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Description of document: Most recent Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) Public Affairs Communications Plan, 2015

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Source of document: Freedom of Information Act Request
FOIA Compliance Office
Commodity Futures Trading Commission
Three Lafayette Centre
1155 21st Street NW
Washington, DC 20581
Email: FOIASubmissions@cftc.gov

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U.S. COMMODITY FUTURES TRADING COMMISSION

Three Lafayette Centre
1155 21st Street, NW, Washington, DC 20581
www.cftc.gov

September 8, 2016

RE: 15-00201-FOIA
Seeking a digital/electronic copy of
the most recent CFTC Public Affairs
Communications Plan (i.e., a
press/external relations plan)

This is in response to your request dated August 17, 2014 under the Freedom of Information Act seeking access to a copy of the most recent CFTC Public Affairs Communications Plan. In accordance with the FOIA and agency policy, we have searched our records, as of August 7, 2015, the date we received your request in our FOIA office.

We have located three pages of responsive records. You are granted full access to the responsive records, which are enclosed.

If you are not satisfied with this response to your request, you may appeal by writing to Freedom of Information Act Appeal, Office of the General Counsel, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, Three Lafayette Centre, 8th Floor, 1155 21st Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20581, within 30 days of the date of this letter. Please enclose a copy of your original request and a copy of this response.

If you have any questions about the way we handled your request, or about our FOIA regulations or procedures, please contact me at 202-418-5192.

Sincerely,

Candace Ambrose
Counsel

February 2, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIRMAN MASSAD

From: Steve Adamske

Subject: 2015 Communications Plan

2015 is shaping up to be a challenging year for the commission and for our public relations. At its core, communications is a vehicle that allows you to enhance and leverage your agenda or what you want to get done. In the fall, we focused on three main areas for you to communicate: who you are, where we are and where we are going. In 2015, we will build off this successful strategy with more concrete measures and to communicate the commission's agenda with clear and purposeful communication. Overall, the message to the public now is a "softer" message than the communications strategies we employed few years ago. That is, back then it was more of a David v. Goliath, black and white, good guy v. Wall St., and good guy regulator versus the people who chased the crisis. Our messages then were crisp and easy to understand. Either you were for derivatives reform, in essence the derivatives that caused the crisis, or you weren't. It was as simple as that, and we needed to make it as simple as that.

Now that the law has been passed and the regulations have been written (largely), the messages are by definition a lot more soft than the harder messages mentioned above. We are now in a process of implementation and making it all work. We are delaying key implementation dates to smooth the transition, we are fine tuning the rules so they work as intended, and we are looking down the road to challenges that may come. Our challenge going forward is to create an interesting narrative that can appeal to a wider audience without the convenience of the black/white approach discussed above. The first way to make this happen is to invoke the crisis. In fact, we will need talk about it every opportunity we get. I fully understand the "eight million jobs lost....." gets old and boring to say every time, but it is precisely that type of repetitive messaging we need in order to get people to know the full context of what we are doing and why. Without that reminder of the true cost of the crisis, millions of Americans lost their jobs and the toll that takes on families, then derivatives becomes about financial actors and esoteric terms and it makes it harder to enact tough reform. By the way, when you testified last summer with the other banking regulators, you were the only one to invoke the crisis in a way that had a human touch: people's jobs, homes, retirement and college savings. The rest of your colleagues ignored the crisis as if it didn't happen. Consider this: Resolution Authority doesn't make any sense unless it is in the context of Bear, Lehman and AIG. Same principle needs to be applied with respect to our data, SEFs, and swap dealers.

A second area where we can emphasize the crisis without being heavy-handed is to remind people how far we have come since the fall of 2008. You have done this expertly in the realm of data, but the same principle can apply to our upcoming work on SEFs and the international agreements we soon hope to reach. With the increased use of examples and statistics, we can make the point without being over the top.

I recommend that your public speeches you continue to reference the crisis, but to provide greater focus on where we are, fine tuning the rules and making changes, and upcoming agenda. Further, we will also look for areas where we can package and drive major initiatives such as data, SEFs, and Cross-border/International. Lastly, I want to come back to you before the Senate Appropriations Committee hearing with some different talking points and some messages on the agency's budget. It is in the Senate where we need to nail the message of needing extra resources.

Where we are – Main Message: Transitioning

I recommend that in upcoming speeches, you acknowledge that the agency is in a transition from the rule writing to implementation. We have used similar words, but to publicly say you are transitioning the agency also means you are taking the reins more and more. As we transition from rule writing to implementation, we will use examples to demonstrate how far we have come (data), the promise of the act (SEFs), what we've accomplished (international). We also need to do a better job of communicating that the act and the rules are working, meaning, things are safer, better and on a better foundation.

Fine tuning

I recommend we more fully develop, by using examples, what fine tuning means. We need to tell people that fine tuning is analogous to driving a car down the road where you are constantly moving the wheel and adjusting the throttle and brake to keep the car moving in the right direction. We also make it clear that the store is not open for looting, but that we are willing to consider adjustments.

Upcoming – Forward looking

As always, you will need to spend time in your public appearances to tell folks where we are going in order to push the agenda. This may go without saying, but it is critical we think about what news we can push, what initiative we can highlight and how can we look forward.

Focus on Initiatives

As stated above, my goal is to package and roll out specific initiatives where package them and sell them as a larger news story. This way we can amplify the

message and initiative beyond the speech or the associated Bloomberg/Reuters story that will result of the initial push. This gives us the opportunity and the content by which to write op-eds, pitch TV appearances, etc.

Internal Communications

One of the things that struck me about the EVS survey was that employees didn't feel connected to where the agency is going, so I propose a monthly Chairman's Message from you to the staff on what is going on at the agency. This message would be general in nature and not confidential, but it would relay significant information to employees that comes directly from you. We may want to supplement the message with more than a once-a-month if something big breaks, such as an increase in budget or some other type of good news event that we should share. I would propose the following schedule to get started:

- March: Introductory message to inaugurate the Chairman's message and give some direction on where the agency is headed. Note: we could fold in the strategic plan message to this one if needed and pick something else for April. (Recommend after the Boca trip)
- April: Strategic Plan message
- May: Budget and Appropriations status
- June: Update on International issues facing the agency and outlook.

Policies:

I would further recommend that you ask the Executive Director to put into place two commission policies that would help define responsibility on behalf of the staff. The first is to state unequivocally that staff is not to talk to the press and all press calls should be referred to the Office of Public Affairs. My understanding is that this policy does not exist, however, division and staff has for the most part adhered to this rule. The second policy is a speaking engagement approval process. As we have discussed, the approval process has been informal with me, the Chairman's office, division director and the person's immediate supervisor has signed off on staff accepting speaking engagements. Since Gary Gensler's time, that process has broken down a bit. In practice as of now, some do seek permission and some don't know they need to do so.