Approach for Developing a Communication Program

Communication Program

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to introduce the concept of a Communication Program and to explain how to develop the three components of a Communication Program, namely the Communication Strategy, Communication Campaign Definition and Communication Plan.

Communication Program Overview

The components of a complete Communication Program are:

- **Communication Strategy**, which defines the overall approach to the Communication Program in terms of lasting principles and approaches that will be used throughout the Program. If carefully prepared, it is likely that few, if any, changes to the Communication Strategy will be needed throughout the performance of the Program.
- **Communication Campaign Definition**, which defines the campaigns to be used in the Communication Program. Some of the key components of the Communication Campaign Definition are definition of the objectives for each campaign, identification of the information requirements for each audience, and development of the key messages to be delivered in the campaign. This document is relatively stable throughout the Communication Program, but is subject to clarification and other modifications throughout the performance of the Program, particularly for campaigns that are to occur later in the Program timing.
- **Communication Plan**, which defines the workplan and other details for accomplishing the communications. This document is subject to modifications for additional detail and changes that are necessary to achieve the campaign objectives throughout the Program.

The detail and examples contained in this Communication Program document represent the degree of specificity and effort appropriate to a relatively significant project. Although, there may be instances when more communication effort would be required than is shown here, it is more likely that some of the components may be scaled back and still meet the project's communication requirements.

Communication Strategy Overview

The purpose of a Communication Strategy is to define the overall approach that will be used in conducting the communications activities for a particular project. The Communication Strategy is prepared as the first document in the communication process. It is used as guidance for the Communication Campaign Definition and the Communication Plan. If carefully prepared, this document should remain stable during the communication process.

One particularly effective way to develop and deploy communications is to map the Communication Campaigns to the stages in which commitment is developed. One model of these stages is shown below, although other models may also be appropriate. This model shows the progressive nature of the commitment process. When viewed from this perspective, it is easier to make the communication process more targeted toward the needs of the audiences during that particular stage.
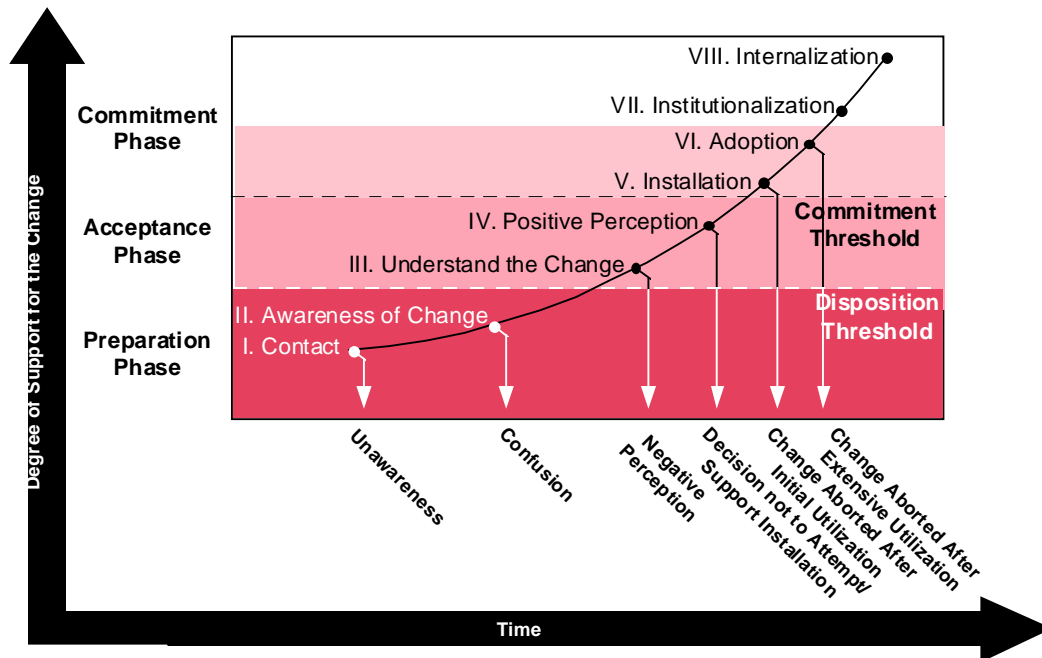
Another advantage in using a model such as the commitment model depicted above is that it helps to guide the types of communication media most appropriate for various stages in a project. It is common for certain types of communications to be overused due to the ease of development and/or deployment. For example, it is common for "non-personal" types of communication, such as memos, voicemail, and newsletters to be used when more "personal" types of communication, such as one-on-one conversations and staff meetings, would be more appropriate for achieving the specific objectives for that communication. In addition, by using a commitment model to guide communication development, it may be easier to gain buy-in from the people who may need to deliver more "personal" types of communications. This model also facilitates the view that effective communications, over time, begin to seem more like "regular work." These types of communication activities are mentoring and coaching, performance expectation setting, performance reviews, and the like.

