



Strategic Communication During Change

What: This tool will help; you when you need to communicate planned changes or provide information regarding ongoing change efforts.

Why: As a change leader you need to think strategically about how and what you communicate during change. Effective communication reduces anxiety and resistance, increased involvement and helps people develop commitment.

When: Thinking strategically about your communication is vital at every stage of the change process. As change leader you are never **not** communicating so it is better to make conscious and strategic decisions about your communication than to leave it up to chance.

How: There are ten components to strategic communication.

- 1) Identify the problem or opportunity**
 - What leads you to believe there is a need to communicate?
- 2) Set Broad Communication Goal**
 - Clarify what you are trying to accomplish by communicating.
- 3) Identify intended audience(s)**
 - List everyone you need to communicate with, both internal and external: e.g. staff groups; other managers/peers; senior management; customers/clients/key stakeholders; others: (e.g. suppliers, community groups, legal/political, media).
- 4) Gather information about each audience (see Gathering Information):**
 - What do they currently know about the change?
 - What are their concerns/issues/values?
 - What is their current position or feeling about this change?
 - Where are they getting their information now?
 - Who are the opinion leaders?
 - What other information do you have about this audience that would help?
- 5) Set specific and measurable communication objectives for each audience**

- As a result of communication efforts, what do you want people to: Know, be aware of, understand? Say? Do? Feel?

6) Clarify key message(s): *Remember not to confuse the key message with what you actually say or do...the message is what people take away from the communication.*

- What is the basic idea I want people to take away?

7) Decide communication strategies:

Remember: "What I hear, I forget. What I see I remember. What do, I understand". The idea is to think about what action you can take and what you could say in person before you put together any written materials. Then when you put all your strategies together what people hear, see and do will compliment one another.

Plan action items first:

People understand and remember what they see, hear and experience. What actions will you take: e.g. set up a task group, plan an event (potluck, tea, barbeque, celebration), hold an open house, conduct a tour, hold a contest, put together a display, etc.)

Plan verbal strategies next:

People remember what they see and hear. What verbal medium will you use? (i.e. formal presentations, speeches, announcements, team and group meetings, personal contacts and discussion, stories, videos, etc.)

Plan written strategies last:

Where possible, what you write should supplement and compliment action strategies and verbal strategies. What written strategies will you use: (i.e. memo, letter, newsletter, bulletin, brochure, information package, e-mail, intranet, etc.)

Determine responsibility, timing, cost and other

8) Implement communication action plan

9) Assess results

10) Develop action plan:

Communication Action Plan

Audience (Who do we need to communicate with?)	Audience Information (What do they know, think, say, feel, do now?)	Communication Objective (What do we want them to know, think, say, feel, do once they receive this message?)	Key Message (What are the messages we want to send?)	Strategies (What actions will we take, what will we say, what materials will we use?)	Responsibility/Timing (Who will be responsible for what tasks? By when?)