

# Build a Communications Plan to Support Change



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Across NRMCC's client portfolio, employees tell us they're overwhelmed by time-sensitive requests from all parts of their organizations, on many different platforms. This sense of overwhelm holds true for people who work at three-person nonprofits and those with thousands of employees. A daily barrage of communications combined with a change management effort equals a lot of uncertainty.

All employers should invest time on internal communications strategy to help employees sort through the noise. But if your nonprofit's going through major change, streamlining your employee communication becomes essential. Strategize before you hit send to help give your changes a better chance of succeeding. Here are some steps to build an internal communications strategy and calendar to guide your efforts.

**Step 1:** Define your goals for your communications strategy (e.g., to streamline internal communication during a period of change, build morale, and help retain team members).

**Step 2:** Determine your timeline for key communications. What messages do you need to share quarterly? Monthly? Weekly?

**Step 3:** Review what you know about your team members' communication needs. What are your team members' values? Work to shape communication around those. What information do employees most often seek from leadership? What previous messages have resonated most with employees? Why?

**Step 4:** Learn how employees already engage with information from your agency. Examine what channels get the most engagement (a monthly internal email newsletter? CEO updates?) What time of day and day of the week do employees most often engage with messages?

**Step 5:** Identify all your potential communication platforms, from messaging apps and social media to email or your Intranet. Match each message with the most effective platforms.

**Step 6:** Build a communications schedule and put it into a calendar format. Some changes and initiatives can be covered in a newsletter or other popular existing communication. Others will merit their own all staff email message or other communication—but reducing the number of those and tracking them can ensure they receive more attention. Create a one-page guide to your key communications platforms on your team shared drive, Google doc, or main Slack or Teams channel and list roughly where and when employees can expect to receive key communications.

**Step 7:** Schedule enough time to craft and review your communications. A hastily drafted message could create more problems for your change management efforts than it solves.

**Step 8:** Make sure your communication plan includes regular information about how employees' input and feedback factored into your changes. [A recent study by employee engagement provider Qualtrics](#) found that 83% of C-suite leaders say their organization acts on employee feedback, while just 43% of individual contributors agree.

Leaders at your nonprofit will never be able to communicate with every employee exactly in their ideal way. But with careful strategizing, you can make communications more helpful and informative and guide your team through a period of change.

As you build out your communications plan, gather information about how employees feel it's working and how you could make your communications more useful. Make these questions part of your regular team surveys and one-on-one conversations so you don't overwhelm people. Discuss what you're learning regularly in leadership team meetings. Employee communication is one of the most important endeavors for any leadership team, and you should devote time at each meeting to discuss it and consider how to continue improving.

Letting employees know when, where, and how to expect key communications from you is an act of kindness. It will go a long way toward building goodwill and showing that you respect and value employees. Commit to streamline your communications, listen to feedback and continue to improve, and you'll find that change management becomes easier and employee relations less strained.

*Rachel Sams is Lead Consultant and Editor at the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. Nearly 25 years into a career in communications, she's still finding new communication challenges, solutions, and opportunities. Reach her with questions about internal communication during times of change at [rachel@nonprofitrisk.org](mailto:rachel@nonprofitrisk.org) or 505-456-4045.*