Outline:

1. Introduction
   a. Welcome

2. The Value and Purpose of a Strategic Communications Plan for Athletics
   a. Communication is powerful.
      i. Whether they know it or not, your college or university has entrusted you with a great deal of power. You have a platform from which you can either
         1. Engage or enrage alumni.
         2. Persuade or dissuade donors.
         3. Encourage or discourage fans.
         4. Excite or incite players and coaches.
      ii. You can use your power for good, or for evil.
   b. Assuming everyone in here is on the side of good and not evil, the greater danger is that we will simply miss the opportunity to do good.
   c. The purpose of a Strategic Communication Plan is to harness the power of communication opportunities and use those opportunities to the benefit of our institutions, athletic departments, teams, coaches and especially, student-athletes.

3. Developing a Strategic Communications Plan for Athletics
   a. Included on the Resource URL:
      i. Westmont Strategic Communication Plan
      ii. This PowerPoint Presentation
      iii. Presentation Notes
      iv. Examples.
   b. A Strategic Communication Plan starts with message.
      i. This takes some careful and deliberate thinking.
         1. Ask, "What messages do we want to focus on in our athletic communications?"
         2. This should be a collaborative effort with individuals both inside and outside of your athletic program.
         3. Every institutions message will be unique, but by way of illustration I will share with you Westmont’s message identification.
ii. In our Strategic Communication Plan, we have categorized our message into four areas:
   1. Philosophical and Mission-oriented messages
   2. Communication of Westmont Culture and Student Experience
   3. Promotion of Teams, Coaches and Student-Athletes
   4. Schedule, Results and Statistical Reports.

iii. If we don’t strategically thing about our messaging, the sports information office can become consumed with the latter two categories and lose sight of the first two.

iv. A look at the first two categories:
   1. Philosophical and Mission-oriented Messages. (see plan)
      a. Mission of Westmont and Westmont Athletics
         In addition to providing the mission statements on the Westmont Athletics website, the sports information office should make every effort to directly communicate and indirectly reflect the mission of Westmont and Westmont Athletics in its publications and press releases.
      b. Athletics as part of a liberal arts education
         At Westmont, Athletics falls under the Provost and is considered a part of the academic curriculum. This is fairly unique but an important part of who we are as an institution and as an intercollegiate athletic program. Therefore, an important part of our message.
      c. The development of the whole person through athletic competition - physical (athletic abilities), intellectual (academic), spiritual, emotional, relational, leadership development.
      d. Athletics communicated within the context of Christian faith as an expression of service to God.
   2. Communication of Westmont Culture and Student Experience.
      a. The predominate public opinion of collegiate athletics and athletes differs significantly from the culture of Westmont Athletics and the experience of Westmont student-athletes. The sports information office should seek to communicate both directly and indirectly the values, goals, expectations, and spirit in which Westmont Athletics is conducted. It should also seek to reveal the experiences of Westmont student-athletes.
      b. Because Westmont student-athletes are involved in every aspect of the college, the sports information office has the opportunity to celebrate and promote the experiences and activities of students-athletes in non-athletic activities such as choir, orchestra, the speech and debate tournament, student government, academic pursuits and accomplishments, etc. By doing so, the sports information office promotes an understanding of the larger Westmont community.
      c. The second aspect of Westmont’s Strategic Communication Plan was to define the ethics and values we want to associate with our athletic communications. (begins on page 2)
i. We won't spend much time here, but it is important that a Strategic Communication
   Plan spell out the ethics under which the sports information office with operate.

ii. This comes into play when someone wants you to communicate something that
   pushes ethical boundaries. It gives you the backing to say no.

iii. In Westmont's Strategic Communication Plan we did specified the following values
    and standards to which we would comply:
    1. Integrity, Truthfulness and Honesty.
    2. Respect for Privacy.
    3. Accuracy in Reporting.
    4. Respect and Sportsmanship.
    5. Timeliness.
    6. Servicing the best interests of the college, athletics, coaches, players, the
       conference and the NAIA.

   d. The third aspect of Westmont's Strategic Communication Plan was identifying our audience.
      (page 3)
      i. Athletics touches a broad spectrum of constituencies and we want to be sure that we
         are aware of whom we are in communication with.

   e. Next, we identified communication vehicles. - How we communicate (page 4)
      i. Our website, press releases, press conferences, all the way down to game programs,
         Google calendar and pocket schedules.

   f. Then after identifying those vehicles, we matched up messages with communication vehicles.
      (page 4)
      i. Here we begin to make choices about how we will intend to use the various
         communication vehicles at our disposal.
      ii. For example, how will you use Facebook or Twitter?

   g. The next aspect of the plan is to match up communication vehicles and audience. (page 5)
      i. This helps us have insight into which vehicles to use in order to reach particular
         audiences.

   h. Media Relations is the next aspect of our Communications Plan. (page 5)
      i. After listing the media outlets we deal with most often, we begin to define the nature
         of the relationship between the sports information office.
         1. For time's sake, I won't go into that today but you can see how we defined
            that relationship in Westmont's Strategic Communication Plan.
      ii. Next we described the game-day services will provide the media,
      iii. Finally, we described how media requests will be handled.

