



**First Baptist Broken Arrow
Communications Analysis and Goals
August 1, 2018**



Introduction

The following report contains a detailed analysis of current communications at First BA and goals for improvement. One-on-one meetings with staff in June and July 2018 were key in developing this report. Other insight comes from anecdotal feedback from various lay leaders and my own observations as a church member of approximately 15 years. In developing this report, I relied heavily on my background in marketing and public relations, as well as my own experience hearing from former members of First BA.

Italics mark actual quotes (in some cases paraphrased for context) from staff interviews that I found particularly poignant. I felt it important for certain staff feedback to be represented in their own words.

Although the goals identified in this report are numerous, they can and should be implemented in stages. Some goals will be more easily achievable by existing staff while others can be tabled until First BA hires a Director of Strategic Communication. The most urgent goals are marked in red.

Throughout the report, I refer to staff in a few ways:

- Leadership — refers to the Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor and Business Administrator
- Director-level staff — refers to the Pastors of Missions, Worship and Community Baptist Coweta
- Ministry leads — refers to Directors of Women's/Men's Ministry, Preschool, Students and Youth
- Department leads — refers to Director of Social Media Strategy, Facilities Director, etc.

It has been my honor to analyze communications at First BA and develop goals for improvement. If you have questions or additional needs, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,

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Internal Communication

Healthy internal communication among staff and leadership is key to the success of any organization. Ensuring staff members feel heard and that their opinions are valued creates a positive culture that goes a long way toward staff motivation and retention. When staff perceive the channels of communication within an organization are closed (i.e., their feedback is not welcome) OR feel as if their communication has consistently been received without due consideration or action, they can feel discouraged and disrespected. This ultimately leads to complaining among their peers or even to church members, and a once-positive culture quickly becomes negative. Negativity can spread like wildfire, ultimately reducing the effectiveness of church ministries and undermining the goal.

Staff must be encouraged to voice their concerns with those to whom they report. Meetings between staff and their direct reports must be made a priority by both parties. Likewise, if staff express a problem, they should be expected to bring one or more solutions to this meeting. Long term, this action and the others described below will contribute to a healthier, more positive culture in which staff and leadership feel they are on the same team.

Internal Communications Analysis and Goals

What First BA is doing well overall:

- Passionate staff
- Staff eager to share their opinions
- Strong leadership

1. Confusion about vision/direction

Some staff below the director level described feeling confused about the direction of the church. They seem to feel big decisions are often made by the director-level staff without much forethought. (This is likely because they are not involved in these discussions/decisions.) Director-level staff questioned whether we are doing “too much.” Many staff expressed the desire to potentially have fewer events, programs, etc., in order to focus more resources/attention on those things.

Side note: It is difficult for me to find the church vision statement on the website. This should be easily findable by guests and something all staff and members know by heart.

“There’s a mixed vision and mixed communication about what we’re doing and why.”

“There’s confusion on the organizational hierarchy and whose job is what. Things get dropped.”

“The ideas and vision are bigger than what our capabilities are.”

“Our biggest issue is that we try to be all things to all people, so then we’re nothing to nobody.”

“We need to get rid of some things — we should do less things with greater focus.”



Goal 1: Leadership should closely review existing ministries, programs and events for Return On Investment (both in terms of time and financial resources). The questions that should always be asked and answered are: “What is the larger goal?” and “Is this helping us meet the goal?” Note that leadership may need to spend some time reviewing and updating existing goals or setting new ones.

2. Communications flow

Nearly all interviewees expressed frustration and/or confusion about how information is communicated to staff. Relevant pieces of information sometimes don’t get communicated to staff below the director level. When staff learn information at the same time as deacons or church members, they feel disrespected.

Email was another area of concern; staff expressed that emails are often ignored or abandoned for other methods of communication such as texting or casual, in-person conversations. Some staff were bothered by non-urgent emails sent outside of traditional office hours, which they also perceived as disrespectful.

Goal 2: Communications flow should be closely reviewed to identify specific break-downs and redrawn to reflect the organizational chart. In other words, a staff member’s supervisor should be responsible for communicating all relevant information. Likewise, if staff are concerned they should have known about a specific announcement in advance, they should communicate that to their supervisor.

