

A truly successful electric cooperative communications program can occur only when communicators actively engage senior leadership in communications planning and execution, while also aligning strategic communication with a co-op's operational success. The following tips can help electric co-op communicators better engage senior leadership and be prepared to contribute more to their co-op's strategic planning.

## BECOME A TRUSTED RESOURCE

### Professionalism and Work Quality

- 🔊 **Be a source of information.** If you know something is brewing (internally or externally), make sure it does not catch senior leadership by surprise—don't assume senior leadership is already aware.
- 🔊 **Be known as a problem solver.** Do not bring problems to your CEO. Bring recommended solutions. If you do not like how something is going, avoid complaining. Come up with a plan and present it.
- 🔊 **Work with integrity and deliver results.** Track and document your accomplishments. Develop a reputation for exceeding expectations and completing assignments on time.
- 🔊 **Stay mission focused.** What is the company mission? How are you helping achieve that mission? Understand the priorities of your CEO and board of directors so you know where to devote your efforts.
- 🔊 **Be reliable and trustworthy.** When your CEO trusts you to be a part of the conversation, respect that trust and do not share information. Be dependable and show up on time. Respond promptly to requests for information.
- 🔊 **Take initiative.** Look for ways to improve processes, suggest new ideas, and take on additional responsibilities. Do not wait for your CEO or supervisor to assign a task. Take the initiative to identify areas where you could make a difference.
- 🔊 **Be a team player.** Show that you are willing to collaborate with others and contribute to the success of the team.
- 🔊 **Communicate effectively.** Make sure your communications with your CEO and other team members are clear and professional.
- 🔊 **Demonstrate creativity.** Show you can think outside of the box and develop innovative solutions to problems.

### Attitude and Personal Development

- 🔊 **Attitude Matters.** Be positive. Motivate others around you. Become an encourager.
- 🔊 **Use active listening.** As the old saying goes, you have two ears and one mouth—listen twice as long as you talk. Let someone finish their thought before you jump in with a comment. Ask clarifying questions. Listen to management input, and respond accordingly.
- 🔊 **Focus on learning.** Know what is going on in the company and the industry. Keep the big picture in mind as you learn about your company and your industry. Ask lots of questions, be observant, and read the latest news.
- 🔊 **Keep perspective.** Is what you are doing in line with the plans of the cooperative? Does it move things forward? Is it correct and accurate?
- 🔊 **Serve as an ambassador.** Your behavior reflects on your company as you deal with members or the public. Ensure you understand your co-op's mission so you can put those values into action.
- 🔊 **Learn a new trick.** Each year, add a new skill. It adds value to you and to the company.
- 🔊 **Deliver quality work.** Consistently produce high-quality work that meets or exceeds the expectations of your CEO or colleagues. Complete tasks accurately and efficiently and that your work is well-researched and well-written.
- 🔊 **Ask for feedback.** Learn about yourself, too. Invite others to let you know what they think about your work. Be open to criticism and thank your colleagues for their comments. It shows you are committed to continuous improvement and that you are open to learning and growing as a professional.
- 🔊 **Learn to be strategic in your thinking and communications.** (See reverse side for more tips.)

## BOOST STRATEGIC THINKING

- 🔗 **Read widely.** Read books, articles, and reports from a variety of fields. This can help you develop a broad perspective and make connections between seemingly unrelated ideas.
- 🔗 **Learn from others.** Seek out mentors or role models who have strong strategic thinking skills. Observe how they approach problems and decision-making.
- 🔗 **Analyze problems.** Break down complex problems into smaller components and analyze each one individually. This can help you identify the root cause of the problem and find effective solutions.
- 🔗 **Anticipate outcomes.** Use critical thinking to anticipate the potential outcomes of different decisions. Consider how different variables might affect the outcome and plan accordingly.
- 🔗 **Plan ahead.** Develop a long-term plan for achieving your goals. This can help you stay focused and make decisions that are aligned with your overall vision.
- 🔗 **Embrace Change.** Be open to change and adapt your plans as needed. Strategic thinking involves being able to anticipate and respond to changes in your environment.
- 🔗 **Practice reflection.** Reflect on your decisions and outcomes to learn from your mistakes and successes. This can help you refine your strategic thinking skills over time.

## HONE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- 🔗 **Identify your audience.** Before you communicate, identify your target audience and tailor your message accordingly. This can help you craft messaging that is relevant and resonant.
- 🔗 **Develop key messages.** Develop a set of key messages that you want to communicate. These messages should be clear, concise, and memorable.
- 🔗 **Choose the right channels.** Choose communication channels that are most effective for reaching your target audience. This might include your newsletter and state-wide publication, email, social media, video, or in-person events.
- 🔗 **Create a communication plan.** Develop a comprehensive communication plan that outlines measurable goals, target audiences, messaging, and channels. This can help you stay focused and on track.
- 🔗 **Be authentic.** Authenticity is key to effective communication. Be honest, transparent, and consistent in your messaging.
- 🔗 **Measure your results.** Measure the effectiveness of your communication efforts and adjust your strategy as needed. This helps to continually improve and refine your approach.

The Council of Rural Electric Communicators (CREC) is pleased to offer the Quick Read series of easily digestible tips, drawn from decades of experience in critical communication. Find more at [Cooperative.com/CREC](https://www.cooperative.com/CREC).