   i. The final aspect of our Strategic Communications Plan addresses the issue of Crisis
      Communication.
      i. We start with a definition of crisis communication:
         1. Crisis communication is any communication which has the potential to
            reflect negatively on the institution, athletic department, coaches, athletes
            or others associated with Westmont and Westmont Athletics.
      ii. Then we go on to give examples such as:
         1. The death of a coach or player

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2. The arrest of a player, coach or administrator
3. Ineligibility of a player
4. Unsportsmanlike conduct
5. Investigation by the NAIA or conference
6. Natural disasters - fire, earthquake, etc.
7. Cut in funding or scholarships
8. Firing of a coach or administrator.

iii. Next we identify some Principles of Crisis Communication:
1. Honest and Truthful
2. Proactive
3. Transparent
4. Respectful of Privacy
5. Seek the best interest of people over the institution
6. Gracious

iv. Responsibilities of the Sports Information Office:
1. Advise the athletic director, school administrators and key decision makers in regard to public relations. The sooner the SID is involved in the decision making process, the better.
2. Plan Formation in conjunction with administration, including:
   a. Messages to be communicated
   b. Delivery method
   c. Communicators
   d. Frequency of communication
   e. Mechanism for handling press inquires
   f. A plan for follow-up messaging.
3. Plan Review
   a. As warranted by the situation. In sever situations in could be hourly.
4. Plan implementation:
   a. Message content creation - press releases, statements, etc.
   b. Coordination of press releases, conferences, etc.
   c. Updates to athletic websites, Facebook, etc.
   d. Serve as contact person for press inquiries and requests for interviews
   e. Implementing and follow-up messaging.
5. Review and Evaluation at the conclusion of the crisis situation

4. Finally, I'd like to submit to you three examples of a strategic communication in action. A copy of all three of these examples are available at the Resource URL:
   a. *Baseball Area Code Tryouts*
      i. This is an event which happened during the summer on our campus and did not directly involve our sports teams.
      ii. It would have been easy for the Sports Information Office to ignore this event.
      iii. However, the event afforded an opportunity for the communication of our message to some very specific audiences.
         1. Recruits - Quality baseball facility, quality school
2. Donors:
   a. Good athletic facilities bring good recruits to campus, resulting in an improved program.
   b. We are putting the athletic facilities that you donated toward to good use.

3. Campus Community
   a. The value of staging an event like this to the school and to athletics.
   b. Implied - Thanks for your sacrifice in putting up with the inconvenience.

4. Alumni
   a. Reason for pride in your alma mater
   b. The new facilities are being put to good use.
   c. The baseball program is on the rise.

5. Administration
   a. Athletics is putting this wonderful new facility to use to promote athletics and the college.
   b. Implied - Thanks for making this facility possible.

6. Neighbors and Local Community
   a. Good things are happening at Westmont
   b. The facility is being used to give high school athletes a chance to perform in front of MLB and college scouts, including some local athletes.

b. Men’s Soccer Team
   i. We have a very proud soccer tradition at Westmont and when our teams aren’t living up to that tradition, it causes all sorts of murmuring and concern from alumni, fans, faculty, staff, etc.
   ii. Last fall, our team got off to an 0-4 start, the worst in 30 years.
   iii. The second example is a game story I wrote with some very specific and direct strategic messaging in mind.
      1. The audience I was seeking to address was wide:
         a. Alumni, especially men’s soccer,
         b. Fans
         c. Media
         d. Student Body
         e. Administration,
         f. Faculty/Staff
         g. Coaching Staff
         h. Players and Parents
      2. The messages were very direct:
         a. Coach Wolf is the winningest coach in school history.
         b. The focus on character development remains whether the team is winning or not.
         c. The value of athletics is in more than just accumulating wins.
         d. Illustration of athletics in the context of a liberal arts institution.
e. Athletics as part of a student’s maturing process.
f. Providing a big-picture view.

c. Mark Patton’s Column
   i. The final example is not a press release at all but a column from our local paper. I choose to share it with you as an illustration that strategic communication may not have to do with writing at all.
   ii. The Golden State Athletic Conference is going through some transitions and it has been very important that Westmont Athletics be able to get out its message about those transitions.
   iii. We have done that in a number of ways, but we also felt it was important that our message be heard through a source other than us.
   iv. And so over a period of about two months, I worked with one of the most respected columnist at our local paper, helping him to understand the issues facing Westmont and the conference and why Westmont made the decision it did to stay in the NAIA.
   v. I had several conversations with Mark on the phone, at games and face to face over lunch. He also interviewed our athletic director and several of our coaches.
   vi. It is always riskier when you are not the one crafting the message, but sometimes you need the message to come from a source other than from the school. In this case, we were very pleased with the results. Our message was heard through another voice.

5. Wrap-up and Q&A session