Goal 3: Review expectations with all staff regarding email and other methods of communication, including responsiveness. Again, if this policy is not in writing, make it so.

3. Accountability

More accountability is needed, across the board. There is a need for post-event recaps to discuss what went well and, more importantly, what could have gone better (and how to fix it for next time).

There is also some “blame game” going on around . Some staff blame the executive pastor for lack of follow-through on tasks, and vice-versa.

“We don’t do criticism here. We tell each other what a great job we did, and for the things that went wrong we place blame in the nicest possible way.”

Goal 4: Leadership must set expectations and communicate them in writing. If expectations aren’t met, there must be consequences — and the existing consequences might need to be revisited/re-communicated if they aren’t getting the desired effect.



Goal 5: Post-event recap meetings should be set. In this meetings, successes should be celebrated. Just as importantly, dialogue and constructive criticism should be encouraged and modeled for staff to create a culture where everyone's opinion is valued in an effort to simply "do better" and "be better." If a single person or department is at fault, they should be addressed immediately and appropriately by the executive pastor or their supervisor.

4. Territorialism between ministries

The majority of interviewees detected some territorialism and/or competition between ministries. Some members sense this vibe, as well. One major problem is that the staff does not pray together regularly. Regular prayer will break down divisions and move the staff toward "one mind" more than any other process or protocol. Improving communication with the Lord is the first step to improving communication with one another.

Another contributing factor to ministry territorialism is that ministry leads do not know what other ministries are working on; therefore, they feel disconnected to the rest of the staff. All ministries would benefit from a) an intentional effort to strengthen relationships among staff and b) incorporating a communication/reporting process among staff members. Lastly, leadership must communicate a culture of teamwork and communicate clear expectations on how to support each other, as well as the attitudes/behavior that will not be tolerated. Specific issues should be addressed directly with relevant staff members.

Once ministry leads understand what each ministry is working on, specific areas should be identified for teamwork and cross-promotion between ministries, especially those that serve the same audience. Young families in particular — likely even those within the church — do not know all of the ways First BA might serve them. For example: Do families in the community who have kids at the Community Preschool know First BA also offers recreational programs for preschoolers at the ARC, or vice-versa? Do mothers who attend MOMS know about the ARC programs or the women's Bible studies at the church? Do parents with kids in Almighty Sports know about the Albany School of Music?

Goal 6: Hold all-staff meetings once per month that open or close with corporate prayer. Director-level staff should communicate their broader vision/priorities to the larger group and give staff the opportunity to ask questions. Ministry leads also should briefly report on their individual ministry areas. (See p. 14 for a sample meeting agenda.)

Goal 7: Plan all-staff outings/retreats at least twice a year in which the team gets away from the campus and into the community to do something fun.

Goal 8: Review staff handbook for language that communicates the staff culture and importance of teamwork; make changes if necessary. At least once per year, provide this material for staff review and signatures.



Goal 9: Create a survey (or utilize an existing survey tool) to measure organizational culture. Require staff to take the survey at the beginning of each year, and review for change from the previous year. If issues are identified, request more information from the relevant staff members.

5. Disconnect between senior/junior staff

Younger staff perceive they are not included in “important conversations” and feel their perspectives are not welcome. Several younger staff members said their feedback is not requested, and they doubt director-level staff would take their feedback seriously even if they took the initiative to share it on their own.

When younger staff members are not encouraged to share their input, this is dangerous for two reasons. First, as previously stated, staff feel disrespected and undervalued. Secondly, an entire generation of church members is not represented when staff of a certain age are the only ones involved in the conversation. In any organization or situation, surrounding oneself only with those who think like you do is more comfortable in the short term, yet detrimental in the long term.

“The population we most struggle with reaching are the under-40 crowd, yet the staff who are under 40 are not included in decision-making. That seems to be a problem.”

Goal 10: Involve younger staff members in key meetings typically reserved for director-level staff with the understanding that they may bring a different perspective that potentially represents a large portion of the church demographic.

6. Identity/vision of Community Baptist Coweta

The CBC staff expressed frustration that church decision-making most often takes a “one-size-fits-all” approach that does not take into account CBC’s demographic and specific needs that differ from the main First BA campus. This lack of collaboration creates what is perceived by CBC staff as “two competing visions.”

