

S·A·L·T
effect

Communicating Final Decisions on
Summer 2020 Camps



by Mary Sterenberg & Kristie Sigler

COMMUNICATING FINAL DECISIONS ON SUMMER 2020 CAMPS

Camps face difficult decisions for summer 2020. How camps communicate these decisions with parents, kids and other stakeholders will impact them just as much as decisions on whether to close or open with significant adjustments. Strong communication can translate to more financial support, stronger confidence in camp leadership and deeper loyalty.

This worksheet helps camp leaders craft messages to effectively communicate their decisions with their key audiences.

STEP 1: KNOW YOUR ORGANIZATION

What is your mission statement?

EXAMPLE: Our mission is to provide outdoor and faith-based camp experiences for children. We strive to encourage positive attitudes and help children build strong relationships through a quality camping experience.

What are your communication capabilities?

EXAMPLE: email list, active Facebook page, ability to record and share video

STEP 2: KNOW YOUR OBJECTIVES

What are your top 2 objectives beyond communicating a main summer 2020 decision?

- Communicate refund processes/options and anything parents need to do
- Protect camp funding to protect existing and future camps and services
- Protect camp funding to avoid permanent closure
- Protect camp funding to protect staff jobs
- Communicate changes to camps (delayed schedules, required masks, residential camps becoming day camps)
- Communicate new opportunities available due to current situation
- Set yourself up for strong enrollment for the 2021 camp season
- Give parents other resources (from your camp or other sources)
- Manage disappointment of campers, especially those with previous experiences with your camp
- Retain permanent staff and help ensure many summer staff return in 2021
- Protect the long-term relationship you have with campers and parents
- Protect relationships with key stakeholders or financial supporters
- Make sure kids know you're also disappointed that camp can't happen
- Other _____

STEP 3: IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCES

Who needs to know your decision?

Keep in mind people beyond current campers and parents. What about camp alumni? Others who provide financial support? Local schools? Local media? List all possible audiences and then list them in order of top priority. Create messages for your top three audiences first. Then repeat the following steps for different audiences as you have time and feel it's needed.

STEP 4: KNOW YOUR AUDIENCES

What is each audience's WINs (wants, interests, needs)?

- I now need child care for summer
- I want to help my child feel less disappointed about missed experiences that can't be replaced (i.e., missing the final year of camp)
- I need my child to have productive/active/fun things to do this summer, especially once virtual schooling ends
- I need ways to help meet my child's need for social interaction this summer
- I want to give my child something to look forward to this summer
- I want my child to learn new things or develop hobbies that I can't teach
- I'm interested in summer options for my kids that are still safe
- I want to help others who are hurting financially because of the pandemic
- I want camps (or THIS camp) to be there for my kids next year and for years to come
- I want a break from entertaining, supervising, teaching my kids after several months at home
- Other: _____

Where does this audience get its information?

Email, specific social media platforms, phone, word of mouth

STEP 5: CRAFT YOUR MESSAGE

Draft two main messages you want to send to your top priority audience.

EXAMPLE parent message: We're disappointed to share that Camp A will not be able to open for Summer 2020. We will offer refund options and need you to select whether you would like a full refund or would donate a portion of your fees to support our camp during this difficult time.

Review your answers to Step 2. Create language to address other important camp objectives.

EXAMPLE parent message:: Though we can't open for summer 2020, we're doing everything we can to ensure we will re-open next summer and welcome kids back. If you are financially able, please consider treating registration fees as a donation to the camp during this difficult time. This helps us cover the ongoing costs of facilities or permanent staff.

STEP 6: EDIT YOUR MESSAGE

Audience Focus

Review your answers to Step 4. Put yourself in the audience's shoes and share your messages in a way that address at least one of your audience's wants/interests/needs. You may not be able to solve their problem, but you can empathize or provide other helpful resources.

BEFORE: We're disappointed to share that Camp A will not be able to open for Summer 2020. [Move directly into refund logistics, etc.]

AFTER: We're disappointed to share that Camp A will not be able to open for Summer 2020. We understand how sad this is for your kids - especially our long-term or final year campers. For you as a parent, it also means juggling not only emotions but summer schedules. [insert info on anything special you're doing for final-year campers who won't return or links to resources that might help parents with changing summer plans or helping kids manage disappointment]

Transparency

Are there ways you can be transparent with the facts or other behind-the-scenes information that went into the decision?

EXAMPLE parent message: We carefully reviewed Centers for Disease Control and Prevention requirements, crunched numbers and brainstormed many options. The camp will lose money we reduce the number of campers to meet CDC requirements, and we can't fulfill our camp's mission to build quality relationships through an outdoor camp experience under the current restrictions. Our board of trustees - people who care about you and your children - made this decision to protect our ability to provide a wonderful camp experience to children for years to come. We also want to do everything we can to also support the campers and parents affected by this summer's closure.

Call to Action

Do you clearly state anything you need or want your audience to do?

Do they need to select a refund option? Give you feedback on ways you can help? Follow you on social media platforms for ongoing updates?

Contact Info

Where should your audience go with questions or feedback?

If your communication prompts other questions, you want those messages to come to a place you're monitoring so you can respond.

Messaging Mix

Where should you share your message?

Ask this question for each audience. Should long-term campers receive personal phone calls from counselors? Should parents get emails? Should a video from the camp director go on the camp Facebook page and Instagram account?

Parent Resources

Ways to Support Summer Camps Affected by COVID

www.salteffect.com/blogs/learn-as-you-grow/supportingcamps

Top 10 Things to Do With Teens & Tweens at Home

www.salteffect.com/blogs/learn-as-you-grow/top-10-things-to-do-with-tweens-teens-at-home

How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus

www.salteffect.com/blogs/learn-as-you-grow/coronavirus

Top 10 Things Your Tweens Want You to Know But Won't Tell You

www.salteffect.com/blogs/learn-as-you-grow/tweenneedyoutoknow

Top 10 Board Games for Tweens & Teens

www.salteffect.com/blogs/learn-as-you-grow/top-10-board-games-for-tweens-and-teens

When Being Grateful is the Last Thing You Want to Do See

www.salteffect.com/blogs/learn-as-you-grow/gratitude-pandemic

See more on the SALT effect blog at www.salteffect.com

ABOUT SALT EFFECT

SALT effect helps busy moms build strong and happy families - especially moms of tweens and teens. Founders Kristie Sigler and Mary Sterenberg teach communication at a large university. Kristie also published the textbook *Persuasive Communication* and does lesson planning and copyediting consulting with companies like McGraw Hill and the EPA. Mary authored the textbook *Write Like a PR Pro* and freelances for Columbus CEO and Cardinal Health.

Kristie and her husband have two sons - a tween and a teen - and two dogs. She works hard to make sure her house doesn't smell like a locker room. Mary and her husband have two tween sons and a younger spitfire of a daughter. They love to travel when they aren't running to sports practices. Kristie and Mary are fueled by connection, laughter and faith (oh, and coffee).

Check out our blog at www.salteffect.com or follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

