

# Meet me in ST. LOUIS!

FCA Annual Conference | May 15-17, 2013

**Find your gateway to communications at the FCA Annual Conference in St. Louis.** The Hilton St. Louis at the Ballpark will be our host, May 15-17, 2013, as FCA peers come together to enhance fraternity communications through the exchange of ideas, experiences and information.

## EDUCATION

Our lineup of engaging, challenging speakers will leave you inspired for the work ahead. Come refresh your creativity and develop your skill set with FCA.

## NETWORKING

Our Associate Members will be on hand to offer information on an assortment of professional services such as printing, design and electronic document solutions. Be sure to stop by the vendor booths for giveaways and in-person consultations.

## RECOGNITION

By submitting applications in dozens of categories, members have the opportunity to bring home coveted awards honoring their quality communication pieces produced in 2012. All award applications will be accepted via our website, [www.fraternitycommunications.com](http://www.fraternitycommunications.com), beginning in January. Keep an eye on your FCA eNews for more information.

With a lot of exciting details in the works, the Annual Conference Committee invites you to spend May with FCA!

### *Did you know?*

St. Louis is home to the very first publically financed kindergarten in the United States. Kindergarten, literally translated “children’s garden” was started in Germany by philosopher Friedrich Frobel as a social experience for children for their transition from home to school. His goal was that children should be taken care of and nourished in “children’s gardens,” like plants in a garden.

Susan Elizabeth Blow studied abroad in 1970, and came across the kindergarten teaching methods of Frobel. She brought his teachings back to the U.S., and in 1873, opened the first publically financed kindergarten in the United States at Des Peres School in Carondelet, St. Louis. She is known as the Mother of Kindergarten.

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## OUR MISSION:

To enhance fraternity communications through the exchange of ideas, experiences and information.

## Know How, When and If to Push Back

By Laura Stelsel, Kappa Alpha Theta

Communicators play many roles. You have to be an entertainer. You’ve got to be a trendsetter. Often times, you must play devil’s advocate. And, occasionally, you have to be the bearer of bad or uncomfortable news.

It’s not easy to acknowledge when something is amiss; to show your organization in an honest light, when that light might not be a favorable one. Sometimes those faults must be recognized in order to address them, make a change, and move forward, but when it’s important to share a negative trend or disappointing news, it can be a tough sell.

It takes courage to bring these items up to your board or council, but it takes real guts to pursue it even when you face opposition. Here are some tips to consider when facing pushback:

**SHARE YOUR CONCERNS** Not everyone thinks like you do, so put yourself in their shoes. Ask why they might be resisting the idea. Maybe they know something you don’t. Perhaps they have experience with a similar situation. Have an honest discussion and study all of the facts.

**ASK THE EXPERTS** Consider bringing in a volunteer or co-worker—someone who knows far more than you on issues like hazing, mental health or recruitment—and asking them to share their opinion with the group. They can provide perspective and credibility.

**WEIGH THE POTENTIAL PROS AND CONS** Together, create a list of the pros and cons. Yes, addressing this issue might be beneficial in one regard, but it could bring up problems that far outweigh the benefits. Consider whether or not it is worth it.

**PICK YOUR BATTLES** After addressing their concerns, consulting experts, and weighing the pros and cons, is the board still not budging? Think about the importance or potential impact of the story. Is it possible that you might face a similar situation—one with a great potential impact—down the road? If so, maybe it’s time to let this one go.

**CONSIDER THE IMPOSSIBLE** Could YOU be wrong? Consider the possibility, and if it’s true, humbly admit it and move on. It will deepen your trust with each other and be more beneficial the next time one of these issues comes around.

When all is said and done, it is important that you ask for and receive their trust. Recognize that, as the board, you know that they are under a tremendous amount of pressure from collegians, parents, alumni, universities, volunteers, donors, etc., but you were hired to do your job to allow them to be better at theirs.

“A board of directors or Grand Council is not selected by chance,” said Kappa Alpha Theta Executive Director Betsy Corridan. “They are a group of people with a significant investment in your organization. They have experience, perspective, courage, and most importantly, vision. It’s likely that if an idea is communicated with a clear purpose, they will almost always trust the expertise of the staff member.”

A good communicator will question things, but so, too, will a good board. Keep in mind that these debates should and will happen, and when they do, it’s crucial to maintain the right perspective in order to take the risks necessary to move your organization forward. If you establish an environment of trust and respect, these discussions will become rarer and easier in the future.

