

Time to Get the Word Out

How to Reach the Right People in Two Changing Landscapes

Our Goal Today

Today, we will walk through practical steps to help your organization expand awareness, reduce stigma, communicate more clearly, build trust, and help individuals, families, and referral sources take the next step.

- The drug and alcohol field has changed.
- The way people find information, evaluate support, and decide who to trust has changed too.
- Getting the word out is about clarity, trust, and making support feel accessible.

1. Why Is This Important?

Marketing is not just promotion. In this field, communication can help people understand what support is available, feel safer asking for help, and know what to do next.

Now

Write one reason getting the word out matters for your organization.

Next

Identify one thing that may be making it harder for people to find, understand, or trust your services.



2. What Would Someone Need to Know?

Imagine someone in your community is worried about themselves or someone they love. They are overwhelmed, unsure what kind of support is needed, and not ready to make a phone call yet.

Before they take the next step, what would they need to know?

3. What Is Changing?

There are two changing landscapes to consider: the drug and alcohol field and the marketing and communication landscape.

The Field

- Your audience is not only the individual seeking support.
- Parents, spouses, friends, schools, healthcare providers, employers, community partners, and referral sources may all be looking for information.
- Different audiences need different information, reassurance, and next steps.

Prompt	Your Notes
Priority Audience #1	
What do they need?	
What questions do they have?	
What fears may stop them?	
What message would help them take the next step?	



Communication

- People may encounter your organization through your website, Google Business Profile, social media, online reviews, billboards, email, text messages, print materials, referral partners, and community outreach.
- A single flyer, post, or ad is rarely enough.
- Your message should be clear and consistent wherever people find it.

Now

List the places your organization currently shares information.

Next

Choose 1 or 2 places where your message needs to be clearer, more consistent, or easier to find.

4. Awareness: Help People Understand What You Provide

At the awareness stage, someone may not know your organization exists, or they may have heard your name but not understand what support you provide.

Pro Tip: Say what you provide, not just what you do.

- People do not always search for your program name.
- They may be looking for relief, answers, hope, safety, or support for themselves or someone they love.
- Plain language helps people connect your services to what they actually need.



Prompt	Your Notes
Service Name	
What Benefit it Creates	
What Fear it Helps Reduce	
What Someone Should Do Next	

5. Consideration: Make It Easy to Trust You

During consideration, people are comparing options and looking for signs that your organization is safe, credible, and able to help.

Trust can come from:

- Credentials
- Partnerships
- Community relationships
- Reviews or testimonials, when appropriate
- Accreditations
- Referral sources
- Years served
- Outcomes or impact data

Now

Write down 3 trust signals your organization already has.

Next

Decide where those trust signals should appear more clearly: website, brochure, social media, email, ads, referral materials, presentations, etc.



6. Decision: Make the Next Step Feel Possible

At the decision stage, someone may understand the benefit of reaching out but still feel unsure or afraid.

Common barriers may include:

- Fear of judgment
- Cost or eligibility concerns
- Privacy worries
- Not knowing what happens next
- Not knowing whether a family member can call
- Unclear contact information
- Not understanding which service is the right fit

7. Find the Friction

Think about someone who may need support but has not reached out yet. What could stop them?

Prompt	Your Notes
Friction Point #1	
Message that reduces the concern	
Friction Point #2	
Message that reduces the concern	
Friction Point #3	
Message that reduces the concern	



8. Make the Next Step Obvious

Every communication piece should quickly answer four basic questions.

- Who do you help?
- What support is available?
- How does someone get started?
- What happens next?

At Home

Select a communication piece: a flyer, website page, social post, email, or referral sheet. Then, identify whether the next step is clear, the contact information is easy to find, and someone outside your organization would understand it in less than 10 seconds.

9. Keep Your Information Accurate Everywhere

For someone who is already overwhelmed, even a small barrier can feel like too much.

Keep your information accurate on:

- Website
- Google Business Profile
- Online directories
- Social media platforms
- Printed materials
- Referral documents
- Email signatures
- Ads

Resource	Details
Phone Number	
Address	
Hours	
Website	



Service Descriptions	
Eligibility Details	
Intake Steps/Contact Forms	

10. Build Content that Feels Safe, Clear, and On Brand

Your brand is more than your logo. It includes your words, visuals, tone, photos, colors, and calls to action.

Use language that emphasizes:

- Support
- Dignity
- Hope
- Clarity
- Safety
- Next steps

Avoid language that feels:

- Judgmental
- Overly critical
- Confusing
- Fear-based
- Hard to understand

Now

Write down 3 words your organization should use more often.

Next

Write down 3 words or phrases your organization should avoid.



11. Create a Simple Brand and Message Guide

A brand and message guide helps your team communicate consistently.

We recommend including:

- Colors
- Fonts
- Logo usage
- Photo style
- Words to use and avoid
- Common calls to action
- Approved descriptions of services
- Preferred tone of voice
- Key audiences
- Trust signals

At Home

Identify whether your organization already has a brand or message guide, and if so, does it need a refresh?

12. Now/Next

Use this section to decide what to do after today.

Do Now/This Week

- Identify your top 2 to 3 audiences.
- Review one website page for clear next steps.
- Check that your contact information is accurate in key places.
- Write down 3 trust signals your organization should share more clearly.
- Choose one service and rewrite it based on the benefit it provides.

Do Next: Over the Next 30 to 90 Days

- Create or update a simple brand and message guide.
- Build messaging for each key audience.
- Strengthen your website, Google Business Profile, and social media presence.
- Add clearer calls to action across your materials.
- Use multiple channels together so your message is seen more consistently.
- Review your content for stigma-reducing language.
- Create a plan to keep information accurate over time.



13. Final Reflection

What is one thing you can update right away to make your organization easier to find, understand, or contact?

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Thank You for Joining Us!

Interested in learning more or want to reference the answer key?

