



August 2009

European eGovernment Awards 2009 Communication guidelines for Awards finalists

Congratulations! You've been selected as one of the 52 finalists for the European eGovernment Awards 2009. Your case is recognised as a valuable example of European good practices in eGovernment. As a finalist, it is important that you take full advantage of this occasion to give visibility to your project among the widest possible audience.

Why communicating your project?

Being one of the few selected to compete for the European eGovernment Awards 2009, you have an excellent opportunity to promote your project widely across Europe. This can be done before, during and after the **European Ministerial eGovernment Conference (Malmö, Sweden – 19/20 November 2009)**, where the Award winners of the four categories (see

<http://www.epractice.eu/call2009/#categ>) will be announced and where you will have the opportunity to exhibit. Besides the four Award categories, a public prize will be awarded to the most voted project, based on the online votes cast by members of the ePractice community (www.epractice.eu) ahead of the event. The event is the major organised by the Swedish Presidency of the European Union: it will gather more than 1000 top level policy makers (including Ministers and State Secretaries), media and key eGovernment stakeholders from the private and the public sector.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS DOCUMENT

- **STEP 1:** putting the basics in place
- **STEP 2:** producing communication materials
- **STEP 3:** maintaining & updating
- **STEP 4:** getting ready for the event
- **STEP 5:** after the event

The Awards Consortium will promote the Awards at pan-European level, but it is important that you also play an active role to maximise the visibility of your project among your contacts. These communication guidelines aim at providing you with some very practical suggestions on how you can enhance the profile of your project, raise media attention, promote good practice exchange and - why not? - attract potential investors.

STEP 1: putting the basics in place

There are a few preparatory steps you should take before starting any communication activity *vis-à-vis* the external audience: prepare your contact list; make sure your website is updated and contains all the key information; prepare your project ID-card, a sort of "business card" with highlights of your project.

YOUR CONTACT LIST

Let as many people know that your project is running for the eGovernment Awards. Think about who might be interested in your project and make sure you have your list of contacts ready for promotion and update dissemination. Some suggestions:

- Check that all your existing contacts are still up-to-date
- Beef-up your list: it can include national policy makers, administrations, your suppliers and providers, your clients and partners, your media contacts at international, national and local level
- At the conference: take the opportunity to gather as many contacts as possible and add them to your contact list/suggest them to register to your newsletter (if you have one).





WEBSITE

Your website is key for the visibility of your Awards case and the first place where people look for information. Make sure it is up and running and updated. Some tips:

- Make sure visitors can find the key information on your project at first glance – i.e.: main objectives, target users, impact
- Consider translating the key information in English, in order to reach a wider audience
- Keep the structure simple to facilitate navigation and to make it easier for you to maintain it
- Keep your website up to date and post regularly press releases, announcements and other updated materials/info
- Put some check-up mechanisms in place to get feed-back about the most visited web pages, and to better define the profile of your visitors (local/regional, international etc.)
- Promote your website: include the link in all your communication materials
- Include the link to the ePractice Awards (www.epractice.eu/awards) website on your website's homepage: it will help enhancing the profile of your project
- Make sure the content is proof-read
- Consider producing a promotional video to demonstrate the impact of your project, when it has a strong visual component, and post it on your website.

Writing for the web: some tips

- Keep your text short and to the point: users usually do not have time to read long texts, but they scan through content quickly through webpages
- Use plain language
- Highlight keywords and use a clear structure (sub-headings, paragraphs, lists, colours and graphics)

Additional suggestions available at:

<http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/>

<http://usability.gov/>

PROJECT ID CARD

It is the "business card" of your project: a short text (around 600 words) including the key information, quick and cheap to edit, update and disseminate. It can be used in a variety of ways: as introduction on your website, as basis for your elevator speech (see "Elevator speech" section, page 4), as background info for your press releases etc. The ID-Card should outline:

- What the project is about: short description
- Main objectives of the project: why is it developed? Which problems is it trying to overcome?
- Added value: Why is your project needed? What makes it interesting? Try to use real life examples to illustrate the difference your project can make.
- Expected outcome

