



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

2019-2022

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**BACKGROUND:**

Established in October 2003 by a special act of the Florida legislature, Toho Water Authority (Toho) stands as a pivotal entity, proudly serving as the largest provider of water, wastewater, and reclaimed water services in the vibrant community of Osceola County. Anchored in its commitment to excellence, Toho currently extends its vital services to over 100,000 customers in the dynamic regions of Kissimmee, Poinciana, and the unincorporated areas of Osceola County.

Toho owns and operates an extensive network comprising 13 water plants and 8 wastewater treatment plants. With the dedicated efforts of its 300+ person workforce, Toho treats and distributes approximately 37.5 million gallons of potable water and reclaims 27 million gallons of wastewater each day.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Every time a person turns on the tap for a drink of water, washes their hands, turns on their washing machine or uses their irrigation system, an interaction with their water utility company has occurred. Beyond the seamless provision of water-related services, Toho engages with its customers and stakeholders in myriad ways—be it addressing inquiries, conducting repairs during a water main break, or fostering community awareness initiatives. Amidst these diverse opportunities for interaction, it is paramount to recognize that each action taken by Toho should serve as a communicative beacon, illuminating the organization's identity, purpose, and unwavering commitment to serving the public interest.

Traditionally maintaining a modest public profile, aligning with industry norms, Toho recognizes the imperative to ascend to new heights in brand awareness. To foster enduring and positive customer relations, Toho embarks on a transformative journey outlined in this 2019-2022 Strategic Communications Plan. This comprehensive strategy delineates the methods and tactics designed to cultivate internal and external understanding of the organization, expounding Toho's integral role in the community and enhancing the public's appreciation for the intrinsic value of water.

## COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES & OBJECTIVES:

This plan adheres to established communication principles aligned with the mission, vision, and values of Toho Water Authority, with the Public Information Office serving as the mediator and gatekeeper for all communications.

### 1. **Proactive:**

- *Objective:* Enable Toho to control its narrative by communicating its story directly, preempting external interpretations of actions, issues, and decisions.
- *Implementation:* Identify and prioritize key themes, initiatives, or projects expected to be the focus of communications and marketing efforts from 2019 to 2024.

### 2. **Open Two-Way Communication:**

- *Objective:* Facilitate transparent and reciprocal information flow within the community and the organization, fostering an inclusive approach to breakdown perceived barriers.
- *Implementation:* Promote an inclusive attitude encouraging engagement from all stakeholders. Emphasize the value of Toho's services to enhance the customer experience.

### 3. **Strong and Consistent Messages:**

- *Objective:* Develop and reinforce strong themes that align with Toho's image, operational goals, and strategic direction.
- *Implementation:* Provide consistently credible and coordinated messages that resonate with Toho's identity, enhancing its public perception.

### 4. **Mission, Vision, and Values Integration:**

- *Objective:* Align communication efforts with Toho's mission, vision, and values.
- *Implementation:* Emphasize Toho's mission of providing reliable, cost-effective, and responsive water services, with the vision to be the standard of excellence in water supply stewardship. Uphold the values of teamwork, integrity, customer-centricity, excellence through innovation, and respect for employees.

### 5. **Broad Definition of Communications:**

- *Objective:* Acknowledge the multifaceted nature of communications, encompassing information, advocacy, marketing, engagement, government affairs, and marketing research.
- *Implementation:* Recognize the diverse elements within the communications spectrum, ensuring a comprehensive approach to address various facets of Toho's interactions with its stakeholders.

### 6. **Overarching Goal:**

- *Objective:* Communicate the value of Toho's services and the broader value of water to all audiences.
- *Implementation:* Develop targeted communication strategies that convey the significance of Toho's services, fostering an understanding of the intrinsic value of water across diverse audience segments.

By adhering to these principles and objectives Toho Water Authority's communication efforts will ensure consistency, transparency, and resonate across all interactions with its stakeholders.

