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ABC  
COMMUNICATIONS  
AND MARKETING  
GUIDE

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## Before you start

- This document will help you before you start any piece of marketing or communications, whether you are rewriting some copy for your small business website or building a communications strategy for a global change programme. We've kept everything clear, simple, and flexible but the theory behind the planning can be repeated for a range of activities.
- Far too often, organisations want to get a quick email out or create a leaflet before they have thought about the who, why, when,... or even what they actually want to say. A leaflet is just one of millions of types of channels you can use to communicate, but is it the most effective one to achieve the result you require? The real power comes from your plan.
- A communications plan or strategy is as easy as ABC. Know your 'Audience', define your 'Brand', and then choose the right 'Channel'. This document will help you with that process.
- Make sure you get a clear communications brief as to who, why, when or what you need to communicate. Often you may be asked to communicate something by a boss or a manager, but you should have the confidence to go back to them, get all the information you need, and challenge them about what it is you want to say and why.
- Look out for the blockers. A blocker is something that is stopping the communications process happening properly. It could be that you haven't got the right budget, or the messages from the top are not clear and concise, or maybe the people who you are trying to get the message to are reluctant to listen. A clear, concise and strong plan will mitigate this.



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### Tools, templates and guides for all your communications, marketing and PR needs.

*Our marketing, PR and change tools and templates are unlike those you see elsewhere. Based on 20 years of communications and marketing experience in real, successful businesses like yours. Written in plain English, simple to use and flexible to your needs.*

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## Anything is possible...

Want to attract the right **Audience** with a powerful **Brand** using the most effective **Channel**? We call this **ABC**.

*A communications plan is as easy as ABC. Know your 'Audience', define your 'Brand' or key messages, and choose the right 'Channel'. Good communication and/or marketing is planned and considers these three elements...*

### **Audience**

#### **Who and Where?**

**Audience** in business means your customers, but which ones give you the best business outcomes with the least commercial effort? Asking this question is just one way in which you might target or focus on a particular customer group. In internal communications you need to identify the right stakeholders, or staff groups, but which of these audiences have the strongest influence, which ones have the most interest in what you are doing and will need to be kept informed?



### **Brand**

#### **What and Why?**

**Brand** is not just about graphic design, your logo or corporate colours. It's everything to do with how you communicate and what messages you get across - how you answer the phone, what your key messages are, the look and feel of your staff uniform or website. Spend some time not just coming up with a slogan or logo that looks nice, but a set of consistent messages, themes, and values that resonate with how you are looking to be perceived.



### **Channel**

#### **How and When?**

**Channels** are the tools or method you use to communicate ranging from print to digital, word of mouth to PR, posters to tweets. The modern world has an increasing number of channels (from social media to plasma screens, network forums to loyalty cards). You need to focus on the channels that meet your business goals or desired outcomes most effectively. Look at competitors or think outside the box to find new or exciting ways to communicate.



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## Know your 'Audience'

If you are doing external marketing, think about which of your customers are the most valuable to you. Which ones purchase the products and services that you are happy to provide? Often in business we can get distracted, focusing on a quick buck or a short-lived trend that may require more effort. We are looking for the customers which are taking your business in the direction you want it to travel in.

For internal communication and engagement, you should think hard about the different groups you are tasked with engaging with. You could perform a stakeholder analysis, which would help you identify the ones with most interest and influence on your desired outcome. What are the messages you would look to get out to these different groups? Are there any potential blockages like resistance to change, or audience groups that are difficult to reach such as mobile workforce, or busy senior staff?

Which communications or marketing channels do these groups engage with, which blogs or trade magazines do they subscribe to? Metaphorically, would they shop at a discount supermarket or a high-end department store? Think of the channels you might use to reach these people and the brands or messages they might respond to. If you don't know then market research could provide the answers.

## Define your 'Brand'

Forget about logos or corporate colors, that's something a graphic designer can help you with. By brand, we mean your intentions, your values, and your key messages. This is a good time to lift the hood on your business strategy and define where you want to go over the next few years. Challenge yourself and your colleagues about what is working well for the business.

For internal communications, you could run workshops with your staff to involve them with the messaging you are trying to create, perhaps your campaign involves getting some complicated messages out. You can use a message matrix to help you get these messages agreed before you start to communicate them. As this will save you time.

In marketing it's always a good idea to research your market. If nothing else then talk to your best customers, but you could also look at competitors and see what brands, slogans, messages and ways of communicating your 'desired' customer groups respond to. Often big companies will spend millions doing this, so in some ways they've done the hard thinking for you.

## Choose the right 'Channel'

If you have done the research (Audience and Brand) correctly the next step should make more sense. Make a simple list of the channels that will help you get the right message to the right people in the right way. Think outside the box too. It may help to come up with new ways that haven't been tried before – posters in toilets, adverts on petrol pumps, sports sponsorships are examples of these unexpected but effective marketing channels.

Some channels such as sending an email or a tweet are great for getting information out quickly, but a printed brochure is a better for detailed sales material to aide conversations. Video or powerpoint presentations are typically better for explaining something complex or telling a strong story but you may be restricted by time or budget.

There is never a 'one fits all' solution. Different people will respond to different ways of being communicated to. The best approach is to create a campaign using a number of different channels, timed in a way that people are being hit with the same simple message a few times.

## What's the plan, Stan?

*A good communication or marketing plan will help you agree what you are going to do and establish how and when you will engage with your audience.*



## Stuck with the 'What's Next?'

There's a whole heap of templates, plans and toolkits on our website to help you go further.

You could also subscribe to The Stream, our successful blog with more tips, tricks and ideas.

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