Communication Principles

Communication Principles are a means to ensure consistency and effectiveness in the communication process. A complete communication process can be lengthy and may involve several people. To bridge these difficulties, Communication Principles can provide valuable direction.

Example Communication Principles

- Communication delivery will be done by the most credible source(s) for that particular message. This will require the involvement of executives and other members of the management team.
- When executives or members of the management team are needed for specific communication activities, they will receive at least two weeks notice and will be prepared with the materials and briefings necessary for a successful communication delivery.
- Each campaign will be based upon specific objectives. At the end of each campaign, these objectives will be evaluated and appropriate follow-up measures taken if these

objectives have not been adequately achieved. This follow-up may involve additional communications to be added to the next campaign, or a delay in the next campaign to allow for additional communications to be done to achieve the unmet objectives.

- Each campaign will focus on delivering a relatively small number of general messages multiple times through multiple communication media. The specific number and type of communications will be mapped to the audience, in consideration of the importance of the message, the size of the audience, and the difficulty of ensuring that the audience has been reached. The Communication Program will focus on delivering critical messages up to nine times to large groups of affected people. No message will be delivered to any audience less than three times.
- The campaign messages will be written to accurately and honestly portray important information, even if it will be viewed negatively. Also, when the message is particularly important or complex, multiple different types of wording will be employed to indicate what will and what will not happen to enhance the effectiveness of the message delivery.
- As the communication plan progresses, more "personal" types of communication media will be used (e.g., staff meetings and one-on-one communications over memos and voicemail messages).

Audience Definition

It is apparent that different groups of people need different types of information for projects. During the development of a Communication Strategy, it is important to identify the people that will need communications over the life of the Communication Program. This information can then be used to develop the audience requirements for individual campaigns. In developing the list of appropriate audiences, several considerations are valuable:

- Identify groups of people that have similar information requirements and consider whether they can be combined into one audience. Segmenting the audiences into too many groups can complicate the communication process with relatively little enhanced value.
- Recognize that the audience groupings are likely to change between campaigns due to changing needs for information. An opportune time to evaluate this type of change is when considering the campaign objectives and the best ways to achieve these objectives.
- Remember to consider audiences that are external to the organization that need information about the project. These groups can include suppliers, customers, unions, governmental organizations, and the like.

Example Audience Definition

Groups Directly Impacted	Groups Indirectly Impacted	Groups Needing Information Only
Finance and Regulatory Affairs	Operations	Corporate Communications
Accounting	Human Resources	Customers
Information Services	Organizational Development	Suppliers
Network Sales and Marketing	Strategy	Network Technology and Engineering
Marketing	Union	
Sales and Service		

Communication Roadmap

The Communication Roadmap defines the specific campaigns to be conducted during the Communication Program and the relative timing of each of these campaigns. This Roadmap provides a degree of clarity necessary for beginning the Communication Campaign Definition.

