



# COMMUNICATIONS PLAN 2016

Lake Don Pedro Community Services District

## ABSTRACT

The District collects millions of dollars annually from ratepayers in the community. Where is this rate money spent? Who keeps the water flowing in my tap 24x7? Is my water safe and do we have enough for me to water my garden? Who is my water provider and who controls them? The Lake Don Pedro CSD has determined that the time is now to increase public awareness of the critical public service it provides. This Communication Plan describes the means to accomplish the goal of the District Board of Directors to increase public awareness of the District and improve its public image.

## Administrator

Chalyse Drake, Director of Administrative Services, Kampa Community Solutions, LLC

# LDPCSD COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lake Don Pedro Community Services District's 2016 Strategic Plan focuses on communications in the following key issues areas: Personnel/Organization, Financials/Accounting, Board/Committees, and Infrastructure/Capital Improvement. Staff has developed a Communications Plan covering all of these critical areas to maximize the District's budget and efficiency.

## GOALS

This Communications Plan has two major goals:

- To provide LDPCSD customers with a clear understanding of the District's operation, management and finances.
- To ensure that LDPCSD customers are aware of the high level of customer service and high quality of water services provided by the District.



## TARGET AUDIENCES

- LDPCSD Customers
  - Active metered water customers
  - Customers with second homes in the service area
  - Vacant land owners
- Internal Communications
  - Customer service
  - Field operations
  - Training and advancement
- Media Relations
  - Local print/radio
  - Regional print/radio/broadcast/cable
  - Legislative Outreach
  - Local elected/appointed officials
  - Regional associations
- Public Agency Outreach
  - Counties/communities
  - Surrounding special districts and service providers
  - Service clubs and civic organizations



## RESEARCH

### DOCUMENT REVIEW

Staff reviewed the following documents and/or programs to prepare this Communications Plan:

- Lake Don Pedro Community Services District 2016 Strategic Plan
- Website content at [www.LDPCSD.org](http://www.LDPCSD.org)
- LDPCSD Board meetings/agendas/minutes

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- Lake Don Pedro Community Services Customer Service Survey 2016

## WEB SURVEY

Staff conducted an online survey using the current e-mail database provided by LDPCSD. Individual IP addresses were used to ensure that each respondent took the survey only once.

	Excellent	Good	Acceptable	Fair	Poor	Horrible	Total
Send me an email	66.67% 28	9.52% 4	19.05% 8	2.38% 1	0.00% 0	2.38% 1	42
Give me a phone call	27.59% 8	24.14% 7	24.14% 7	3.45% 1	13.79% 4	6.90% 2	29
Local radio stations	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	13.64% 3	18.18% 4	40.91% 9	27.27% 6	22
Local newspaper	11.11% 3	22.22% 6	22.22% 6	14.81% 4	11.11% 3	18.52% 5	27
Newsletters or flyers in my mail	31.25% 10	25.00% 8	31.25% 10	3.13% 1	3.13% 1	6.25% 2	32
A posting on a community bulleting board just for the CSD	4.35% 1	8.70% 2	17.39% 4	17.39% 4	30.43% 7	21.74% 5	23

The survey detailed a number of questions ranging from satisfaction with services to how customers would like to receive information. While the overall satisfaction rate is

very good (with 75% claiming Somewhat or Very Satisfied) we should always be aiming for more. This Communication plan will focus on the question of “how customers would like to receive their information”, which is detailed in the chart to above. The tactics in the Communication Plan will mainly focus on web resources such as email, newsletters, and website usage.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- To increase positive customer perception of LDPCSD customer service and quality of the delivery of water over cost.
- Knowledgeable and dedicated staff willing to support new communications initiatives.
- New and expanding grant programs specifically for communication/education programs for sustainable water management.
- Inform of the fact that LDPCSD consistently provides high-quality water services to its customers.

## STRATEGIES

1. Engage LDPCSD staff to support and implement communications efforts.
2. Focus branding and outreach efforts on programs that connect LDPCSD staff *directly* with high-quality service and programs.
3. Incorporate fact-based outreach for all major LDPCSD programs, plans and initiatives to help educate rate payers.
4. Better utilize Web-based outreach.