## STAKEHOLDERS/AUDIENCE:

In the strategic alignment of messaging and communications, Toho Water Authority recognizes the necessity of targeting distinct sectors within its diverse stakeholder landscape. Tailored communications are directed to one or several audiences, aligning with the specific purpose and desired outcomes of each messaging initiative.

### 1. Our Customers:

- **Objective:** To engage and inform the diverse array of stakeholders at the core of Toho's service mission.
- **Segments:**
  - Ratepayers (homeowners and businesses)
  - Multifamily property owners, renters, and managers
  - Industrial and commercial users
  - Development community
  - Institutional users (schools, hospitals, special care facilities)

### 2. Key Influencers:

- **Objective:** To cultivate positive perceptions, uphold reputation, and navigate operational and policy considerations within Toho's service area.
- **Segments:**
  - Media
  - Informed community leaders
  - Elected officials
  - Legislators
  - Special interest groups
  - Industry and agency leaders

### 3. Partners:

- **Objective:** Recognizing the role of partners as key influencers and collaborators in joint activities and operations.
- **Segments:**
  - Local, regional, state, and federal regulatory agencies
  - Technical staff in member jurisdictions
  - Local and regional water providers and trade associations

### 4. Ourselves:

- **Objective:** To emphasize the importance of internal communication and education, fostering a team of informed and engaged ambassadors for Toho Water Authority.
- **Segments:**

- Board of Supervisors
- Staff at all levels

In addition to outreach, the concept of "in-reach" is underscored within Toho's communication strategy. An informed and engaged Board of Supervisors and staff serve as integral extensions of the Water Authority's communication activities. By equipping employees with access to messaging, tools, and outreach activities, every team member becomes a valuable ambassador for Toho in the community.

This targeted approach to stakeholders and audiences ensures that Toho's communications are not only purposeful but also resonate effectively with the diverse groups that play pivotal roles in shaping perceptions, operational considerations, and the overall success of the Water Authority.

## CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES:

Having an excellent reputation with stakeholders is important. Those who are aware of Toho Water Authority generally have a positive impression and high level of trust for the work the Authority does.

### 1. Little Understanding of Toho's Water Source:

- *Opportunity:* Develop educational campaigns to inform the public about Toho's water source, emphasizing the reliability and safety of the Aquifer. Utilize various communication channels, such as social media, newsletters, and community workshops, to reach a broad audience.

### 2. Customers' Understanding about the Need to Raise Rates:

- *Opportunity:* Create transparent and easily understandable communication materials detailing the reasons behind rate increases. Emphasize the necessity of maintaining and improving water infrastructure to ensure continued access to clean and safe water. Utilize visual aids and infographics to simplify complex information.

### 3. Addressing Water Supply Issues & Water Conservation:

- *Opportunity:* Launch a comprehensive public awareness campaign on water supply issues and the importance of conservation. Highlight Toho's efforts in developing a sustainable water supply plan and encourage community involvement in water conservation initiatives. Engage with local schools and community organizations to spread the message.

### 4. Issues Important to Customers:

- *Water Quality (Taste and Smell):*
  - *Opportunity:* Implement a proactive communication strategy addressing water quality concerns. Provide regular updates on the water treatment process, reassuring customers about the safety and quality of the water supply. Conduct public forums or Q&A sessions to address specific concerns and gather feedback.
- *Easy-to-Read Bills and Payment Options:*
  - *Opportunity:* Revise billing statements to make them more user-friendly and visually appealing. Offer multiple payment options, including online and automated systems, to enhance customer convenience. Provide clear instructions on reading bills and understanding the charges.



5. **Building Awareness of Toho's Positive Reputation:**

- *Opportunity:* Leverage Toho Water Authority's positive reputation to strengthen relationships with stakeholders. Showcase success stories, community partnerships, and the Authority's commitment to environmental sustainability through various communication channels, fostering a sense of pride and trust among stakeholders.

6. **Educational Campaigns on Water Conservation:**

- *Opportunity:* Capitalize on the growing interest in environmental sustainability by launching targeted campaigns on water conservation. Collaborate with local environmental organizations, schools, and influencers to amplify the message. Develop engaging content, such as videos and interactive online tools, to encourage active participation in water-saving practices.