There are also notable disconnects among the staff at CBC and First BA. The campus pastor expressed he does not know what is going on with the youth/kids ministries at CBC and has no involvement in the budgets for these ministries.

CBC staff also shared disappointment/concern that director-level staff rarely visit CBC yet make decisions that impact the CBC staff/congregation. Lastly, there seems to be some lack of clarity among ministry leaders regarding how much time they themselves should spend at First BA and CBC.



“Director-level staff rarely darken the door at CBC, but they’re the ones making all the decisions.”

“Communication between the staff at the two campuses is a nightmare.”

From a member perspective, the vision of the First BA/CBC partnership lacks clarity and should be revisited. At one point, members were told that CBC might someday be one satellite campus of many. However, that plan seems to have changed or has been placed on hold. The co-branding of First BA/CBC seems to communicate that the campuses are operating as one entity; however, that is not the “feel” people get upon visiting CBC. Staff are confused about this, too. Some of these issues will likely resolve if/when First BA adds a third campus.

Goal 11: Director-level staff and ministry leads should regularly attend CBC services and events, perhaps in a rotation, to deepen their understanding of the needs of this campus/congregation and communicate support of CBC leadership. Leadership should review staff time spent at both locations and communicate expectations for this.

Goal 12: CBC’s campus should meet regularly with the campus youth and children’s pastors so all parties are up to date on campus initiatives.

Goal 13: Leadership should closely review the First BA/CBC connection. Questions that should be asked/discussed: What is the goal of this campus partnership? Is a single approach to decision-making, programming, marketing, etc., for both campuses “working” for all involved? How can CBC staff feel more engaged in these processes? Do members at both campuses understand the long-term plan for the First BA/CBC connection beyond the CBC expansion campaign?

7. Marketing oversight/budgets

Currently, ministry leads decide a) what they market, b) how they market, and c) how much they spend to market. It is my understanding that there is one marketing budget for general First BA marketing (managed by the Director of Digital Strategy) in addition to individual marketing budgets for each ministry area (managed by individual ministry leads).

Organizing marketing in this way is problematic because it encourages each ministry to do its own thing without understanding how this fits into the church’s broader goals. By transitioning marketing decisions and oversight of marketing budgets to one individual, more consistency will be achieved across all ministries. Although it is necessary for ministry leads to remain involved in marketing their programs (see below), this change will allow them to focus on their strengths in leadership and program development/execution.

Goal 14: Hire a Director of Strategic Communication to lead the First BA marketing strategy, public relations and general communications for the church. (See p. 15 for job description.)



Goal 15: After hiring a Director of Strategic Communication, transition ministry marketing oversight/budgets to this position. The Director should meet regularly with ministry leads to review their goals/ideas and help determine strategies and a reasonable budget for marketing programs and projects.



External Communication

“External communication” refers to how the church communicates with its members, visitors and the community at large. What a church communicates, and how it communicates, is certainly key for members to help determine their level of involvement in church activities. Good communication with visitors is just as important since we want them to have a smooth, positive experience in hopes they will return.

What and how (and if) we communicate to the larger community, including the unchurched, are key factors that can drive visitors to First BA or to another local church to which they feel they can better relate. Marketing helps ensure residents know of First BA and what we are about. Community engagement is an essential vehicle to demonstrate that First BA is a church that loves its residents and welcomes them to our campus and, ultimately, into a relationship with Jesus Christ. The positive image that can be created or grown through marketing and community engagement also strengthens members’ relationship with their church. We saw through An Affair of the Heart that members are eager to get out into the community through outreach projects like this.

External Communication Analysis and Goals

What First BA is doing well overall:

- Video
- Branding
- Ministries’ engagement on social media
- Concert advertising on KXOJ (free through concert promoter)

1. Information overload

All staff recognized the importance of communication, but several are overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information they need to communicate (specifically, Missions, Youth and Production Services). These staff members and others tend to feel First BA “tries to do too much.”

The production team expressed frustration regarding the number of requests for marketing/creative and how these requests are submitted. They seem to feel like the workhorses of the church and that no one understands the volume of work they must develop. They prefer ministry leads and other staff submit their requests for projects in writing rather than in passing. This team finds it difficult to accommodate ministries’ last-minute requests, although these are at times unavoidable. Production Services must be able to adapt and respond to needs; otherwise, the church’s communications will be handicapped.