## Letter *from the* PRESIDENT



By Jennifer M. Siler, Alpha Delta Pi

I recently purchased the iPhone 5. I realize not everyone is an Apple fan, but one undeniable fact is that the company has created a brand that is recognizable around the world. And this brand includes product packaging. If you have bought an Apple product, you know what I'm talking about—the design and craftsmanship that goes into the box and the internal display of what's in the box. Everything in the box has a place and a purpose, and the presentation inside the package and on the outside have been thoroughly branded and coordinated to the product.

As I opened the iPhone 5 box, I thought about the packaging I use for our communications. Often, product developers don't put much thought into the packaging, but Apple considers the delivery, and their attention to detail and respect for their product shows from the outside in. When Steve Jobs introduced the first iPhone, a single device for music, Internet connection and phone calls, his question was, "Are you getting it?" I think Apple gets it.

According to an article in *Forbes* earlier this year, Apple has used three marketing points since the company was incorporated in 1977.

**EMPATHY** Understand our customer needs better than any other company.

**FOCUS** To do a good job of the things we decide to do, we must eliminate all of the unimportant opportunities.

**IMPUTE** We may have the best product, the highest quality, the most useful software, etc. If we present them in a slipshod manner, they will be perceived as slipshod. If we present them in a creative, professional manner, we will impute the desired qualities.

Are you getting it?

We can relate those three points to our communication plans with our organizations? With empathy, we must understand what our members need to know about the organization, whether they've been members for a few months or several decades. This may be the most challenging of the points as each member brings his or her personal reactions, understandings and remembrances to weave into their acceptance of information and change.

Focus is perhaps the easiest point to include in our communication plan. It's pretty much a standard goal to be successful with our communication. We must focus not only on the content of the message but also its presentation, or packaging, if you will. Delivery and presentation can make or break the point of the message and, thus, the acceptance of important information.

Presentation of our communications must be creative, fun and professional so members will attribute the desired results to the organization. To impute the desired results requires excellent presentation of content and message.

Much like the packaging of the iPhone, you have to surround your message and form of communication with empathy, focus and impute for it to be successful and for your members to learn and engage. It's the reason our communications plans include magazines, websites, social media, mobile apps and more. Are you getting it?

Who knows what the next technology craze will be. Will it make a difference in how we package our communications? Most likely. As communicators, we have to lead the way and make a difference for our organizations and our members. Have you got it?

## 6 NETWORKING TIPS FOR CASTING A WIDER WEB

Education, recognition and networking are the main purpose of the Fraternity Communications Association. Each year, when we survey our members following our Midyear and Annual conferences, there is an overwhelming response that networking opportunities alone can make attendance worthwhile. Honestly, is there a better way to learn and grow in our personal and professional lives than to do so with our friends? For this reason, FCA has also started a monthly brown bag lunch series for our numerous friends in Indianapolis. (Don't worry, we will live tweet the events so non-Hoosiers can join as well.)

For many of us, networking is easy. For others, it's a little more difficult. The next time you find yourself at an FCA function, another conference, or a university alumni event, keep these networking tips in mind to make the most of your experience.

- 1 TAKE A LOOK AT THE GUEST LIST** Whether it's via an app like Guidebook or a Facebook event page, look at the other attendees, particularly those you have heard about and want to meet and those from organizations that interest you.
- 2 FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE SCHEDULE** Look for times where there will be extra chances to mingle. Then make sure you use that time to network as opposed to checking email or primping in the restroom.
- 3 SET NETWORKING GOALS** This could mean picking a topic you want to learn about and intentionally seeking those who can help you, or merely making one new friend.
- 4 PRESENT YOURSELF AS SOMEONE YOU'D LIKE TO MEET** Authenticity goes a long way. You want to meet John Smith? Great. Make John Smith glad he met you.
- 5 THINK OF IT AS A TREASURE HUNT** Finally! A hunt that isn't against our bylaws! All joking aside, each new person you meet can lead you to the information or person you want to know. You might even find some hidden jewels along the way.
- 6 PROMPTLY FOLLOW UP** Send a note, email or LinkedIn invite within 24 hours. It will reassure the person you really were glad to meet them. This kind of good impression goes a long way in furthering business relationships.