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## *A Leader's Guide to Successful Collaboration with an Executive Communication Professional*

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Most corporate leaders climb the ranks without the support of dedicated executive communication professionals. So when they reach a senior level or join an organization that offers exec comms help, they may not realize how to take maximum advantage of this resource.

As a result, they often wind up taking *minimum* advantage of these communication experts, who are often relegated to crafting PowerPoint decks or managing event logistics. This often leaves the exec comms pro frustrated—and more importantly, shortchanges the leader and the organization.

That's why members of the elite Executive Communication Council created a framework of three essential questions to guide this relationship:

### **1. WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONAL?**

### **2. WHAT SHOULD YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONAL EXPECT FROM YOU?**

### **3. WHAT SHOULD YOU BOTH EXPECT TO ACHIEVE TOGETHER?**

These questions serve as conversation-starters. They may be particularly useful for leaders who are new to executive communication support or new to the organization they're leading. In any case, the mission is to work more strategically, productively and powerfully together.

### **WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONAL?**

Your executive communication partner can help you:

- More compellingly express your ideas, your expertise and your mission persuasively, both inside and outside the organization—in your voice
- Use all means and media to increase your strategic influence on the organization's behalf
- Connect the leadership of the organization to key stakeholders in a relatable way – and activate them based on your words and ideas
- Foster collaboration with other leaders and departments to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive perspective

Best-practice executive communication starts with strategic planning and grows through consistent, candid and thoughtful communication between the leader and the exec comms partner.

This relationship extends beyond one-off support for a specific event, speech or conference. Importantly, it represents a dynamic, continuous partnership built on mutual trust, honesty and respect, designed to support and elevate your leadership role.

### **WHAT SHOULD YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONAL EXPECT FROM YOU?**

In the busy life of a senior executive, it's easy to see many communication engagements as obligatory—as showing up, delivering a few bullet points, and answering a few questions.

But if you're going to spend your valuable time—and demand the valuable time of your employees, customers, investors or other stakeholders—you owe yourself, your organization and your audience to take maximum advantage of every communication opportunity.

Your executive communication partner can help you think through who you are as a leader and what you have to say that will truly further the organization's mission and serve the audience's needs.

That's a big puzzle for a corporate leader. Your executive communicator can help you solve it, if she or he is worthy of the title—but only if you make time to exchange ideas early in your relationship, and often throughout your ongoing, evolving collaboration.

### **WHAT SHOULD YOU AND YOUR EXEC COMMS PARTNER EXPECT TO ACHIEVE TOGETHER?**

Here's how this should feel: Whenever you formally communicate—whether through a speech, employee town hall, LinkedIn post, video or tweet—you know exactly why you're saying what, to which audience, and why, at precisely this moment.

And after engaging with you in communication, your audiences should feel the same way. Your communication strategy should be as disciplined and purposeful as your business strategy. And your executive communication partner (or team) should be essential to making that happen.

Ultimately, and in the biggest picture, best-practice leadership communication looks like this: Various members of an organization's senior leadership team each have a thought-leadership platform. Each platform will be customized to its leader's unique professional expertise and interested audiences (a CMO will have a different communication plan than a CFO, for instance) and personal communication strengths.

Yet, each platform also will be coordinated to serve an overarching exec comms strategy—and contributive to the platform of the CEO, or top leader in the organization.

In the end, executive communication can and should, as the ECC's charter dictates, “make a fundamental difference in the reputations, contributions and fortunes of an organization.”

Does yours?