Include the **logo** of your project and the reference to your website, the **link** to the ePractice Awards (www.epractice.eu/awards) website in the ID-Card. Examples of ID-Cards can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/apps/projects/index.cfm?prog_id=EPART





STEP 2: producing communication materials

PRESS RELEASES

When writing a press release, keep in mind:

- The "five W" rule - your press release needs to easily answer the following basic questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why?
- Keep it short: an effective press release is a one A4 page max
- Include the basic information and the key elements that make your project interesting at the beginning
- Focus on:
 - Main goals and results: what is the project doing? Be specific
 - Solutions/benefits: what does the project want to achieve?
 - Concrete applications: how your project will be deployed, now/in the future
 - What the benefits will be
- Include: date at the beginning of your release; links to your website and the ePractice Awards (www.epractice.eu/awards) website; your contact details (email/telephone number).

Writing press releases - useful tips

- "Less is more" - write few, concise and specific messages/sentences: they can be more easily picked up by the media (e.g. "the internet can save your life")
- Write in the present tense, third person and the active voice ("we foresee" instead of "it is foreseen by...")
- Use a plain language that most people can read without further explanation. Remember: the release is not for a specialised audience only
- Avoid acronyms, abbreviations, technical/scientific jargon, clichés, vague and abused words
- Ask someone else (possibly a non-technical person) to read your press release and give you feed-back: having a "fresh" perspective will help make the release clearer and more suited to a wider audience.
- Engage your readers by adding concrete examples, facts and figures highlighting impact – avoid generic sentences
- Be factually correct and only put in information that adds some value – don't overstate the expected outcomes of your project/study
- Before drafting your press release, try to take some distance from the topic

Press releases dissemination & follow-up

- Press releases should be sent to your media contacts as soon as ready – there's no point of circulating an old piece of news, particularly to the press
- Contacts in your country should get the press release in your language – consider translating it in English if you want to inform your international contacts
- Post the release on your website
- Think about additional dissemination channels you can use - e.g. blogs, wikis, RSS, tags, etc.
- Always add the web reference to the European Commission eGovernment conference and the ePractice Awards websites for additional information.

AWARDS MEDIA KIT

An Awards Media Kit (<http://www.epractice.eu/awardsmediakit>) has been produced for you. It contains useful communication and promotion material you can use – e.g. press releases templates, photo materials, conference logo, banner etc. Don't reinvent the wheel: this material has been produced for you - just adapt it or translate it (partially or fully) to make the best out of it.

The **Awards Consortium** promotes the eGovernment Awards *vis-à-vis* a wide target audience across Europe. Among other activities, we regularly disseminate news announcements and press releases. Avoid writing your release from scratch: **you can save time by re-using the text of the releases we will produce, tailor it to your audience if you want, and disseminate it to your contacts** (preferably translated in your own language). We will send you all the news announcements for your information and re-use. The list of all sent press releases is available at <http://www.epractice.eu/awardsnews>





Media coverage

Follow-up your communication activity and keep an eye on the coverage your project gets on the media/other sources. This coverage is a very good promotional tool, and a useful "thermometer" to assess the interest your project gets (and by whom). You can publish the coverage on a dedicated page on your website. Let us know when your media coverage is available, so we can also have an overview of interested target audiences and tailor our communication activities accordingly.

STEP 3: maintaining & updating

Make sure you regularly update the communication materials about your project (website, brochures, newsletter etc.) and your contact list. You may also want to organise a seminar at local/regional/national level to raise awareness about your project and attract interest ahead of the conference (don't forget that an eGovernment Awards public prize will be awarded based on an online **public vote** which will be launched ahead of the event).

For all communication material you produce/update, don't forget to:

- Include the link to the ePractice Awards website
- Proof-read all the content
- Translate it into your own language for local dissemination, whenever possible.

Also, you can use the **"European eGovernment Awards 2009 finalist"** title on all your communication material (website, brochures, newsletters, ID-card, news announcements, posters, gadgets etc.).

