

Change management communication is vital, but so easy to get wrong

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Change management is often overlooked as a discipline that helps to ensure organisational change gains traction and is adopted by the employees it impacts. One of the simplest tools available to organisations is communication, however it is often underutilised or incorrectly implemented.



“What if, and I know this sounds kooky, we communicated with the employees.”

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Behavioural change is vital to the success of projects. Only by effecting behavioural change can organisations ensure that a project is a success. However, communication is only as good as the message behind it – the message needs to be conveyed correctly to the correct audience at the right time.

Employees communicate all the time - emails fly back and forth daily resulting in a noisy landscape with an inundation of information. This is the unfortunate result of falling into the trap of communicating for communication's sake. Here are some of the most common mistakes made when communicating a change, as well as some suggestions for improvement:

1. **One message does not fit all:** Project communication is often focused upward. This becomes an issue when the communication is sent downward as a box-ticking exercise, resulting in valuable information not being communicated correctly. You may be communicating the same information to vastly different audiences, so the message needs to be communicated differently for maximum impact.

2. **We don't communicate often enough:** When in the middle of a project, we often forget to communicate. Generally, we communicate well at the start of a project, but as the project progresses, other responsibilities become more important, and this element is often neglected. When communication restarts, the original message has been forgotten, leaving the audience confused.
3. **We communicate too often:** On the flip side, we can also over-communicate. This usually happens when there is an understanding that we need to keep everyone in the loop; however, it can quickly result in communicating unnecessarily. This amplifies the noise, and the message is at risk of getting lost.
4. **We don't understand the audience's needs:** This results in the right message being pitched at the wrong level and tone. This leads to the message not resonating or making an impact.
5. **We are lazy in our communication platform:** Email may be the most used communication channel in an organisation, but it is not the most popular or effective. There are many other ways of communicating more creatively or effectively while increasing productivity and minimising time wasting.

The trick to effectively communicating for change is to cut through the noise and make your message stand out from the crowd. A message needs to have a purpose, needs to be tailor-made and must always have the audience in mind. Here are some top tips that you can use when using communication in your change management efforts within your organisation:

1. **Shake things up:** Email is boring. Take some time to understand what alternate channels you have available in your organisation. Some trending 2023 communication methods include:
 - i. Video emailing - senders can screen record themselves or just their voice, while showing required displays or documents on their computer screen, providing a time effective way to communicate rather than writing lengthy emails.
 - ii. Project management systems such as Proof Hub can help to convey tasks clearly and streamline the workload.
 - iii. Collaboration tools like Asana totally remove the need for email, providing the team with all the information they need for the project, allocating tasks, and keeping track of progress.
 - iv. Team communication apps like Microsoft Teams or Zoom.
 - v. Social media is a great tool to communicate with teams and uses a platform like Yammer which has been designed for companies to keep their employees engaged and communicating. Unlike Twitter and Facebook, employees aren't distracted by irrelevant topics, allowing companies to create their own social platforms for employees so that they can post on walls, comment on posts, and send direct messages.

These options show us that there are many alternatives to traditional emailing that will ensure swift communication.

2. **Keep it simple:** Communicating complex information needs to be carefully considered. Understand what the audience tier needs to know and then the type of communication you need to use will follow.
3. **Time it right:** Timing is everything. A message can be catchy and beautiful, but if it reaches your audience at the wrong time, it will not resonate. For regular communication, find a slot where your audience is generally not too busy or too tired to interact with the communication.

Of course, change management is far more complex than simple messaging but in lieu of a comprehensive change effort,

many organisations use communication as light change management. While not ideal, there is value in this approach, as long as these messages are properly deployed by understanding the change and tailoring messages for the impacted stakeholders.

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