

Effective 4-H Club Communication Strategies

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Communicating with club members is a vital part of the retention of families in the 4-H program from year to year. Research shows that a lack of communication is a leading cause for members to leave a 4-H club (Lewis et al., 2018). Not knowing when a club meeting is or what the club's expectations of its members are can be extremely frustrating for busy families. Successful club leaders share information with families in a concise fashion across several platforms because being brief and repetitive is key in any effective communication.

Every generation has a method of communication that is preferred. Email is a great way to communicate with Generation X, but a millennial much prefers text messages (Bloodworth Rivers, 2019). The lesson here to be learned is that club leaders should consider their audience when choosing a communication method and layer their communication across multiple platforms. This document shares ideas and strategies for keeping club members and their families up-to-date with everything they need to know to stay involved in the club.

Email

Email is often the default communication method for many clubs. While it is a convenient tool, it is not recommended to be used as the sole source of communication. Details can be shared in an email, but another method of communication should be used to direct members to check their email.

- Subject – Should explain what is in the email so that it can be easily searched for in the future.
- Follow – Up - If there is a deadline involved, make sure to send another email closer to the deadline.
- Links – Include links to more information that can be found on county or state websites.
- Bullets – Utilize bullet points to emphasize different topics to pay attention too.



Modern technology allows 4-H clubs to communicate more effectively than ever, but club leaders may struggle with which type to use.

Newsletters

Consistent newsletters are a great way to share information regarding club events. If they are sent in a timely manner, members will start to rely on them as a dependable source that they look for. There are several online tools that can be used to create a newsletter specific to your club needs.

- Smore.com - This platform is easy to edit and share across social media and through email.
- Tynyletter.com – This platform is a smaller version of Mail Chimp and is easy to use.
- Benchmarkemail.com – This platform uses a drag and drop function to create fun digital newsletters and is free for up to 250 emails a month.
- Hard Copy – Sending newsletters through the mail or handing them out at club meetings may still be the way to go depending on club member preferences.

Text

Text messaging is a quick and convenient method of communication for clubs.

- Keep information in texts brief. This method should be used to direct members to find information in another place, like an email, or to send a reminder about a deadline or task to be done.
- Group texts can be irritating to some as replies get sent to the entire group.
- Consider using a text messaging platform like Remind, WhatsApp, or GroupMe to send texts to the group.

Website

Club websites are a great place to store all information relating to the club. Creating a website can involve a significant time commitment and requires dedication to updating it as information changes.

[Go.osu.edu/googlesitecreation](https://go.osu.edu/googlesitecreation)

Handouts

It is hard to beat having all the information you need listed on a piece of paper that members can take home, give to their parents, or hang on the refrigerator.

- Caution should be given to only using this method as absent members will need the information too.
- Consider attaching the document to an email also so that it can be searched for if they lose the paper copy.

Cloud File Storage

Using the cloud to store club documents like photos, officer reports, historical club information, or anything that might be useful to future club members is encouraged. Some 4-H clubs might like to use:

- Box
- Google Drive
- iCloud
- Teams
- Dropbox
- One Drive

Apps

As most club members and parents now carry around a smartphone, apps are a new way for clubs to stay connected. Different apps will provide different services, but some of the commonly provided include group messaging, event planning, photo storage, task management, and calendars. Below is a list of popular apps but more are created daily.

- BAND
- Remind
- GroupMe
- WhatsApp
- Slack
- InstaTeam
- TeamSnap
- TeamReach

Social Media

Social media is probably the most on controversial methods of communicating. While working with children it is important to remember that not all parents allow their youth to participate on social media. Clubs considering using social media should refer to the Ohio 4-H Social Media Policy.

<https://ohio4h.org/volunteers/volunteers/club-leaders/club-management-resources-policies-and-procedures>

References

Bloodworth Rivers, T. (2019, November 8). Improve communication between generations at workplace. Retrieved February 16, 2021, from <https://www.iofficecorp.com/blog/communication-between-generations-in-the-workplace-4-different-generations-in-the-workplace#:~:text=Use%20Different%20Types%20of%20Communication,-Baby%20Boomers%20grew&text=Baby%20Boomers%20prefer%20face%2Dto,via%20phone%2C%20email%20or%20text.&text=Social%20media%20is%20another%20form%20of%20communication%20between%20generations%20in%20the%20workforce>.

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