TOOL · COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

A great plan no one hears about fails just as surely as a bad one. This tool helps you plan what you'll say, who needs to hear it, and how they'll hear it.

THE FIVE RIGHTS

01 · THE RIGHT
INFORMATION
What do they need to know?

02 · THE RIGHT
AUDIENCE
Who needs to hear it?

03 · THE RIGHT
TIME
When do they need it?

04 · THE RIGHT
CHANNEL
Where will they see it?

05 · THE RIGHT
FREQUENCY
How often will they hear it?

The right information, to the right audience, at the right time, through the right channels, with the right frequency.

> **if no one knows about it, it doesn't matter how great it is.**

WHERE COMMUNICATION FITS IN A PROJECT



kickoff
Tell your own team why first.

planning
Test the message on a few people.

build-up
Build anticipation early.

launch
Say it everywhere, clearly.

after
Tell the story of what happened.

Communication runs through every phase. If you're using the Lead a Project tool, this strategy fills in its communication plan.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

01 **Page 2:** set the goal and what success looks like.
02 **Page 3:** audit how you communicate today.
03 **Page 4:** define your audiences.
04 **Page 5:** take stock of your channels.
05 **Page 6:** shape the message and the tone.
06 **Page 7:** build the plan: who hears what, when, where, and how often.

START WITH THE END

GOAL AND SUCCESS

Before you write a single announcement, decide what you want people to know, feel, or do.

PROJECT OR INITIATIVE

LAUNCH OR KEY DATE

THE MAIN GOAL OF THIS COMMUNICATION (SELECT ONE)

- [ ] awareness
- [ ] participation
- [ ] behavior change
- [ ] support or buy-in
- [ ] feedback

THE GOAL, IN ONE SENTENCE

By [date], [audience] will [know / feel / do] [what].

e.g., By March 1, 500 current customers will know the new location is open and 100 will visit.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

	MEASURE	TARGET	HOW WE'LL TRACK IT
01			
02			
03			

Pick measures you can actually see: sign-ups, attendance, replies, clicks, questions asked. "People felt informed" only counts if you ask them.

PUT IT ON THE PROJECT TIMELINE

OUR OWN TEAM HEARS IT BY

THE AUDIENCE FIRST HEARS IT BY

COMMUNICATION OWNER

Rule of thumb: the people closest to the work hear it first, and never from a public post.

KNOW WHERE YOU ARE

COMMUNICATION AUDIT

An audit shows how communication actually works today, not how you think it works. Plan on about two weeks.

HOW TO RUN IT

01 **List every channel you use.** Use the channel inventory on page 5.

02 **Gather the last 90 days.** Collect your emails, posts, announcements, and mailers in one place.

03 **Ask real people.** 5–10 people from each audience: a few team members, a few loyal customers, and someone new. Use the three questions below.

04 **Look at the numbers.** Email open rates, clicks, sign-ups, attendance. Note what moved people and what didn't.

05 **Decide: keep, fix, or stop.** Every channel and message lands in one of the three columns below.

three questions to ask

01 "Where do you usually hear about what's happening here?"
02 "What have you missed that you wish you'd known about?"
03 "What do you usually skip or ignore?"

WHAT WE FOUND

WHAT'S WORKING

WHO WE'RE NOT REACHING, AND WHY

KEEP, FIX, STOP

keep	fix	stop

WHO NEEDS TO HEAR IT

TARGET AUDIENCE

"Everyone" is not an audience. Different people need different information, at different times, in different places.

common audiences: your team · current customers · prospects · partners and vendors · the wider community

Who are they?	What do they already know?	What do they care about?	What should they know, feel, do?	Where do they pay attention?

Answer these five questions for each audience. The fourth one, what they should know, feel, and do, matters most.

AUDIENCE 1

WHO THEY ARE

HOW MANY PEOPLE, AND HOW CLOSE TO THE WORK

WHAT THEY ALREADY KNOW

WHAT THEY CARE ABOUT

THEY NEED TO KNOW

THEY SHOULD FEEL

THEY SHOULD DO

WHERE THEY PAY ATTENTION

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM

AUDIENCE 2

WHO THEY ARE

HOW MANY PEOPLE, AND HOW CLOSE TO THE WORK

WHAT THEY ALREADY KNOW

WHAT THEY CARE ABOUT

THEY NEED TO KNOW

THEY SHOULD FEEL

THEY SHOULD DO

WHERE THEY PAY ATTENTION

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM

More than two audiences? Print this page again. Most strategies have three to five.

HOW THEY'LL HEAR IT

CHANNEL INVENTORY

List every channel you have, then match each message to the channel that fits it.

CHANNEL	WHO IT REACHES	BEST FOR	EFFORT	USING NOW
email				
text messages				
social media				
website				
paid ads				
printed mailers				
in-person events				
team meetings				
one-on-one				
word of mouth				

MATCH THE MESSAGE TO THE CHANNEL

IF THE MESSAGE IS …	START HERE
personal, sensitive, or a big change	In person or one-on-one first, before anything goes out in writing.
detailed, with dates and steps	Email or the website, where people can come back to it.
a reminder or a deadline	Text or a short email, close to the date.
about building interest	Social media, stories, and events.
an invitation	Word of mouth. Give your most connected people one sentence to share.

WHAT YOU'LL SAY

MESSAGE AND TONE

People forget most of what they hear. Give them one clear sentence they can repeat.

THE KEY MESSAGE

One sentence. If someone remembers only this, it's enough.

e.g., "Same service you trust, now 10 minutes closer. Opening March 1 on the north side."

THREE SUPPORTING POINTS: THE WHY, THE WHAT, THE HOW

01

02

03

THE CALL TO ACTION: THE ONE THING WE WANT PEOPLE TO DO NEXT

TONE: HOW SHOULD THIS COME ACROSS? pick three

- [ ] warm
- [ ] hopeful
- [ ] urgent
- [ ] confident
- [ ] celebratory
- [ ] honest
- [ ] calm
- [ ] inviting
- [ ] personal
- [ ] professional
- [ ] playful
- [ ] serious

HOW IT SHOULD NOT COME ACROSS

WORDS OR PHRASES WE'LL AVOID

the tone check, before anything goes out

- [ ] Read it out loud. Does it sound like us?
- [ ] Would it make sense to someone brand new?
- [ ] Does it lead with why it matters to them?
- [ ] Would we be fine with it being forwarded?

PUT IT TOGETHER

THE PLAN

Plan to say it more than once and in more than one place. People need to hear a message several times before they act on it.

	WHEN	AUDIENCE	MESSAGE	CHANNEL	FREQUENCY	OWNER
01						
02						
03						
04						
05						
06						
07						
08						
09						
10						
11						
12						

AFTER IT GOES OUT

compare with the success measures on page 2

WHAT WORKED	WHO WE MISSED	WHAT WE'LL DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME

- [ ] We told our own team before we told the public.
- [ ] Every audience on page 4 heard the message at least twice, in two different channels.