## TACTICS

Tactics are the specific efforts and actions used to implement the Communications Plan. Each strategy has a unique set of tactics to be carried out by either LDPCSD or outside consultants as noted. Not all tactics will be feasible for implementation based on funding and/or staff availability; however, they should be considered when appropriate.

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## 1. ENGAGE LDPCSD STAFF IN MULTIPLE DEPARTMENTS TO SUPPORT AND IMPLEMENT COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS.

Currently communications efforts are planned, managed and implemented by General Manager Pete Kampa. It is critical to engage a wider cross section of staff to develop materials, information and content for communications efforts.

### Develop Internal Pool of Writers (LDPCSD Staff)

LDPCSD has identified the following individuals to serve as conduits for information regarding their particular job function:

Staff Member	Expertise
Pete Kampa General Manager	Operations, Management and Legislation
Randy Gilgo Operations Supervisor	Construction & Maintenance
Syndie Marchesiello Office Coordinator - Board Secretary	Customer Service, Record Keeping and Reporting
Chalyse Drake Administrative Director, Kampa Community Solutions	Web Presence

It is anticipated the majority of these individuals will commit to at least one to two hours every other week to support this effort.

These staff members will:

- Prepare brief summaries of activities, news, programs and initiatives within their areas of expertise on a monthly basis.
- Prepare brief stories that focus on staff members and/or service-driven actions as appropriate.
- Provide updates regarding progress/milestones achieved within their departments.

This information will be used to populate newsletters, the LDPCSD website, news releases and advertising efforts described in this Plan. We anticipate that overall management of these activities will be supervised by General Manager Pete Kampa. A detailed description of the frequency of these efforts is included in the timeline section of this Plan, however the majority of these efforts will take place on a monthly basis.

### Develop Internal LDPCSD Briefing (LDPCSD Staff and Board of Directors)

LDPCSD's employees and directors are not only the District's greatest asset for operations and maintenance; they can also serve a critical role in communications efforts. The vast majority are in fact customers of the agency they serve. They are the family, friends and neighbors of LDPCSD customers. Their ability to speak knowledgeably about basic programs and services is critical to the overall positive perception of LDPCSD's management. Uninformed employees and directors can inadvertently contribute to misconceptions about operations, resulting in negative perceptions of the District.

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Staff recommends that a simple, straightforward summary of key projects, programs, milestones and initiatives be shared with staff and the Board on a monthly basis via email. This should be a simple standard email compiled by Staff based on items received from the internal writer pool. As some staff members do not utilize e-mail, hard copies should be provided when appropriate.

## 2. FOCUS BRANDING AND OUTREACH EFFORTS ON PROGRAMS THAT CONNECT LDPCSD STAFF *DIRECTLY* WITH HIGH-QUALITY SERVICE AND PROGRAMS.

One of LDPCSD's largest operating expenses is its personnel. It is important for the District to demonstrate that the number of employees is appropriate to deliver the level of service expected by LDPCSD customers. Consistent reinforcement of this message is extremely important.

Our recommendations are as follows:

### Revise Advertising Strategy to Focus on Employees (LDPCSD)

All forms of advertising and education programs should use images and copy that link LDPCSD employees with specific projects/programs and/or initiatives.

Staff members who appear in advertising or collateral materials should be asked in advance to give LDPCSD permission to use their images for educational purposes.

### Promote Both Department and Individual Achievement

When possible, LDPCSD should promote individual and/or department accomplishments or services. This reinforces the concept that staff members are ready to meet any challenge whether it's responding to a malfunctioning pump or a broken water main. Real stories about real experiences with real customers are a great way to connect the public with LDPCSD operations. These stories should be generated as part of the biweekly reports prepared by the writing pool. Appropriate stories will be chosen for inclusion in the eNewsletters and/or considered for news releases as appropriate. This is a call for a type of story to be included in outreach materials.