STEP 4: getting ready for the event

Besides the on-going maintaining/updating work, get ready for eGovernment Ministerial Conference by preparing a good elevator speech, with highlights of your project, and a complete check-list of items for your stand. Some tips below.

ELEVATOR SPEECH

At the event, your stand is likely to be visited by a high number of attendees (around 1000 participants are expected). As they will be overwhelmed by information, you need to "catch" them with a quick overview presentation of your project: your "elevator speech" should be a concise, planned in advance and well-practised description about your project to grab the listeners' attention and make them want to know more. You should be able to deliver it in the time span of an elevator ride (ideally, thirty seconds and 90-130 words maximum). Remember that not all the conference attendees have a technical background: choose simple and direct words and make use of concrete examples. Besides the conference, you can use the elevator speech whenever you have to provide a short and catchy explanation of your project (also with journalists).



Suggested steps to prepare your elevator speech

1. Know yourself: before you can convince anyone, you need to precisely define what your project is about.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What are its key strengths?
- What adjectives come to my mind to describe it?
- What is it my project trying to "sell"?
- What would I like my listener to do as a result of my description?

2. Outline your talk: start with an outline of your ideas using bullet points (no details at this stage) - simply write a few essential lines about your project to fix what you really want to say

3. Finalise your speech: expand on the notes/bullets you made. These tips can help:

- Take each note you made and write a sentence about it
- Take the sentences and connect them to make the links clear
- Go through what you have written and cut unnecessary words out/simplify long and complicated sentences
- Replace complicated words and jargon by simple language
- Finalize by making sure it is no more than 130 words long

4. Get familiar with your speech

- Practice your elevator speech many times, until you really feel comfortable with it
- While practising, put yourself in your interlocutors' shoes and try to guess which questions may come to their mind while listening to you

YOUR STAND

Make sure you have all the updated information materials about your project to present at your exhibition stand. Some suggestions:

- Avoid heavy printed material as give away to visitors (e.g. heavy reports): distribute light material instead (e.g. a short leaflet with key information and website link)
- Printed material should attract people's attention and lead them to your website for further information.

The eGovernment Conference should be as GREEN as possible!

Remember that when planning the materials to bring/distribute at the event...

- Try to reduce paper material & stick to electronic versions as much as possible
- Distribute useful - and ideally recyclable or 'green touched' - gadgets away
- Include the mention 'Print only when necessary' on your web pages, your electronic documents available on the web, your e-mails etc.

**Any idea/suggestion to make this event greener
Is welcome!**

STEP 5: after the event

- Updated pictures of the Awards finalists and winners, of the Awards ceremony and the whole event will be made available during and immediately after the conference (we will send you the web-link in due time). You can use this photographic material for your own promotion, and circulate it to your contacts – remember that journalists are eager to receive images
- The conference website and related external resources will also be regularly updated – don't forget to include the links in all your communication!
- A press release announcing the Awards winners, as well as a wrap-up release with highlights and key figures about the event will be produced and disseminated by the Consortium and the European Commission. Circulate them to your contacts as soon as we make them available!





DON'T FORGET: We are here to help you!

Do not hesitate to contact us for further assistance and if you need advice on how to maximise your project visibility.

Awards website: www.epractice.eu/awards

Awards Helpdesk: awards@epractice.eu

For **media-related queries** (e.g. journalist attendance at the conference, press programme etc.), please contact awards@epractice.eu

European eGovernment Awards Consortium:

- ◆ Center for European Public Administration, AT www.donau-uni.ac.at/verwaltung
- ◆ Danish Technological Institute, DK www.teknologisk.dk
- ◆ P.A.U. Education, ES www.paueducation.com
- ◆ RSO S.p.A., Rome, IT www.rso.it

© European eGovernment Awards Consortium, 2009. Print only when necessary.

European eGovernment Conference

Swedish Presidency website:

<http://www.egov2009.se/>

European Commission website:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/egovernment/conferences/malmo_2009/index_en.htm