Example Communication Roadmap

Campaign	Dates
Awareness and Understanding	7/1/04 - 10/15/04
Understanding and Positive Perceptions	10/16/04 - 4/31/05
Installation	5/1/05 - 12/31/05
Follow-Up	1/1/06 - 3/31/06

Communication Media Definition

As with consideration of audiences, a definition of the types of communication media to be used is important during the Communication Strategy stage of the Communication Program. The communication media used should change depending on the campaign and its specific objectives. Although communication media such as memos and newsletters may be valuable for certain types of messages, an effective Communication Program will also utilize more "personal" types of communications as the campaigns progress.

At this point in the process, the specific types of communication media to be used may be targeted. However, as the Communication Program progresses, this information may be modified.

Example Communication Media Definition

Type of Communication	Awareness and Understanding Campaign	Understanding and Positive Perceptions Campaign	Installation Campaign	Follow-Up Campaign
E-Mail	✓			
Voicemail	✓			
Newsletter	✓	✓	✓	✓
Memo/Letter	✓	✓		
Presentations and staff meetings	✓	✓	✓	
"Ask Your Question" voicemail box		✓	✓	
Management scripts	✓	✓	✓	
Intranet	✓			✓
One-on-one conversations	✓	✓	✓	✓
"Day in the Life" video		✓	✓	
Education and training sessions			✓	✓
Mentoring and coaching			✓	✓
Performance expectation setting			✓	✓
Performance reviews				✓
Rewards and recognition				✓
Consequence management				✓

Communication Campaign Definition Overview

The purpose of the Communication Campaign Definition is to provide methods, processes and tools for further development of the planned communications. It builds on the contents of the Communication Strategy and serves as a bridge to the Communication Plan.

A Communication Campaign Definition guides the development of a set of messages designed to move the specified audiences through one or more of the stages of commitment discussed in the Communication Strategy. For example, the campaigns chosen for a particular project may be:

1. Awareness and understanding campaign
2. Understanding and positive perceptions campaign
3. Installation campaign
4. Follow-Up campaign

A Communication Campaign Definition contains:

- **Campaign Objectives**, which specify criteria for measuring the success of each communication campaign detailed in the Communications Strategy.
- **Audience Requirements**, which consider the specific communication topics applicable to each of the appropriate groups identified in the Communication Strategy. This is also the place to consider consolidation of groups of people into audiences for the purpose of minimizing the complexity of the communication campaign.
- **Message Definition**, which defines the key messages or primary category of messages to be delivered for each of the campaigns. Also, the Message Definition details the audiences who will receive the message, and the communication media, frequency, and timing for that message.

Communication Objectives

Communication Objectives specify the overall goals of each Communication Campaign Definition. At the end of each campaign, these objectives will be used to determine if the Campaign has been successful. If the Objectives have not been achieved, a plan to remedy this issue can then be implemented early enough to ensure that the next campaign builds upon a firm foundation. Two likely means to remedy missed objectives are to include additional communications in the following Campaign, or to delay the following Campaign while the missed objectives are addressed.

Example Communication Objectives

The following twelve objectives are examples for four Communication Campaigns:

Campaign: Awareness and Understanding

- 100% of directly impacted personnel will be aware of the ABC project.
- The majority of directors and managers will be able to explain the ABC project and its objectives in their own words.
- 100% of executives and directors of indirectly impacted organizations will be aware of the ABC project.

Campaign: Understanding and Positive Perceptions

- Over 60% of the directly impacted personnel will be able to explain the ABC project and its four objectives.
- The majority of executives and directors will view the project as necessary to the long-term competitive positioning of the organization.
- 45% of impacted personnel will have voluntarily participated in at least one Brown Bag Lunch presentation about the ABC project by 3/31/05.

Campaign: Installation

- 100% of directly impacted personnel know the required training schedule applicable to their position.
- 80% of all inbound communications are answered within 2 business hours.
- 100% of impacted personnel know that a Help Line exists.

Campaign: Follow-Up

- The majority of directly impacted personnel can describe at least one benefit or success story associated with the ABC project.
- 100% of directly impacted managers are aware that a performance appraisal guideline document is available for their use in setting next year's employee performance goals.
- 100% of all inbound communications are answered (or acknowledged, if the answer must be researched extensively) within 2 business hours.