## 3. INCORPORATE FACT-BASED OUTREACH FOR ALL MAJOR LDPCSD PROGRAMS, PLANS AND INITIATIVES TO HELP EDUCATE RATE PAYERS.

Over the next two years, LDPCSD will have a number of major projects, programs and plans to develop and implement. These include the State (final) inspection and ribbon cutting for the Well Projects, implementation of the Grant Funded Regional Water Conservation Program, and the Service Line Replacement Project.

Each of these efforts needs to have an education component that clearly explains:

- The nature of the project;
- Why it is necessary;
- How much it will cost;
- Where that funding will come from; and
- How it contributes specifically to LDPCSD's ability to provide high-quality service to its customers.

Staff recommends that LDPCSD incorporate tasks specific to outreach in Requests for Proposals and/or Qualifications as appropriate when seeking consultants for work on major projects. The costs for project-

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specific education and outreach should be assigned to those projects and not to the District's overall communications budget.

## 4. BETTER UTILIZE WEB-BASED OUTREACH.

### Revamp Website (LDPCSD and KCS Staff)

It has become clear that the residents of LDPCSD are interested in more information to be accessible at the click of a mouse. Earlier this year, we changed our outdated website platform and replaced it with a more user friendly one. The goal of this site is to make it a data base for customers to easily access public information that they would normally have to submit a Public Records Request for and make District information transparent. Based on our review, we believe that a simple reorganization of the materials with a few additions would improve its functionality and earn the CSDA Certificate of Excellency for Transparency.

### Consistently Update Site (LDPCSD and KCS Staff)

The LDPCSD site can and should serve as a primary source for up-to-date information regarding LDPCSD operations. It is important to update the site at least weekly with new information to keep website traffic coming back.

Staff members at all levels should be reminded of the importance and usefulness of the website and encouraged to promote the site to customers. This is especially important for Customer Service representatives. LDPCSD should ensure that all letterhead, materials, bills and emails include the proper web address

### Semi-Annual Customer Surveys (LDPCSD via SurveyMonkey)

LDPCSD has a very active community of customers who are willing to provide feedback to the District. Staff will actively collect emails to create a data base with which to send email blasts to our customers, leading them to a web-based survey intended to gather input on customer opinion of District services.



### E-Newsletters for Customers (LDPCSD and KCS)

Postage and printing is expensive — e-mail is not. Using the briefs submitted by District representatives, LDPCSD could populate an e-mail template and send bimonthly news updates to customers. Ideally, eNewsletters would be distributed bimonthly and contain material/stories generated by the writers pool.

E-newsletters produced for customers can be amended and distributed to LDPCSD partners, elected officials, other agencies and service clubs. This may be the same e-Newsletter as prepared for customers with slight modifications as needed and should also be sent monthly.

### Revise Billing Statements and Include News Briefs about LDPCSD Programs and Initiatives (LDPCSD)

We suggest that LDPCSD populate that blank space on the back of water bills with news briefs provided by Department representatives. Formatting cost is well within budget parameters and could provide more

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consistent communication with rate payers. These would consist of a bullet list of programs and news identified as most important and relevant to customers by the General Manager and Office Coordinator.

We also suggest that a simple graphic be prepared to show how LDPCSD spends money, separating operations and capital improvements, and that this graphic be included in on a regular basis.

## EVALUATION

It is important to measure the impact of any public education program in a meaningful way. The success of this program should be measured as follows:

- Increase in traffic to the District’s website. We are seeking to double the number of visits to the site over the next 12 months.
- Increase in rate payer knowledge regarding key District programs and projects. This should be tested via survey as described above. Additional indicators include increase in public comments and active participation in Board meetings.
- Decrease in the number of respondents who believe the website needs more information. Target is a 20% reduction.
- Increase in the percentage of rate payers who know where their water comes from. Target is a 20% increase.

## BUDGET

BILL INSERT (MONTHLY/BIMONTHLY)	“@.05” 1,400X6	\$450
SURVEY SOFTWARE	12MONTHS	\$360
		TOTAL: \$810