7. **Public Engagement in Long-Term Water Supply Plan:**

- *Opportunity:* Foster community engagement by organizing town hall meetings, webinars, or workshops to educate the public about the long-term water supply plan. Encourage input from residents, address concerns, and emphasize the collaborative efforts of Toho and its partners. Use social media platforms to create a dialogue and gather feedback.

8. **Innovative Communication Strategies:**

- *Opportunity:* Explore innovative communication strategies, such as augmented reality (AR) experiences, virtual tours of water facilities, or interactive online platforms. This can enhance the public's understanding of Toho's operations and make information more accessible and engaging.

By addressing these challenges and leveraging the identified opportunities, Toho Water Authority can enhance its communication, fostering a stronger connection with the community and ensuring a well-informed and supportive customer base.

## BRAND:

Toho Water Authority, established in October 2003 by a special act of the Florida legislature, has maintained a consistent corporate look for 15 years. The initial visual identity, introduced in 2003, underwent subtle modifications in 2008 and 2011, resulting in the current logo variations—one with the tagline "Bringing you Life's Most Precious Resource" and one without.

Typically, organizations and brands undergo a refresh of their corporate identities every decade to adapt to evolving trends and market dynamics. Recognizing the need for a rebranding effort is critical, and Toho finds itself in a juncture where several factors warrant consideration:

### 1. Mergers/Acquisitions:

- *Not Applicable*

### 2. Repositioning within the Industry:

- *Applicable:* Toho is strategically elevating its role and reputation within the water industry.

### 3. Overcoming a Difficult Reputation:

- *Not Applicable*

### 4. Desire to Reach New Audiences:

- *Applicable:* A growing and diverse population necessitates reaching new audiences for enhanced understanding and acceptance.

### 5. Modernization:

- *Applicable:* Toho acknowledges the outdated nature of its current brand, with changes in leadership and an evolved organizational landscape since the original design.

### 6. New Leadership:

- *Applicable:* With an entirely new Board of Supervisors and three new Directors, including a new Executive Director, a reevaluation of the brand aligns with the transformed leadership landscape.

In response to these considerations, this Communication Plan advocates for a strategic rebranding of Toho Water Authority. The existing brand is perceived as outdated and requires modernization to align with the evolving dynamics of the organization and the industry it serves. A refreshed organizational image is not only overdue but also essential for harmonizing with the proposed new visual communications strategy outlined in this plan.

Rebranding is a specialized process that demands comprehensive organizational commitment, dedicated time, adequate funding, and the expertise of professional brand consultants. This strategic initiative is not merely a change in aesthetics; it is a deliberate step towards aligning Toho's visual identity with its evolving role, values, and commitment to serving a diverse and expanding community.

## CORE STRATEGIES:

To elevate the overall awareness of Toho's programs and services, the following core strategies are proposed, ensuring that materials and messaging are not only informative but also visually compelling and delivered with sufficient frequency. This heightened customer understanding is essential, particularly when seeking ratepayer acceptance, as an informed public is more likely to provide consent when comprehending the nuances and trade-offs inherent in maintaining reliable, safe drinking water.

### A. Explain the Basics:

- *Objective:* Educate the public on the intricacies of providing clean, reliable water, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the water journey from source to tap and beyond.
- *Communication Tactics:*
  - Utilize clear, straightforward written and visual explanations detailing the water's origin.
  - Explain the intricacies of advanced treatment and technology in accessible terms.
  - Leverage facilities, projects, and partnerships for media engagement and events, spotlighting stories on advanced water treatment and reuse.

### B. Show More:

- *Objective:* Emphasize the indispensable role played by the water industry and its personnel in contributing to the community's well-being.
- *Communication Tactics:*
  - Establish direct links between the Authority's work and specific community benefits such as public safety, health, and economic development.
  - Portray water industry personnel as "everyday heroes" through storytelling and visuals.
  - Reinforce the notion that water, as a common thread, connects and sustains life for all community members.