Audience Requirements

The Audience Requirements portion of the Communications Campaign is a means to specifically consider the needs of each audience grouping. Notice that the definition of audiences and Audience Requirements are specific to a particular campaign. The Audience Requirements are helpful in (1) consolidating groups of people into a single audience, (2) ensuring that the messages for that Campaign will be adequate to achieve the communication requirements for all audiences, and (3) looking for common communication requirements that may be appropriate for mass communication media, such as newsletters and memos.

In identifying audiences, the following characteristics may apply:

- Members of an audience often need the same kinds of information
- Members of an audience may be impacted in a similar way during that particular stage of the project
- Members of an audience may have similar responsibilities towards the project at that particular stage

To help you correlate the message to each audience refer to the following Example Audience Requirements chart, which provides general and specific information needs for some sample audience definitions.

Example Audience Requirements

Campaign: Awareness and Understanding

Audience	General Information Requirements	Specific Information Requirements
Executives	● Overview of project ● Project goals and timing	● Interrelationship and/or impact on other corporate initiatives and financial position ● Project priority ● Project leadership and staffing ● Project status and issue discussion
Directors (for directly impacted areas)	● Overview of project ● Project goals and timing	● Their personal and departmental responsibilities ● Impacts on their department and timing ● Impacts on their personnel and timing ● Who to contact for answers
Managers and Supervisors (for directly impacted departments)	● Overview of project ● Project goals and timing	● Their personal and departmental responsibilities ● Impacts on their position and timing ● Impacts on their department and timing ● Impacts on their personnel and timing ● Who to contact for answers
Employees (for directly impacted departments)	● Overview of project ● Project goals and timing	● Impacts to their position and timing ● Who to contact for answers
Union for Employees (for directly impacted departments)	● Overview of project ● Project goals and timing	● Positions to be impacted ● Impacts on the positions and timing ● Ways they will be informed and involved
Directors and Managers (for indirectly impacted areas)	● Overview of project ● Project goals and timing	●
Customers	● Overview of project ● Project goals and timing	●

Message Definition

Each Campaign will focus on delivering a relatively small number of *key* messages. Different messages will be applicable to different audiences at different times on the basis of their information requirements. Also, different messages lend themselves to different types of communication media. For this reason, it is important to specifically consider the messages for each Campaign along with the applicable audiences, media, frequency, and timing. One way to perform this definition is shown below.

Example Message Definition

Note that the following messages are worded in complete sentences. In the development of the actual messages, concise wording is appropriate if the essential points are conveyed to the people who must prepare the messages.

Campaign: Awareness and Understanding

1. XYZ Corp. is implementing a new system for customer service within the 123 division. The name of this project is CSRI. The goals of this project are to enhance customer satisfaction through a "one call does it all" strategy and to reduce transaction costs for customer requests. The project timeline is from 7/04 through 12/05, when the package will be fully implemented and all impacted personnel will have fulfilled applicable training.
2. Although productivity enhancements are expected, this project will not result in lay-offs.
3. To accomplish the CSRI project objectives, corporate funding priorities for some projects will be revised. Also, headcount reallocations will be necessary. Details about the headcount reallocations will be announced when the process changes are identified.

1. Implementing a new system for customer service within 123 division. Project name is CSRI. The goals are to enhance customer satisfaction and reduce transaction costs. Project timeline is from 7/04 through 12/05.	
Executives	7/04
Directors (impacted)	7/04-8/04
Managers and supervisors (impacted)	8/04-9/04
Employees (impacted)	8/04-9/04
Union (impacted)	8/04-9/04
Directors and managers (non-impacted)	8/04-10/04
Customers	10/05-12/05
Media: Memo, E-Mail (2), Voicemail (2), Newsletter (2), Intranet, Staff meetings, Management scripts, Customer letter	

2. No lay-offs will result from the CSRI project.	
Executives	7/04
Directors (impacted)	7/04-9/04
Managers and supervisors (impacted)	7/04-9/04
Employees (impacted)	8/04-11/04
Union (impacted)	8/04-11/04
Directors and managers (non-impacted)	10/04-11/04
Media: Memo, E-Mail (2), Voicemail(2), Newsletter (2), Intranet, Staff meetings, Management scripts	

3. Funding priorities and headcount allocations will change. Details about headcount reallocations will be announced when the process changes are identified.	
Executives	7/04-8/04
Directors (impacted)	7/04-9/04
Media: Memo, E-Mail, Staff meetings	

Communication Plan Overview

The Communication Plan is the document used to direct the actual preparation and delivery of communication materials. It defines the specific communications to be prepared and delivered, the timing for each communication, and the budget for the overall Communication Program and/or Campaign.

