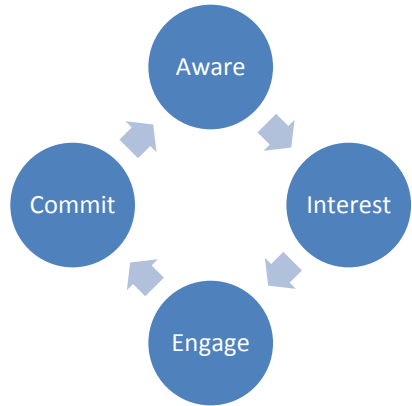


How2guide: Communications Planning

Introduction	When do you use this guide
Stakeholders can make or break a project or a programme and poor communications can alienate even the most avid supporter. Good communications does not happen by accident, it requires careful planning to ensure that the right messages are received by the right audiences at the right time. There are fundamentally 2 types of communications: - The announcement which is linked to a significant event. - The drumbeat which should be continual and help to maintain right levels of awareness and attitude.	Before planning communications the stakeholder analysis should be carried out (see the Stakeholder Mapping how2guide). The stakeholder map is the foundation for the communications plan so it is an essential companion. The communications plan is one of the first jobs for a new initiative, it helps to ensure that the key decision makers are engaged and understand the initiative and the benefits that it will bring. Communications is happening throughout the life of the project or programme, as such it should be actively managed at all times, whether it is proactively delivering messages or responding to information requests.
The Engagement Cycle A really good way to create stakeholder resistance is to make lots of assumptions about levels of interest in your initiative and their potential levels of support. The work to develop the stakeholder map should show the expected levels of interest and commitment but these will need to be tested as part of the early communications. If the following sequence is used then the stakeholder can be managed more effectively to test their understanding and commitment. It also helps to highlight concerns and issues that may arise and ensure the right messages are getting across. Starting the cycle at the wrong point can lead to the stakeholders rejecting the concept or committing against the concept without having the full facts available to them. If a stakeholders awareness is raised by opponents or with information that sets inappropriate expectations then they can move to commitment against your initiative which will make your task much more difficult, as such, this cycle must be managed carefully. <pre>graph TD; Aware((Aware)) --> Interest((Interest)); Interest --> Engage((Engage)); Engage --> Commit((Commit)); Commit --> Aware;</pre>	

How2guide: Communications Planning

Awareness	Interest	Engage	Commit
When raising awareness the focus should be on gaining the stakeholders' attention and earn the right to be listened to. At this point in the cycle it is critical to highlight what is in it for them to take interest and this should be the priority, so it should be kept short and sweet so that you earn the right to be heard.	Once you have managed to attract the stakeholders' attention then the next step is to raise their interest. Hopefully this will be a positive interest but even negative interest is better than no interest as you will have something to build on. At this point more detail can be fed into the dialogue to help with understanding.	This may be the first point of face to face contact or contact by phone, as you have won the right to outline what you are planning and explain what you need from the stakeholder. By engaging they should now be listening so you have the chance to gain a commitment. They may still be hostile but you can communicate the facts effectively.	Once you have communicated your message and helped them to understand what you are trying to achieve then you should be able to gain their commitment or support. People who fully understand the message are more likely to be reasonable and heated resistance can be avoided if not fully support.

Planning the Engagements

For each group you will need to decide what the communications plan needs to achieve, so you will need to work out:

a. What level of support you will need from them	b. How active they will need to be	c. Where are they on the level of engagement at the moment
d. What channels are going to work best for them	e. Who will be most effective in delivering the message	f. When will be the best time to engage them

This model from work by Smythe and McKinsey helps to understand how different approaches will cause different reactions.

Approach	Telling	Selling	Involving	Co-creation
Summary	Telling the many what has been decided by the few (instructional with little sell).	Selling to the many what has been decided by the few (tell with a sell and entertainment).	Driving accountability down by implicating people as individuals (giving people the time, space and process to apply the change/decision to their own work, regardless of the degree of delegation).	Judging who will add value if included in front end decision forming and change/strategy development (not to be confused with a laissez faire culture which is poor at closure and ill disciplined. Co-creation takes robust governance and skill).
Outcome	Hooligans or spectators	Compliant collaborators	Willing collaborators	Personally committed reformers

How2guide: Communications Planning

When developing the plan it is necessary to consider the various channels and the likely effect that they will have. These can be mainly put into two categories, passive channels where the stakeholders have to come to find the message and channels where the message is being delivered to the stakeholder directly.

Some will be more or less formal than others, often the informal channels can be most effective when they are available, some to consider include:

Intranet	Website	Exhibitions	Conferences
Newsletters	Podcasts	Twitter	Public Service Broadcasts
Facebook	Email	Brochures	Bulletin boards
Press releases	Café conversations	Meeting	Individual briefings
Posters	Workshops	Notice boards (including electronic)	Advertisements

SMEF - the keys to effective communications

The following checklist can be used as the keys to effective communications; if you use these simple keys then your communications will be far more successful.

S takeholder analysis	you need to know what the reaction to your message is going to be and what you want to achieve from it.
M essage clarity	in the crazy world of endless communications noise you need to be able to get your message heard, so what you are trying to say needs to be clear and concise.
E ffective channels	You must use the right channels for the audience: There is no point in using Facebook if you want to get to the Information Security Manager! There are many merits in many channels and you need to be clear which ones are going to work for you.
F eedback loop	There must be a way for people to provide feedback, whether electronically or face to face. This will help you judge the success of your communications and track the status and commitment to your cause.

How2guide: Communications Planning

The Technique – Communications Brief

Technique Overview	Concept
The communications plan will be constructed of any number of communications events, some will be regular and others will be one offs. For each event a Communications Brief should be developed to ensure that it is planned properly and the purpose is fully understood. This will enable the right channels to be selected to achieve the impact that is required. Developing the Brief is an important discipline and it encourages the programme and project team to think through opportunities, threats and options for achieving a successful outcome.	The concept of the Communications Brief is a simple template which is intended to answer the following questions: a. Why is this communication required? b. Who will the audience be? c. What impact needs to be achieved? d. How will the communications be delivered and by who? e. When will the event take place? f. Where will the message be delivered and by who? g. How much will it cost?

Example

This example is a Communications Brief for an all staff announcement about a new project to offer grants to encourage more cycle routes next year.

Why is this communications required?	To raise awareness of the concept and create interest.
Who will the audience be?	Internal staff that interface with organisations that may wish to bid for the grants when they become available.
What impact needs to be achieved?	A positive attitude from our internal stakeholders and encourage them to use their own communications channels to influence their customers.
How will the communications be delivered and by who?	Intranet Direct emails to key staff Briefing at monthly events
When will the event take place?	It will initially be an announcement on the first day of next month. It will be updated through staff bulletins over the following six months.
Where will the message be delivered and by who?	Initially electronically initiated by the director responsible for the grant budget.
How much will it cost?	Internal channels only so no budget required.