### C. Illuminate Technology:

- *Objective:* Recognize and integrate technology advancements into customer communication, acknowledging the prevalent role of technology in customers' lives.
- *Communication Tactics:*

- Revamp and optimize the website to be more mobile-friendly, offering a seamless user experience.
- Research and implement customer experience portals that facilitate connectivity and alerts.
- Stay vigilant in monitoring both existing and emerging mediums and tools for customer communication, ensuring alignment with technological trends.

By implementing these core strategies, Toho aims to not only inform but also engage its audience effectively. The multifaceted approach, encompassing education, community connection, and technological integration, is designed to foster a deeper understanding of Toho's vital role and contributions while maintaining transparency and relevance in an ever-evolving landscape.

## TOOLS AND TACTICS:

Toho currently employs a variety of communication tools and outreach strategies, which have proven effective over the years. While this Strategic Communications Plan doesn't propose elimination, it takes a discerning look at their perceived effectiveness, aiming for enhancement where needed.

### External:

#### 1. Social Media:

- *Current Tools:* Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter serve as vital channels for customer communication.
- *Improvement:* Regularly assess and enhance content strategies to maximize engagement and relevance.

#### 2. Website:

- *Current Tool:* [www.tohowater.com](http://www.tohowater.com) serves as the primary outlet for Toho customers.
- *Improvement:* Continuously update and streamline the website to ensure accessibility and user-friendliness.

#### 3. Bill Inserts:

- *Current Tool:* Monthly full-page bill inserts provides key information on events and ways to conserve water.
- *Improvement:* Optimize content for relevance, ensuring its content is punctual for a 30-day distribution cycle.

#### 4. Consumer Confidence Report (CCR):

- *Current Tool:* Annual water quality report, now primarily accessible online.
- *Improvement:* Enhance online accessibility, promote educational initiatives, and consider targeted outreach for report distribution.

#### 5. News Releases and Media Advisories:

- *Current Tools:* Regularly utilized for external communication.
- *Improvement:* Evaluate effectiveness and adjust strategies to ensure wider coverage and impact.

#### 6. Brochures:

- *Current Tools:* Subject-specific brochures distributed as needed.
- *Improvement:* Regularly update content and design to align with evolving communication needs.

#### 7. Outreach:

- *Current Tools:* In-person engagement at community events and meetings.

- *Improvement:* Evaluate the frequency and impact of in-person outreach, adjusting strategies for maximum community connection.

#### 8. **TAP Program:**

- *Current Tool:* Customer emergency assistance program administered through the Council on Aging.
- *Improvement:* Increase awareness through targeted communication, showcasing program success and results.

### **Youth Education:**

#### 9. **Summer Camp:**

- *Current Tool:* Hands-on learning experience for middle school students.
- *Improvement:* Regularly update the curriculum to align with evolving educational needs.

#### 10. **Drops Savers Poster Contest:**

- *Current Tool:* Annual poster contest promoting water conservation.
- *Improvement:* Evaluate participation and consider expanded outreach for greater impact.

#### 11. **Outreach Programs:**

- *Current Tools:* Partnership with the Osceola County STEM coordinator for classroom modules.
- *Improvement:* Explore additional partnerships, and expand educational offerings.

### **Internal:**

#### 12. **Quarterly Updates, Toho All Emails, The Pipeline (Internal Monthly Newsletter):**

- *Current Tools:* Internal communications channels.
- *Improvement:* Regularly assess and enhance internal communication strategies for clarity and engagement.

#### 13. **Employee Meetings and Gatherings, V.O.T.E. Committee, Intranet:**

- *Current Tools:* Internal engagement platforms.
- *Improvement:* Optimize internal communication channels to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing.

#### 14. **Infographics and Short Videos:**

- *Improvement:* Introduce visually compelling content to simplify complex concepts and increase audience engagement.

### **NEW TOOLS:**

#### 15. **Nextdoor:**

- *Introduction:* Explore the use of Nextdoor, a private social network, for neighborhood communications.
- *Evaluation:* Regularly assess the platform's effectiveness in reaching and engaging local communities.