“There’s just too much to communicate.”

“By the time I’m ready to tell a story, I’m traveling again.”

“No one can tell me what’s a priority.”



“We are reactionary, not proactive.”

Goal 1: Develop processes to help Missions, Youth and Production Services prioritize what to communicate, when and how. (This is a long-term undertaking and would be a key role of the Director of Strategic Communications.)

Goal 2: Develop a written tool/process for project requests to Production Services. This tool should be developed by Production Services and should answer the questions: What is needed? Who needs it? When do they need it? Where it will be used? and Why is it needed? (i.e., What is the goal?)

Goal 3: Incorporate “staff education” in all-staff meetings in which staff of various departments and ministries speaks about a topic important to them and how their co-workers can help. Production Services is a specific example of a department that might speak.

2. Community involvement

Nearly all staff communicated a need for First BA to increase its presence in the community. This can be done by identifying existing events in which the church can play a part, and by hosting specific community events on or off campus. The key is to “think outside the box” to attract interest (and perhaps even positive media attention).

“We need to be in the public eye more.”

“We’re not on people’s radars.”

“BA doesn’t love us because we don’t show we love them.”

Existing community events the church might be involved in:

- Rooster Days Parade in May
- Taste of Summer (all-you-can-eat BA ice cream festival) in June
- Camp Bandage in June
- On July Fourth, many cars full of people already gather at the church to watch fireworks at Rhema. First BA could have staff/volunteers hand out bottles of water or candy/popcorn to these campus visitors and invite them to church.
- Nienhuis Park Back to School Bash in August
- Unite My City — a citywide, multi-denominational approach to racial reconciliation under the banner of Christ

The church will likely need to prepare some materials to support these types of events as they come up, and Production Services must be able to accommodate these needs. Ideas include:

- Basic collateral for sharing about church programs/ministries
- Branded water, candy or other giveaways that are relatively low-cost



- A First BA-branded “photo opp” — a creative background and props — that encourages people to snap and share a photo

Goal 4: Ask each ministry lead to research and identify at least one existing community event in which their team can become involved in the next calendar year. This event might be “in place of” an event that would normally be facilitated by First BA staff from start to finish; in this way, ministries might actually save money and reach new audiences.

3. Nationalism

Junior staff in particular perceive messages both from the pulpit and put out by the church through social media and email might be counter-productive.

“We have gotten so political, especially in the past year.”

“We’re not making people angry with the Gospel; we’re making people angry with the political statements.”

These statements represent a generational divide that the church should be aware of. SBC President J.D. Greear was quoted as saying, “The younger generation has a hunger for getting beyond the partisan stuff and saying, ‘What’s it like to follow Jesus in 2018 and not be a Republican Christian or a Democrat social progressive Christian?’ Our (his church, The Summit’s) general approach is that the church as an organization should not typically get involved in the particulars of policy but should limit itself more to teaching the truth.” Source: Religion News Service, June 6, 2018

Goal 5: Leadership should consider and seek to understand the perspective of younger members of the church and community. This understanding should guide decisions related to guest speakers and sermon content.

Goal 6: When involved members leave the church, leadership should reach out personally to offer well wishes and request feedback. (This could fall under the responsibilities of a Director of Strategic Communications.)

4. Social media

As previously noted, ministries’ use of Facebook and other social media platforms is generally strong and engages their members well. One ministry with room for improvement is the Preschool Ministry. The Facebook page, which is a key channel for communicating with parents of preschoolers, offers great tips for discipling young children, but virtually no information about preschool activities, programs or opportunities. Preschool parents do not receive regular newsletters or emails about everything available to their families, which leads to frustration and missed opportunities. Again this ministry in particular offers many opportunities for cross-promotion with ARC programs, MOMS, etc.



In recent weeks, the main First BA Facebook page has become a stronger source of information about the church itself. Videos of sermons should be edited into short Facebook-appropriate clips (no more than 5 minutes long). This is especially appropriate for sermon series, as it helps draw people in to hear more on this topic.

Goal 7: A plan should be developed and implemented to ensure preschool parents are being communicated to appropriately using Facebook, email and potentially other channels. If possible, preschool parents should be surveyed to find out what programs they know about and how they prefer to receive information.

