

Guideline: Developing Communications Plan



Migrated development approach from existing IBM Global Services Method work product.

Relationships

Related Elements

- [Communications Plan](#)

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Main Description

A structured communication approach is required for the successful deployment of large, complex systems that involve significant business change. Use the following steps to develop the Communications Plan:

1. Select communications team and process owner.
2. Review current and past information and communication processes and the high-level strategy defined in the Transition Strategy.
3. Develop an in-depth communication strategy.
4. Create the Communications Campaign Definition (note that this step will be iterative through the various campaigns as they roll out).
5. Develop a Communication Project Plan (note that this step will be iterative as the campaigns roll out).
6. Manage the feedback process; refine and redesign approach, as required.
7. Execute the plan and measure the results.

Select Communications Team and Process Owner

The communications team should include representation from the client's project team, corporate communications function, and IBM consultants. The consultants' role is to provide the communication plan framework and facilitate the development of the communication plan and materials. A client team member should be selected as the communication process owner. The communication process owner will have overall plan responsibilities that include overseeing the production of the communications strategy, campaign, project plan, and implementation of the Communications Program.

While the communications process owner does not deliver all communications alone, he or she is the focal point for ensuring continuity, responsiveness, and consistency in execution of the communications plan.

Review Current and Past Information and Communication Processes and the High-Level Strategy Defined in the Transition Strategy

Before developing the communication plan, review the project scope and project plan together with the campaigns as defined in the Transition Strategy and the Transition Plan, in order to align all future messages with the client's vision and project milestones. A review of the client's current and past communication process and practices will provide a starting point for identifying communications channels and feedback processes to use with various members of the client organization.

Develop an In-Depth Communication Strategy

There are 4 steps to developing an in-depth communication strategy. They are:

1. Develop communications principles
2. Define your audiences
3. Create a communication road map
4. Define the communication media

Develop Communication Principles

Communication principles help to ensure consistency and effectiveness in a communication process. Communication principles should be set out at the beginning of the communications work so that no matter how lengthy and complex the change initiative gets, there is clear directives that the entire communications team has agreed upon and that management has approved.

Define Your Audiences

Different groups of people within the organization need different types of information during a change initiative. In the planning stages it is important to identify the people who will be affected by the change initiative, how they will be affected, and how best to communicate with them throughout the change initiative. Once this list is developed, it will be possible to understand the different requirements of each audience segment. Be sure to consider both internal and external audiences.

Create a Communication Road Map

The Communication road map defines the specific phases (referred to here as campaigns) to be conducted during the

change initiative and their relative timing. A road map helps in understanding the Communication Campaign Definition step in the development approach. The campaigns map to commitment stages identified in the commitment model. For example, the second stage of commitment in a change initiative is the Awareness of Change: simply knowing that a change is going to happen. Usually one of the first communication campaigns is making people aware that their organization is going to undergo a change initiative and the reasons for it.

Campaign	Dates
Awareness and Understanding	7/1/99 - 10/15/1999
Understanding and Positive Perceptions	10/16/99 – 4/31/1999
Installation	5/1/99 - 12/31/2000
Follow-up	1/1/00 - 3/31/2000

Define the Communication Media

There are various methods for delivering and receiving messages to and from audiences ranging from "non-personal," such as memos and posters, to "personal," such as staff meetings. You will need to select media depending on what messages you are attempting to deliver and what audience you are delivering them to. You will probably change the choice of media during the project, but it is important to identify the media you have available and start to target appropriate media to messages and audiences.

Create Communication Campaign Definitions

Once you have completed the overall, in-depth Communication Strategy, you should move to creating Communication Campaign Definitions for each campaign you have identified for the change initiative. These campaigns are designed to guide the identified stakeholders through one or more stages of commitment, as shown in the commitment model. The three parts to defining a Communication Campaign are:

1. Campaign Objectives
2. Audience Requirements
3. Message Definition

Campaign Objectives

Specify the goals of each Communication campaign. At the end of each campaign, these will be used to determine if the campaign has been successful. See the following Communication Objective examples:

Campaign: Awareness and Understanding

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

Audience Requirements

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 to consolidate groups of people into a single audience, to ensure that the messages for each campaign can help achieve the communication requirements for all audiences, and to identify common communication requirements that may be appropriate for mass communication media. Keep in mind that 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 affected in a similar way during that particular campaign
- Members of an audience may have similar responsibilities toward the project during a campaign

For example:

Audience	General Information Requirements	Specific Information Requirements
Executives	Overview of project Project goals and timing	Interrelationship or effect on other corporate initiatives and financial position Project priority Project leadership and staffing Project status and issue discussion
Managers and supervisors	Overview of project	Their personal and departmental

of affected departments	Project goals and timing	responsibilities Impacts on their position and timing Impacts on their departments and timing Impacts on their personnel and timing Who to contact for answers
Customers	Overview of project Project goals and timing	

Message Definition

Each campaign should be focused 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 communications media. For these reasons, it is important to specifically consider the messages for each campaign along with their audiences, media, frequency, and timing. Create a Campaign Communication Definition for each campaign defined in the Communication Strategy.

Develop a Communication Project Plan

The Communications Plan is the document used to direct the actual preparation and delivery of the communications materials. It defines the specific communications to be prepared and delivered, the timing for each communication, and the budget for the overall communications program. The three main tools in the Communications Project Plan are:

- Communication Delivery Planner -- For each campaign, it identifies the media, timing, applicable messages for that media, and the audience to be targeted. The person who prepares the media will use this planner.
- Work plan -- Used to schedule the production, approval, and delivery of communications, usually a Gantt chart.
- Budget -- Used to determine the total cost, and should follow the format and content requirements of the client.

Execute the Plan and Measure Results

This step is the actual delivery of the message to the specific segment and the physical capturing of their feedback for future analysis.

Manage the Feedback Process; Refine and Redesign Approach as Required

Throughout the delivery of the Communications Plan work product, members of the project team and the extended communications process team need to capture audience/segment feedback and measure the campaign's success based on the Campaign Objectives of the Communications Strategy.

The following approach to capture this feedback will enable the project team to quickly assess and respond to issues as they arise. The communications project team should prepare a master feedback file to hold feedback captured via survey results, interviews, meeting notes, focus groups, etc. The feedback collected should be reviewed weekly, or at some other appropriate interval, with the project team to determine the need for immediate action. Periodically the feedback should be consolidated for formal review at project intervals to assess the effectiveness of the communications plan, identify unanticipated points of resistance or concern, and determine the need to update/refine the plan. Also in this step, the communications process team should create a log for tracking communication plan implementation activities.

Some of the feedback mechanisms that may be used for assessing the impact of the delivered communications to the stakeholders are:

- Feedback survey questionnaire
- Notes taken by presenter (or scribe) summarizing issues, answers, and questions
- Responses by participants after delivering package or message
- How the campaign performed relative to its stated objectives

Discussion Forum

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