There are three main tools in the Communication Plan:

1. Communication Delivery Planner
2. Workplan
3. Budget

- The **Communication Delivery Planner** builds upon the detail developed in the Message Definition. For each campaign, the Communication Delivery Planner identifies the communication media, timing, applicable messages for that media, and audiences to be targeted. This information will be predominantly used by the preparer of the communication materials.
- The **Workplan** will be used to schedule the production and delivery of communications. The Workplan is a gantt chart for the overall Communication Program. It contains the following information:
  - ✔ Detailed communication activities for the current communication campaign
  - ✔ Summary information for later communication campaigns
  - ✔ Preparation and delivery responsibilities
  - ✔ Completion dates
  - ✔ Timeline showing elapsed time
- The **Budget** is used to determine the total cost of developing and delivering all the communications specified in the Communication Plan. The Budget should follow the format specified by management. It may include only incremental or cash expenses (such as video production costs) or it may also include resource time costs and the like.

Communication Delivery Planner

The Communication Delivery Planner is a means to consolidate messages by media. The Communication Delivery Planner also allows for a review of the key message delivery to ensure that the targeted number of repetitions is accomplished. Note that although there may be media delivering the same messages multiple times, these are not meant to be mere duplication of the same materials. Instead, each iteration of the same media needs to include additional detail that is relevant to the key messages identified.

Example Communication Delivery Planner

Campaign: Awareness and Understanding

Media	Timing	Messages	Audiences
Memo to executives and directors	1/04	#1, #2, #3	Executives and directors (impacted)
Memo to all employees	1/04	#1, #2	All audiences except customers
E-mail (2)	1/04, 3/04	#1, #2	All audiences except customers
Voicemail (2)	1/04, 3/04	#1, #2	All audiences except customers
Newsletter (2)	1/04, 3/04	#1, #2	All audiences except customers
Intranet	1/04	#1, #2	All audiences except customers
Management scripts	2/04	#1, #2	Directors (impacted and non-impacted), managers and supervisors
Staff meeting - executives	2/04	#1, #2, #3	Executives
Staff meeting - directors	2/04	#1, #2, #3	Directors (impacted and non-impacted)
Staff meetings - managers and supervisors	2/04	#1, #2	Managers and supervisors (impacted)
Staff meetings - employees	2/04	#1, #2	Employees (impacted)

Workplan

The Workplan is the document which contains the activities, responsibilities, and timing of the overall Communication Program. It enables the communication effort to be managed as a project. In evaluating the success of specific campaigns, the Workplan and Communication Objectives are key input.

The Workplan is a meaningful way to portray the communication effort to others and ensure that the flow of the Communication Program is consistent with the Communication Strategy. Also, it is the first time that resourcing and effort may be fully established. This can be important for timely notice about required assistance of executives and other busy individuals. Finally, the Workplan is an important input to the Budget development.

The Workplan may be created using a spreadsheet or project planning software to enable revisions as the Communication Program progresses.

