

5

COMMUNICATION



Good communication is vital to the success of any organisation.

Within an organisation, communication needs to be a deliberate process that is appropriate to both the audience and the message. If we are not deliberate and planned about our organisational communication strategy and style, then people may interpret the message from what they observe. This may not be the message you want people to take away about you. It is important that organisational communication is planned, to ensure that perception actually is reality.

Key points about communication

- All communication should be: honest, straightforward, clear and timely.
- Good communication is a powerful tool to help an organisation achieve their purpose.
- Good communication is not just talking and listening.
- In an organisation, a number of systems and processes contribute to the achievement of good communication.
- We communicate something to other people all the time, even when we think we are not, for example our body language.

Components of communication

1. **Message** – As part of an organised process, it is important to think about the message you are communicating and the purpose for that message.
2. **Media** – There are many means by which you communicate to others; having a conversation, sending an email, issuing a press release, holding a meeting, giving a presentation, maintaining an up to date website, social media, written procedures; to name a few.
3. **Audience** – Different individuals and groups will have different communication needs. Thinking about the audience and how they are most likely to receive the message you intended, is an important part of a communication plan.
4. **Communicator** – Some people are natural communicators and others will need to work at it. Regardless of your skill level, it is important that everyone understands their role and makes the effort to communicate.

Internal Communication

Internal communication includes all the processes within an organisation that create the flow of information necessary for the efficient operation of the organisation.

It is a management function to ensure that the formal communication processes within the organisation are designed to allow for that flow of information.

It is a governance function to ensure communication from the governing body to the management is operating effectively.

In some not-for-profit organisations the governance function may need to assume a level of management responsibility in order to bridge the gap, if there is not a management team in place.

Communication with volunteers is also a key part of the internal communication process and can involve:

- Emails or texts
- Meetings
- One-on-one discussions or casual conversations
- Newsletters
- Websites and social media
- Presentations
- Procedure manuals
- Acknowledgements.

Effective communication will be a combination of the above. Written communication will need to be backed up with good conversations.

Remember all communication should be two-way to assist clear understanding. It involves talking, listening, asking and answering questions and feedback.

External communication

External communication covers how an organisation communicates with stakeholders outside of the organisation. Stakeholders are diverse and each stakeholder group will require a specific communication strategy.

To determine who your stakeholders are, list them:

1. **People/groups** who interact with your organisation (clients, public, funders, government departments)
2. **Community influencers** who provide support and/or influence public perception (politicians, councillors, media, businesses, peak bodies, lobby groups)

External communication can involve:

- Personal contact via emails, meeting, phone calls
- Newsletters
- Regular networking events
- Presentations or reports
- Media releases/statements
- Website
- Social Media
- Messenger groups

It is a good idea to develop a communication plan that covers what you are going to do, when you are going to do it and put an annual budget in for this. The planned activities for communication contribute to the perception others will have of you. It is important that it is planned and consistent.

Feedback

Communicating to others is not a perfect process. A lot of “noise” can interfere with the message. It is therefore very important that part of your communication process includes checking for understanding.

When communicating one-to-one, it is relatively easy to seek feedback by asking questions to ensure your message is understood. When dealing with stakeholder groups you can ask questions in group situations, or by conducting a survey.

Never forget that one of the most important parts of communication is listening.

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