Goal 8: Continue to strengthen the First BA brand on social media by incorporating more video into the feed. Be sure captioning is turned on, as many people consume video without sound. Ensure captions are properly edited before posting.

Goal 9: Review social media policy (perhaps through “staff education” during all-staff meetings) to reiterate the importance of leading with love and kindness on social media.

5. Website/branding

The First BA website is strong, and most information is organized in a way that is easily findable. However, information for some events does not tell members what they need to know. One example is the Summer Preschool Kickoff in June. There was some misunderstanding that this event was a drop-off event, rather than a family event. Another example is women’s/men’s ministry events, which should always note whether childcare is available and who the guest speaker is, etc.

Overall, branding for the church and its events is also strong. However, one must assume a person seeing an event logo knows nothing about the event or the church. The Shop Talk Expo is a men’s ministry event that did not use the word “men” anywhere in the logo, creating confusion about the event and its intended audience.

Goal 10: Going forward, staff should err on the side of over-communication to church members. Ministry leads should focus on telling members the High 5: the Who, What, When, Where and Why, plus one final question, “How much does it cost?”

6. Advertising

The church could benefit from some strategically placed advertisements such as a billboard off the Broken Arrow Expressway (also suggested by the Missions Pastor) and possibly some Facebook ads that target specific users through keywords. Examples: preschool, Mothers’ Day Out/MDO and gymnastics.



The marquee/electronic sign at 61st and Elm is an extremely useful tool for advertising, and I understand it has been successful in attracting attention for programs. However, some logos and information being used on the sign are too small for passing motorists to easily read (one example is the Albany School of Music logo).

Goal 11: Staff should review budgets for advertising and experiment as it can.

Goal 12: Marketing materials and logos should go through an editing/vetting process in which mistakes can be identified and corrected before publication.

Goal 13: Marquee messages should be tested and tweaked as needed for readability. They also should be frequently changed to present new information on a regular basis. This demonstrates First BA is a church with vibrant ministries that has “something for everyone.”



Sample Staff Meeting Agenda

Parties involved: Department leads and up. Business support staff (with the possible exception of a staffer to record notes) nor ministry/facility support staff should be included in this meeting.

Frequency of meeting: Monthly

Length: 1 hour, 15 minutes

- Prayer (ask a different staff member to lead each time) — 2 minutes
- Leadership gives status report/casts vision of churchwide focus — 10 minutes
- Staff education (given by a different staff member each month; topics might include how to improve social media for your ministry, how to make your event budgets more efficient, administrative “hacks”) — 15 minutes
- Allow time for staff questions/discussion — 10 minutes
- Ministry leads each report on their focus for the month, including their problems, challenges or concerns — 30 minutes
- Close in prayer (ask a different staff member to lead each time) — 2 minutes



Job Description: Director of Strategic Communications

Position Summary Develop and execute church communications strategy, both internally and externally. Work with leadership and director-level staff to identify staff communications gaps at First BA and Community Baptist Coweta, and develop and implement solutions. Work with ministry leads to identify problems and develop solutions. Create marketing content and guide the development of digital and print materials.

Time Commitment Full time preferred

Education/Experience

- College degree in marketing, public relations or a related field of communications
- 8+ years in a marketing or media position

Qualifications/Skills

- Committed follower of Christ
- Strong writing and editing skills; ability to craft a message to the appropriate audience
- Confident public speaker with ability to cast a vision
- Problem-solver who respects tradition but thinks “outside the box”
- Knowledge of relevant trends/tools related to communications and ministry

Responsibilities and Duties

- Internal Communication
 - Meet weekly with director-level staff (and senior/executive pastor, as needed) to identify communications needs and develop solutions
 - Meet regularly with ministry/department leads to discuss their overall goals, programs/events and related communications opportunities/needs
 - Lead committee tasked with communication during First BA’s pastoral transition
- External Communication
 - Identify opportunities for community engagement and work with ministry/department leads to execute projects approved by leadership
 - Oversee church branding and marketing
 - Oversee social media strategy and develop content/execute projects as needed
 - Manage media relations — both proactively and reactively
 - Outreach to members who have left the church

Accountability Executive Pastor

Direct Reports

- Director of Digital Strategy
- Video Director