

Communications plan

Communicating for change, and to support your organization's workplace wellness initiative

Perhaps the most common problem with communication is that there is not enough of it!

The second most frequent communication problem is sugar-coating the information, over promising, or making promises that can't be kept in order to keep people from becoming unhappy. Unfortunately, the result is that people feel deceived and trust erodes. You will have a lot of great news to share with employees regarding the organization's workplace wellness initiative. However, ensure that you send communications informing employees about "why" the organization is developing the initiative.

Follow these principles in order to ensure your communication is effective:

- Be clear and honest. Share what you know, but don't make promises you can't keep.
- Consider the frame of reference of the intended audience. What are they concerned about? What language do they use? What questions do they have?
- Use the medium most likely to reach your intended audience. You will likely need to use more than one medium to reach multiple stakeholder groups.

There are two major components in this tool: Process and Content.

1. **Process** focuses on the logistics of the communication and delivering it in the most effective method to impact the intended audience.
 - What is the approach to be used?
 - How often will it be used?
 - Who is the target audience?
 - What is the method of communication?
 - Who will deliver the communication?
 - How will the effectiveness of the communication be measured?
2. **Content** focuses on what the message says and the results expected from delivery of the message.
 - What is the purpose or objective of the communication?
 - What are the key messages to be delivered?

Timing, process and content for creating effective communications

There are several components to planning effective communication and there are no short cuts. Each communication must be carefully planned. Areas to consider:

Timing

- When is the best time for the audience to receive the message?
- Does it align with other initiatives as appropriate?
- When will the message be sent?

Vehicle/Media/Medium

- What vehicles do they have access to?
- What will reach the greatest number of people?

Frequency

- How critical is the message and how often does the audience need to hear it?
- Will different media be used for different messages?

Target Audience/Stakeholder

- Who is the audience?
- What is their level within the organization?

Message

- What about the message is relevant to them?
- What level of detail is appropriate at this time?

Responsibility/Sender

- Who is responsible for crafting and sending message?
- Who is responsible for message content?

Feedback Mechanisms

- What mechanism will be used to collect feedback?
- What is the timing for collecting feedback?

Create effective communication

Use this simple six step process for crafting well-thought-out messages.

State the purpose of the communication. [P]

Include 2 to 4 key messages. [KM]

State what you know. [K]

Convey what you don't know. [DK]

Identify next steps. [NS]

Identify how to provide feedback. [FB]

Beginnings of a sample leader kick-off e-mail that includes purpose, objective, key messages, etc., for a workplace wellness initiative. This e-mail could continue with more next steps and other ways to provide feedback.



TO: All Employees
From: Top Leader
RE: Healthy Choices

I am delighted to inform you of a new initiative that will bring more healthy options to our workplace. [P]

We are participating in a local project that is teaching us ways to provide more healthy foods, physical activity opportunities, and support for employees who are nursing mothers and those who want to quit tobacco. [KM]

We will be forming a wellness team to help make these changes – and every employee is eligible to volunteer. More details on the wellness team to be shared soon. [K]

What we don't know are all of the healthy choices you'd like to see at work. Therefore, attached is an Interest Survey. Please complete and return (anonymously, if desired) in the box at the reception desk by <date>. We want to hear from you! We'll provide all employees with a summary report in a few weeks ... [DK, NS, FB]

Communications Plan

Timing	Process					Content	
Date	Vehicle(s)	Frequency	Target Audience	Responsibility/ Sender	Feedback Mechanism	Objectives	Key Messages
Date communication will be sent	Communication method (e.g., e-mail, Intranet, newsletter, staff meeting, poster, one-on-one)	How often will this method be used/repeated?	To whom is the communication targeted? (This may be multiple groups of people.)	Who will the audience view as the author or spokesperson for the messages?	How will effectiveness be measured? (e.g., staff meetings, e-mail box, specific role, focus groups, surveys)	What is the purpose/objective of the communication?	What are the key messages to be communicated?