Communication Brief

Quick Ways to Improve Your Next Employee Communication Campaign

- **Sum up your communication strategy** in one sentence.

- **Determine what you want** people to know, feel and do.

- **Be provocative**. Try something new or unexpected.

- **Know your audience**, including their concerns and motivations.

- **Keep your message simple**. It's more likely to be skimmed than studied.

- **Use words and pictures** to reinforce key messages.

- **Consider what would persuade you** to change your beliefs or take action.

- **Avoid hyperbole** and rosy descriptions, which suggest propaganda.

- **Be specific**. The more specific the message, the more credible.

- **Make it personal**. Include illustrative examples or testimonials.

- **Speak plainly**, without jargon and clichéd expressions.

Do Your Communications Hit the Mark?

Before you distribute an important communication, conduct a pilot test in person or by phone. It's an easy way to enhance your product and gauge potential reactions. Here's how to do it.

Before the pilot test – identify and invite participants

Select about 10 people who represent the communication's target audience and send them an invitation like the one below.

"You have been selected to participate in a discussion concerning an upcoming communication about [Topic]. The discussion will be held on [Date, Time, Place]. If you are able to attend, please confirm by replying to this invitation. You'll then be sent a draft communication to review. Nothing more will be asked of you after the discussion concludes. We hope you can attend and look forward to hearing from you."

During the pilot test – hold a focused discussion

Use the discussion guide below, modified as necessary, to gather feedback. It's best if the discussion facilitator is not the author of the communication.

Thank you for taking the time to join us. I'm [Name] and will lead today's discussion. Before I ask for your reaction to the communication you received, I need to review three things:

- First, there are no right or wrong answers to anything we will discuss. It's all personal opinion, so please be candid and say whatever you think and feel.
- Second, I will report common views and perceptions to the communication's sponsor, but I will not identify anyone's personal comments.
- And lastly, the communication you received is still in draft form. The final version will incorporate today's feedback and may look different.

Any questions before we begin? Okay, let me start by asking…

1. What's your general reaction to the communication?
2. What, if any, concerns do you have after reading it?
3. What, if any, content do you find confusing or unclear?
4. What should be added, deleted or modified to improve the communication in any way?
5. Under ordinary circumstances, how much of this communication might you read?
6. What action, if any, would you take after reading this communication?
7. Considering everything, how can we improve this communication?

Before we break, does anyone have any final comments about anything we discussed?

After the pilot test – report results

Draft a brief report that summarizes participants' overall impressions, likely reactions, sources of concern and confusion, and suggestions for improvement.

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