Example Workplan

	Responsibility		Completion Date	Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar
	Preparation	Delivery		
Awareness and Understanding Campaign				
Memo to executives and directors	SL		1/5/97	
Memo to all employees	SL		1/10/97	
E-Mail #1	SL		1/11/97	
Voicemail #1	SL	WS	1/14/97	
Newsletter #1	SL, MT		1/31/97	
Intranet	MT		1/31/97	
Management scripts	SL, RA		2/8/97	
Staff meeting - executive	SL, DG	DG	2/15/97	
Staff meeting - directors	SL, DG	DG	2/22/97	
Staff meetings - managers and supervisors	SL, DG	DG	2/28/97	
Staff meetings - employees	SL, DG	DG	3/31/97	
E-Mail #2	SL		3/5/97	
Voicemail #2	SL	WS	3/15/97	
Newsletter #2	SL, MT		3/31/97	
Understanding and Positive Perceptions Campaign			4/1/97 - 8/1/97	
Installation Campaign			9/1/97 - 12/31/97	
Internal communications				
Customer communications				
Follow-Up Campaign			1/1/98 - 3/31/98	

Budget

The final piece of the Communication Plan is a Budget for the Communication Program. The Budget should follow the typical format and content requirements.

When developing the Budget, the following costs may be applicable:

- Material costs, such as paper, video tapes, etc.
- Printing charges
- Programming costs for placing communications on the intranet
- Video production, duplication and distribution charges
- Postage
- Costs associated with any rewards or special recognition procedures
- Time charges for personnel involved in preparation and/or delivery of communications
- Fees for external resources involved in preparation and/or delivery of communications

Glossary of Terms

Audience A group of people who need similar types of information for a particular campaign. Members of an audience may be impacted in a similar way and have similar responsibilities towards the project.

Campaign A discrete phase of a Communication Program that seeks to achieve a specific set of objectives. Campaigns may be tied to particular stages in the commitment process. At the end of a Campaign, the objectives should be evaluated for any follow-up action that may be warranted.

Communication Campaign Definition The stage of the Communication Program in which the details of a specific Campaign are established. The components of a Communication Campaign Definition are: Communication Objectives, Audience Requirements, and Message Definition.

Communication Media Various methods for delivering and receiving messages to and from audiences. These methods can be "non-personal," such as memos and e-mail messages, or "personal" such as one-on-one conversations and staff meetings. Media need to be selected on the basis of the message to be delivered and the stage of the Communication Program.

Communication Plan A document that guides the development of specific communication preparation and delivery. It specifies the communications to be done, the timing, and the individuals responsible for key activities. The Communication Plan includes the Communication Delivery Planner, Workplan, and Budget.

Communication Principles A series of guiding statements upon which the Communication Program is built. These statements are developed at the beginning of the Communication Program and are used as guidance for the development and delivery of the communication activities.

Communication Program The blueprint for communications for a specific project.   It provides the guidance necessary to design, develop, and deliver communications to the audiences that need information. A Communication Program consists of: Communication Strategy, Communication Campaign Definition, and Communication Plan.

Communication Roadmap A definition of the identified campaigns and timing for a specific Communication Program.

Communication Strategy   A definition of the overall approach that will be used to conduct the communication activities under a Communication Program. A Communication Strategy includes: Communication Principles, Audience Definition, Communication Roadmap, and Communication Media Definition.

Media Various methods for delivering and receiving messages to and from audiences. These methods can be "non-personal," such as memos and e-mail messages, or "personal" such as one-on-one conversations and staff meetings. Media need to be selected on the basis of the message to be delivered and the stage of the Communication Program.

Plan   A document that guides the development of specific communication preparation and delivery. It specifies the communications to be done, the timing, and the individuals responsible for key activities. The Communication Plan includes the Communication Delivery Planner, Workplan, and Budget.

Principles A series of guiding statements upon which the Communication Program is built. These statements are developed at the beginning of the Communication Program and are used as guidance for the development and delivery of the communication activities.

Program The blueprint for communications for a specific project.   It provides the guidance necessary to design, develop, and deliver communications to the audiences that need information. A Communication Program consists of: Communication Strategy, Communication Campaign Definition, and Communication Plan.

Roadmap A definition of the identified campaigns and timing for a specific Communication Program.

Strategy A definition of the overall approach that will be used to conduct the communication activities under a Communication Program. A Communication Strategy includes: Communication Principles, Audience Definition, Communication Roadmap, and Communication Media Definition.

Workplan The document which summarizes the communication activities, preparation and delivery responsibilities, completion dates, and elapsed time for the Communication Program.