image of Statistical Agencies**

- **(11) Management of crisis**

Examples of crisis:

there may be some errors in our data which have escaped attention until they have been released

some critical parties question our data on the basis of some reasons which are “seemingly” very strong;

we fail to keep the timing of release of some data as previously undertaken;

some personnel scandals within the Agency which have got known outside;

some physical disasters happening and we may indeed have something to be blamed (such as serious accidents being met by staff and there may be some negligence on the part of senior staff)

## **Strategies and tactics to enhance visibility and image of Statistical Agencies**

### **Management of crisis**

- Resist the temptation to cover up things or to create excuses thereby introducing untrue statements. This would not normally help in the end but rather worsen the situation and even cause permanent damage to the institution.
- Keeping a long term track record of honesty and sincerity to rectify errors is the best policy.
- And coupled with good relationship with various parties, including the mass media (as mentioned earlier we should gain the trust and confidence of these parties all along), we may get over the image crisis.

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Visibility creates and promotes impact
- Beware of over-exposure
- Image building—
  - impressing people in different sector
  - differentiallybut image building is a holistic process :
  - plans and measures should be designed and
  - implemented in a co-ordinated fashion