

Communication Checklist

Problem: Starbucks' paper beverage cups are not recyclable in most parts of America and the world. Because Starbucks is responsible for the distribution of about 6 billion paper cups each year, the company is partnering with [Closed Loop Partners](#) to give out [\\$10 million in grants as part of a new initiative](#), the NextGen Cup Challenge. The goal of the initiative is to create and bring to market a recyclable and compostable coffee cup by 2021. The challenge will award grants to entrepreneurs working on ideas that could lead to the development of more sustainable cups.

Research

What do we know about the current situation?

- Starbucks' current paper cup contains 10 percent recyclable material
- The cup is not recyclable in most of America and the world
- Only a few American cities, including Seattle, San Francisco, New York, and Washington, DC, have the infrastructure needed to recycle the cups
- As part of its sustainability efforts, Starbucks has devoted considerable time and resources toward developing a recyclable paper cup
- Starbucks is currently working on its 13th internal test to create a biodegradable paper cup

What are more details about the existing product?

- Starbucks' current paper cup has a thin, non-biodegradable liner designed to meet safety standards and prevent leaks
- Internal trials have not been able to create a liner that stands up to safety standards when filled with a hot liquid
- Starbucks' goal is to create a plant-based, compostable liner that can stand up to hot liquids while meeting safety standards and preventing leaks

What do we need to know?

- Which organizations and/or individuals will participate in the new initiative
- Which organizations will receive the grants to develop a sustainable cup
- What strategies and techniques the grant recipients intend to develop as they work to create a recyclable cup
- How often and in what manner the grant recipients will publicly share their work
- Whether any of the grant recipients were successful

What tools will be used to find out?

- Publicly available information will include open source web sites so other companies can use the information for their own product development
- Starbucks' and Closed Loop Partners' PR and communications teams will inform the public of the progress made by the grant recipients

Has it always been this way?

- Starbucks has had a 10 percent recyclable cup since 2006

- Starbucks' current cup has a thin liner designed to prevent spills and meet quality and safety standards
- Starbucks has been working internally on developing a recyclable cup for several years with limited success

How do we know?

- The PR and Communication teams at Starbucks and Closed Loop Partners have issued several press releases on the subject, which is a company and industry priority

How much time do we have to find out?

- Starbucks hopes to bring a fully compostable and recyclable cup to market by 2021

Strategy

Who are the decision makers?

- Starbucks company executives, led by Colleen Chapman, VP of Global Social Impact
- Executives at Closed Loop Partners
- Other members of the consortium who will award accelerator grants to entrepreneurs working on ideas that could lead to the creation of a more sustainable Starbucks cup

Who are the stakeholders?

- Starbucks
- Closed Loop Partners
- Grant recipients
- Starbucks customers
- Environmentally conscious consumers
- Starbucks shareholders
- Other companies that want to develop their own sustainable cups

What do we need to accomplish?

- Inform the general public about Starbucks' continued sustainability efforts and try to reach out to scientists and entrepreneurs who may be interested in developing a recyclable cup
- By offering grants, entrepreneurs and scientists will be able to put their ideas to the test and have a financial incentive to develop a recyclable paper cup
- Starbucks needs to create, test, and bring to market a biodegradable and recyclable paper cup within three years

How will we know if we are successful?

- Starbucks will be successful if its partnership with Closed Loop Partners and the \$10 million in grant money results in a recyclable cup that can be scaled and brought to market within three years

What behavior are we trying to achieve?

- Cities, states, and even countries all have different infrastructures set up for recycling, which has resulted in a patchwork of laws and policies for recycling requirements. Starbucks supports streamlining and expanding policies for recycling requirements
- If Starbucks' cups can be recycled nationwide and throughout the world, the company will contribute to removing up to 6 billion paper and plastic cups from landfills
- This will change behavior by encouraging more people to recycle since they will know that Starbucks cups are recyclable anywhere in the world

What steps will take us there?

- Awarding grants to qualified organizations
- Research and development
- Product testing
- Bringing the cup to market within three years

Implementation

What tools make sense to get message across?

- Existing social media channels
- Press releases
- Blog posts updating progress
- Tweets
- Video updates
- Interviews with company scientists and grant recipients
- Starbucks partner (employee) open forums
- Announcement at annual shareholder meeting

What is the budget?

- The budget is \$10 million given to grant recipients plus any expenses related to internal product testing and development
- Existing social media channels are of nominal expense because the Communication team and infrastructure is already in place

Are there other limitations or resources available to use?

- Limitations: Existing challenges related to developing a recyclable cup; persistent external perception that Starbucks isn't doing anything to change its paper cup
- Resources: Organizations receiving grant funding have additional internal resources available to them; other companies using the open source information generated from the existing research and development

What channels of communication do stakeholders use?

- Existing social media channels
- Press releases targeting mainstream media outlets
- Blog posts
- Company web site updates
- Videos posted on company web sites
- Open source web sites to share progress

What is the timeline?

- Starbucks wants to have a recyclable cup brought to market within three years

Evaluation

How will the campaign be measured?

- Progress made to create a recyclable paper cup
- If a recyclable paper cup is created and brought to market within three years, the campaign will be a resounding success
- The campaign will also be measured on how much new information and research is created toward the goal of a fully recyclable paper cup

What statistics can be used to indicate success?

- How many cups are removed from landfills and recycled instead
- Percentage of cups Starbucks uses that are recyclable
- Metrics related to impressions, web site traffic, and outreach to the public
- Increase in net new customers
- Positive social media reaction – Starbucks viewed as leader in sustainability

What other indicators will be examined?

- Progress made by grant recipients
- Information shared on open source web sites
- Internal Starbucks research and development progress toward the goal
- Statistics related to decreased usage of paper cups
- Potential increase in value of Starbucks stock

What are people saying about the campaign?

- The campaign has just started, but the press has been overwhelmingly positive. A few organizations are skeptical because Starbucks has promised to reduce its paper cup usage in the past, but overall the initiative has been picked up by major news organizations and has received positive press mentions related to Starbucks' commitment and leadership on sustainability issues