TO: Communications Department

FROM: Smokie Lee, Manager of Communications

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SUBJECT: Identifying the Needs of Audiences for Our New Product Launch

Identifying your audience makes you more effective at communicating (“Tips on Knowing Your Target Audience When Communicating Within an Organization,” n.d.) and helps you choose the best communication channel (Root, III, n.d.). Some argue that it's the single most important step in any communication (Barten, n.d.). A new product launch is a challenge for technical communicators because in addition to needing to know how to communicate the new product or features, all internal teams need to be involved (Schneider & Hall, 2011). Effective internal communication is vital to the success of a company (Johnson, Donohue, Atkin, & Johnson, 1994) and "may well be more important...than external communications" (Young & Post, 1993). In the case of BoldFLASH, the stakeholders include all teams from the six main areas: research & development, manufacturing, sales & marketing, technical support, finance/accounting, and human resources.

The next step in effective technical communication is to recognize your audience's needs (Gerson & Gerson, 2013). What information do they need from your communication? There are two main sources of data for determining an audience's needs: sources of already published information known as secondary sources, or data collected from research you conduct called primary research (Gerson & Gerson, 2013). For communicating a product launch to internal employees, secondary sources regarding your audience's needs such as books or periodicals will likely be unavailable; in this case reliance on primary research in the form of surveys (Marcotte, 2000) and face to face meetings and feedback (“Purdue OWL: Audience Analysis,” n.d.) are preferable.

Based on my research and knowledge of BoldFLASH, I have identified the following stakeholders' needs and recommendations for focusing your communications regarding the new product launch so that it is relevant.

* **Research & Development**
  + **New Product Development:** This team will need to assist with creating launch documentation and with supplying information about the product to other teams (Burnes, 2013). This documentation should be created as a single source document so that it can be reused in a variety of ways all throughout the company (Puterbaugh, 2011): sales pitches, marketing presentations, & status reports, as well as the intranet support site.
  + **Product Enhancement:** To stay competitive, businesses must make improvements to their products regularly (Adams, n.d.), so the product enhancement team needs to know the current features and use case of a product so they can research enhancements.
* **Manufacturing**
  + **Detroit, Shanghai & Purchasing:** It’s important to fully understand what the supply and distribution chain will look like before a product launches (Schneider & Hall, 2011), so all teams in the manufacturing area will need to be included in the new product launch communications.
* **Sales & Marketing**
  + **U.S., European, & Online Sales:** Top performers from all sales teams will be vital in running sales tests and helping to train the rest of the teams (Burnes, 2013). In addition, sales teams will need to communicate with the Manufacturing department to understand the supply demands (Schneider & Hall, 2011).
  + **U.S. & European Marketing:** Because you must know your market before a product launches (Schneider & Hall, 2011) marketing will need to use all the tools in their arsenal, including social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), to research and engage with customers.
  + **Partner Management:** While marketing focuses on researching and engaging with future customers, partner management can focus on marketing to an often overlooked set of users: existing customers (Burnes, 2013).
* **Technical Support**
  + **Technical Support:** Learning curve, quality issues, and failure to meet customer expectations are three factors that can ruin a product or its launch WHY FAIL. Technical support can help with all these issues by testing the product and helping to craft product information (Burnes, 2013).
* **Finance/Accounting**
  + **Corporate Finance & Corporate Accounting:** Because the costs of developing and launching a product have increased drastically in recent years (“New Products,” 2013), the financial departments need to be involved to help evaluate the risks and rewards associated with the product (Burnes, 2013) and to draft budgets during (“The Secrets for a Successful Product Launch,” 2014) and after (Boundless, 2015) launch. They also need to be able to quickly allocate additional budget resources for growth if the product is successful (“The Secrets for a Successful Product Launch,” 2014).
* **Human Resources**
  + **Corporate HR:** This team will need to be available to hire additional employees if the product is extremely successful HOW TO LAUNCH. Not including them early in the launch can increase the cost of product development (“New Products,” 2013).

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