

# Develop a Communication Plan in 7 Steps

## Template



A communication plan helps define the approach you will take to communicate your project or vision across different audiences. It helps to establish trust, manage expectations, encourage participation and collaboration and ensures that the right people know about the project and understand how it will benefit them.

This document highlights the 7 steps you should take and the questions you should answer in order to create a strong and engaging communication plan:

**Step 1:** Define What Needs to be Communicated

**Step 2:** Set Clear Objectives

**Step 3:** Identify and Define your Target Audience

**Step 4:** Create an Overarching Message

**Step 5:** Select the Most Appropriate Communication Methods

**Step 6:** Develop a Detailed Timeline

**Step 7:** Implement the Plan



## Step 1: Define what needs to be communicated

- ▶ What are you trying to communicate (i.e. Your vision, a strategy, a new tool go-live, etc)?
- ▶ Why is it important?

If you need to create a communication plan for a specific project/implementation, what needs to be communicated will depend on where you are:

Project Phase	What to Communicate
Budgeting	Communicate goals
Selection	Communicate specific problem statement Communicate choice
Planning	Communicate roadmap
Kick-off	Communicate timeline and effort required Communicate personal and organizational benefits
Design	Communicate options
Implementation	Communicate what has been completed Communicate personal benefits Communicate enablement
Training	Communicate enablement Communicate training guides
Go Live	Communicate excitement Communicate benefits

## Step 2: Set Clear Objectives

The objectives tell your team why you need a communication plan and help you create a path to success.

- ▶ What challenges are you facing that the communication plan can help to overcome?
- ▶ What do you wish to accomplish? What are the short, medium, and long-term goals that will help you move closer to your vision?

Project Phase	Communication goal
Budgeting	Establish trust Control expectations
Selection	Get buy-in
Planning	Align Stakeholders
Kick-off	Excite stakeholders
Design	Reduce choices and stress
Implementation	Excite audience
Training	Excite users Reduce fear of the unknown Enable people to be excellent
Go Live	Avoid feeling of false completion

## Step 3: Identify your Target Audience

You need to know your target audience so that you can understand what a day in their life may look like.

- ▶ Who needs to understand the vision to help the company achieve its' goal in the project?

- ▶ What do they care about most?
- ▶ Who may be impacted by the activities carried out by the project?
- ▶ How will this change their lives?

The more specific and personal you can be when defining your target audience, the better. People relate on a personal level, and you need to show them you know what they care about.

## Step 4: Key Message

You need an overarching message to align everybody towards the same goal and keep everything consistent.

- ▶ Why should your audience care about the plan?
- ▶ What benefit will your audience gain from adopting the plan?

Different audiences care about very different things. Therefore, you need to be able to effectively tailor different aspects of your message to a specific audience in a language they understand. This will help you encounter less resistance by showing your company and coworkers the value it adds to them.

## Step 5: Communication Methods

Depending on what needs to be communicated, you will need to think of different methodologies to clearly convey your message. This may depend on your organization limitations, but options are unlimited.

- ▶ What is available?
- ▶ How are other departments communicating what they are doing?
- ▶ What can you do?
- ▶ Think about a campaign/project you have seen that was successful, what did they do differently?
- ▶ What would your audience respond to best?
- ▶ Why would they respond to it?



## Step 6: Develop your Timeline

Communication in all stages of your project is critical. All target audiences involved must be aware of any changes and/or progress. A strong and detailed timeline will help keep everyone informed and on track.

- ▶ When will you kick-off your project? When would you like to have it realistically completed by? (give yourself a 2 – 3 week margin)
- ▶ What specific activities/ tactics do you want to use on a weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, yearly basis?
- ▶ What do you want to achieve each week, month, and year?

## Step 7: Implementation of the Plan

Your communication plan will be rolled out when your projects start. The goal is to support the project by communicating effectively and engaging the audience in a language they understand.

- ▶ What are your start/end dates?
- ▶ How often do you think people need to hear about the progress you are making?
- ▶ Will you give people continuous updates?
- ▶ How will you inform them when something takes place?
- ▶ Will you let them know if something does not go as planned? If so, how?

Throughout the duration of the project, things are bound to change. If this occurs, you need to reassess and see if previous methods are still effective.

**Need help to create an engaging communication plan?**

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