By strategically assessing and refining these tools and tactics, Toho aims to maintain a robust communication strategy that aligns with evolving needs and technological advancements, ensuring effective outreach to both external and internal stakeholders.



## MEASUREMENTS:

Gathering and analyzing customer and stakeholder feedback is a cornerstone of refining Toho's messaging and optimizing outreach and communications strategies. This invaluable input is derived from various sources, including customer comments submitted through the website, phone calls, public comments at Board meetings, and insights from the customer service team and field operations and maintenance crews.

To enhance Toho's research and customer feedback mechanisms, the following strategies will be implemented:

### 1. Informal Customer Feedback:

- *Current Practice:* Routine collection of informal customer feedback.
- *Improvement:* Continuously refine data collection processes to ensure a comprehensive understanding of customer concerns and issues.

### 2. Algorithmic Analysis:

- *Strategy:* Utilize algorithms such as Google Analytics for data collection on the external website and social media platforms.
- *Rationale:* Leverage advanced analytics to gain insights into user behavior, preferences, and trends, enabling data-driven decision-making.

### 3. Board Engagement:

- *Strategy:* Better promote and expand Board engagement.
- *Rationale:* Enhance communication with the Board to ensure alignment between organizational objectives and feedback from key stakeholders, fostering a more cohesive and responsive approach.

### 4. Survey Promotion:

- *Strategy:* Promote survey findings to internal and external audiences; explain how the research is being incorporated into future programs.
- *Rationale:* Increase transparency by sharing survey results, demonstrating a commitment to incorporating feedback into ongoing and future initiatives.

### 5. Industry Partnerships:

- *Strategy:* Remain involved with other industry partner organizations.
- *Rationale:* Stay abreast of industry trends, best practices, and collaborative opportunities, ensuring Toho remains at the forefront of effective communication strategies.

By implementing these measurement strategies, Toho aims to establish a comprehensive feedback loop that informs ongoing improvements in communication

practices. Leveraging advanced analytics, promoting engagement with key stakeholders, and transparently sharing and incorporating survey findings into decision-making will contribute to a more responsive, customer-centric, and industry-leading communication approach.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this Communication Plan serves as a comprehensive roadmap to elevate Toho Water Authority's communication strategies. By aligning with the organization's mission, vision, and values, and considering the diverse needs of stakeholders, these strategies aim to enhance transparency, engagement, and overall effectiveness.

Throughout this plan, key areas have been addressed, including:

1. **Challenges and Opportunities:** A thorough analysis of challenges has been undertaken, providing the foundation for strategic opportunities. Leveraging Toho's positive reputation while addressing crucial issues will guide future communications.
2. **Background and Introduction:** An overview of Toho's history, mission, and vision has been presented, setting the stage for the need to strategically elevate the Authority's brand awareness.
3. **Communication Principles and Objectives:** Clear principles and objectives have been outlined, emphasizing proactive, open two-way communication, strong and consistent messages, and alignment with Toho's mission, vision, and values.
4. **Stakeholders/Audience:** A nuanced understanding of diverse stakeholders and audiences has been provided, ensuring tailored communication strategies for each segment.
5. **Brand:** Recognition of the need for a refreshed brand to align with evolving organizational dynamics and communication strategies.
6. **Core Strategies:** Defined strategies to explain the basics, show more, and illuminate technology, creating a holistic approach for effective communication.
7. **Tools and Tactics:** An inventory of current tools, outreach efforts, and proposed new tools to optimize communication channels both internally and externally.
8. **Measurements:** Strategies for gathering and analyzing customer and stakeholder feedback, employing algorithms, and engaging with industry partners to continually enhance communication effectiveness.

This plan represents a commitment to dynamic and adaptive communication strategies. As we implement these initiatives, we anticipate increased stakeholder engagement, strengthened brand resonance, and ultimately, a more informed and satisfied community.

For any questions, clarifications, or updates to this plan, please contact the Public Information Office, Mary Rose Cox.