



Making Project Communications Work

Key tips to help you make your ITSM projects a success.

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SUMMARY

This is a summary and sample list of key points for successful project communications. This has been gathered from BRC's experience of working with on numerous of IT Service Desks and Service Management programmes and projects.



Background

Good communications is key to the success of any organisational change programme or project. It is already a difficult task to change the way people work and this becomes impossible if they are all unsure of the value of the change and how it will affect them. Most failures in this area are due to lack of open and consistent communications, which can lead to uncertainty, mistrust and resistance or refusal to change.

It is a fact that there will always be resistance and it is vital to meet this head-on by sending out a 'marketing mix' of consistent, positive messages. The central (project) group in particular should ensure that they are all consistently 'on message' – i.e. up to date with current progress and able to provide consistent answers.

Communications Objectives

The main objectives of any Project Communications Plan are:

- To aid the smooth implementation of the Service Transformation Programme/Project (SIP) across IT and the business as a whole.
- To manage communications in a structured and proactive manner
- To communicate clearly and openly how changes will happen
- To publish successes and regularly report on progress against targets
- To establish a positive communications channel with all IT Customers (users)
- To minimise rumour and mis-information and to positively aid staff motivation through a difficult period of change.
- To inform Customers (users) of any changes affecting them.



Communications Approach

In order to avoid rumour and mis-information it is vital that, where possible, all Project and IT staff are kept up to date on issues and can therefore provide a consistent message on progress.

- All IT staff should know key project issues, objectives and current progress.
- All IT staff should be able to provide a consistent view and details on the project and sub-projects at any time.
- SIP team need to feel enabled, enthusiastic, confident, and prepared to answer questions and deal with resistance.
- Rumour and uncertainty are generally best countered with consistency, clarity and openness.
- A communications owner should be assigned as the central point of contact and co-ordination for communication within the programme/project. This person should constantly review communications to ensure that the right messages are being communicated through the correct channels and media e.g.
 - Keeping everyone up-to-date on project progress at appropriate levels
 - To maintain close contact with the members of the project for progress updates and keep a regular circulation of information and issues within the project.
 - Carry out feedback gathering to assess if the correct messages are being received by key individuals
- In addition to summary E-mail / bulletin board / Newsletter/ Intranet messages going out to staff, it is recommended that a regular 'face to face' briefing is given to staff with as much relevant information as possible in advance of the changes. Weekly 'team' or 'departmental' briefings would provide a good outlet for this channel of information.
- Communications should be assessed as part of the overall project review – i.e. did it meet the objectives, were the messages understood etc.
- All communications should be cross checked before sending to avoid any unnecessary errors and image-detractors.
- All communications should also be checked to ensure there is clarity on
- The Target audience



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- The core message to be relayed
 - The media – ie how this will be sent out and in what forms
 - The means of testing that the message has been correctly received.



Communications Media

Key media should be identified and included in the plan:

WEB-SITE/COMPANY INTRANET

This is an effective way of providing access to a variety of information and messages to a wide audience. For the duration of the programme the web-site should provide:

- Home page - General project information, reflecting the agreed messages - project & programme objectives, initiatives etc.
- Programme contact and structure information – key people, teams etc – with email links
- Progress reports, successes, project and programme information
- Access to other relevant information e.g. relevant training courses
- An 'ideas forum' area where all-comers can contribute issues, questions, ideas etc.
- A FAQ page

PROGRAMME BROCHURE

This provides a tangible, tactile piece of information for anyone to read and refer to on the overall project – this should help to minimise time spent explaining project details, particularly to occasional participants who may not have the time or interest to read project documentation online. This should reflect the agreed messages and be a clear source of entry-level general project information.

It will be useful if the 'brochure' is presented in a memorable and useable format – e.g. bookmark, mouse-mat.

AWARENESS FORUMS / SEMINARS

Particularly in the early stages of the programme, seminars and forums that entice people to attend (e.g. Sandwich seminars where lunch is provided) can be an effective method of increasing awareness, motivating individuals and broadcasting key messages.

STRATEGIC WORKSHOP EVENTS

A successful PR event that sends out positive quality messages about the programme and engenders 'buy-in' can also provide a successful



information gathering exercise to further clarify business issues and operational requirements.

Workshop events can provide an opportunity get agreement across a number of people, sometimes across many geographic locations, on project way forward, plus the opportunity to provide detailed iterative information on the project and the potential impact on individuals and groups.

NEWSLETTER/EMAILS

Regular brief monthly newsletters should be written and circulated to broadcast successes, provide progress updates and broadcast key messages. This should be a SIP newsletter if appropriate or combined with another existing newsletter.

APPENDIX A - EXAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS SCHEDULE

Date	Activity	Target	Media	Owner	Notes
	Prepare Comms plan	SIP Project Team	Document	Project Sponsor	Overall approach
	Team Updates	IT Dept	Weekly Briefings	Project Manager	Kick-Off Slides/Notes
	Issue Group Email	IT Dept	Group Email	Project Sponsor	Clarify: Project is active High Level content Need to support SIP Progress & next actions
	Team Updates	IT Dept	Weekly Briefings	Project Manager	General Progress
	Issue Group Email	IT Dept	Group Email	Project Sponsor	Report on: Progress of Workshops etc. Initial Work Next Actions
	Customer Communication	Business	Email	Project Sponsor	Customer Awareness of project, service improvements
	Team Updates	IT Dept	Weekly Briefings	Project Manager	General Progress
	Group Briefing	IT Dept	Meeting	Project Sponsor Project Manager	Face to face progress update and questions
	Customer Communication	Business	Email	Project Sponsor	Customer Awareness of project, service improvements & Go Live plans
	Team Updates	IT Dept	Weekly Briefings	Project Manager	General Progress
	Customer Communication	ALL	Email	Project Sponsor	Go Live Announcement
	Review overall success of Comms	SIP Project Team	Post Imp Review	Project Manager	

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