



# COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

## build greater engagement

During any programme, effective communications will build greater engagement and awareness amongst all the stakeholders – and deliver direct benefits to the business. Everyone needs to be kept fully informed and understand how they can contribute to the success of the programme.

Inspired Partners invests time at the beginning of every programme to decide how best to communicate and develop a **communications plan**. This always gives a long-term payback over the life of the programme.

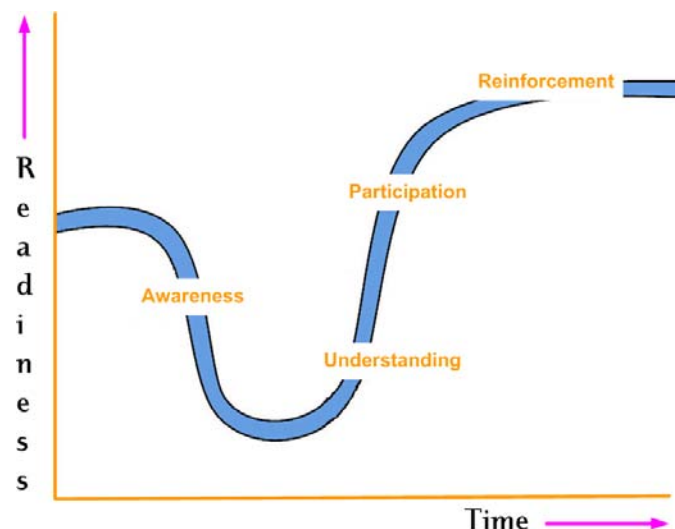
We use a proven process:

### 1. Define your audience

Who do you need to communicate with? Your stakeholders are all those individuals who will be affected by or will have an impact on the programme.

### 2. Determine your messages

What information will each stakeholder need, and when in the programme will they need it? This should be based on each individual's journey along the 'change curve'. For long programmes, just focus on the next three months.



### 3. Identify your communications methods

How can you communicate with your stakeholders? You should identify all the potential media and mechanisms at this stage, including:



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Team briefs

Q & A sessions

Formal presentations

Newsletter

One-to-one briefings

Training

Web pages

Notice boards

Road shows

#### 4. Match your messages, audiences and methods

Consider each piece of information required for each stakeholder and match it to the most appropriate communications methods. You should be able to group different information needs and consolidate the communication requirements. Use existing mechanisms wherever practical and save 'attention-grabbing' methods until they can have the most impact.

At this stage, you also need to identify the frequency of or deadlines for the communications and whether a specific presenter – such as the MD – is required.

#### 5. Build your communications plan

Collate all this information together to build your **communications plan**. For each separate item, this should include:

- The objective of the communication
- The content – taking into account all the different stakeholders' needs
- The audience(s)
- Who will create the communication
- Who will deliver the communication
- When the communication will be delivered

#### 6. Communicate your plan

Communicating the plan is a useful communications tool in its own right and will reassure those not directly involved with the programme that they will be kept informed. It also allows forward planning to ensure everyone gets the key dates booked into their diaries.



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You can present the plan in a tabular format, which is easy to create and simple to monitor. However, this may not have the impact of a more pictorial option. Visual representations may take more time to create but they allow the plan to be shared with a wider audience, and provide a simple means for tracking progress and forward planning.

### 7. Deliver your plan

Use the plan to check that delivery of your communications remains on track. It is useful to review the plan regularly to take advantage of the increasing experience of the team, the stakeholders and the changing business environment. This also allows you to:

- Build on effective mechanisms
- Identify additional communications opportunities
- Develop the next stage of the communications plan if you are working on a long programme

Based on Inspired Partners' experience, here are some key points to remember when planning your communications:

- It takes longer than you might think to prepare communications successfully
- Communications must be consistent in approach and message - if your spoken words do not match the written word, people will get confused
- Communications should be two way, so provide opportunities for feedback and stakeholder involvement
- The volume of communications should be proportionate to the activities and progress of the project
- Maintain a positive emphasis, and if you create an expectation, then make sure you deliver it
- Use existing mechanisms as much as possible, but when you really want to make an impact - do something **different!**

