Communicating During an Organizational Change

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"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."
– George Bernard Shaw

"Just because change leaders are thoroughly familiar with the why, what and how of a change initiative, they should not assume that everyone else knows about it too."
– Carol A. Beatty

Most experts would agree that communication is a vital ingredient in successful change initiatives, and there is much research to support this assertion. My own research revealed a very high correlation between change success and communications efforts (Pearson correlation r = 0.567, significant at the 0.01 level). Furthermore, it has also been shown that ineffective internal communication is a major contributor to the failure of change initiatives.[1] For example, Sally Woodward and Chris Hendry surveyed 198 employees in U.K. financial services institutions undergoing change and asked them to specify the barriers to change.[2] Two of the six barriers identified were: lack of adequate communications (not being kept informed, receiving conflicting messages, wanting to understand but not being given explanations) and lack of consultation. In my view, expert communication is indispensable when persuading people to support change. Some researchers even claim that the essence of change is communication; that is, that communication produces change rather than merely serving as one tool in its implementation.[3]

Communication efforts during a large change project attempt to persuade stakeholders to adopt a new view of the future, but before they can arrive at this new conviction, three things must be absolutely clear to them: the "why," "what" and "how" of the change.

The importance of answering the "why" questions is backed by much empirical research. For example, Paul Nutt, in his study of major change at a hospital setting, found that employees were more likely to accept the change if they felt it was justified.[4]

The vision of the preferred future, or the answer to the "what we are striving to become?" question, must be clear and motivating as well, and it must answer the most important question: "What's in it for me?" Backing this up is Brian Niehoff and associates, who reported that communicating a shared vision through various media was a significant factor in developing organizational commitment to change.[5]

Third, you must explain the "how," or the change rollout plan, that will allow the organization to reach the final destination. Just because change leaders are thoroughly familiar with the "why," "what" and "how" of a change initiative, doesn't mean they should assume that everyone else knows too. A memo is not enough, a big organizational meeting is not enough, and certainly an email blast is not enough. Making sure everyone understands and accepts the change is a tough job, and a change leader without the required communications expertise would be well-advised to have an expert consultant or communications committee to help with this

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[1] Coulson-Thomas, C. (1998). Strategic vision or strategic con? Rhetoric or reality? In C.A. Carnall (Ed.), *Strategic Change,* Work Study 1998 47:2 , 67-68.

[2] Woodward, S., & Hendry, C. (2004). Leading and coping with change. *Journal of Change Management, 4*(2), 155–183.

[3] Ford, J., & Ford, L. (1995). The role of conversations in producing intentional change in organizations. *Academy of Management Review, 20*(3), 541-570.

[4] Nutt, P. C. (1986). Tactics of implementation. *Academy of Management Journal, 29*(2), 230–261.

[5] Niehoff, B. P., Enz, C., & Grover, R. A. (1990). The impact of top-management actions on employee attitudes and perceptions. *Group & Organization Studies, 15*(3)337–352.

vital task. Furthermore, communications must start at the very beginning of the change and continue right through to the end. If not, your change will be in jeopardy, like it was in the following case study.

Office Relocation at Coastal Petroleum[6]

Coastal Petroleum is a relatively small but rapidly growing regional distributor of gasoline, lubricating oils and other petroleum products that also has a number of gasoline stations in the local market. Its expertise in negotiating contracts with bulk-station operators and independently-owned chains of gasoline stations contributes to its success. The company attracts many of its employees away from competitors, and employees regard a job with Coastal as very prestigious. To date, employee turnover at all levels has been low. Senior management is beginning to worry, however. Over the years, revenues have grown rapidly but profits have not increased in equal proportion. And costs have risen significantly. The senior leaders recently set a goal of containing costs, and soon after, an opportunity presented itself to do just that.

The current headquarters of Coastal is in a luxury office building in the centre of the regional capital city near shops, hotels, restaurants and theatres. The rent is expensive, but renewal of the lease, which is about to expire, would mean a substantial increase in the rent. In addition to leasing costs, the office pays high monthly sums for several direct telephone lines to the company's refinery and bulk-storage terminal.

So, to save costs, management has decided to relocate about 80 percent of its offices to the refinery and bulk-storage complex, where Coastal owns the land and buildings. This complex is located in a general area of docks and shipyards, warehouses, factories, and other oil terminals, which are all rather closely grouped together along the waterfront. A large frame building at the plant once housed the company headquarters, but it has sat vacant since the offices relocated to the city centre. Now the company is planning to move many departments back to this building. To prepare for the move, the building was painted, soundproofed and renovated to bring it up to modern standards.

Although the move is several months away, considerable unrest has developed among office employees. The usual banter and kidding has disappeared, performance has deteriorated, and the group is unenthusiastic about the move, to say the least.

Now senior management is worried because they've heard some wildly exaggerated rumours about various aspects of the move. Employees are complaining about the time they will waste driving to work, about the noise and the dirt of the new location, and about the inconvenience of having to remain around the plant during the lunch period to eat at nearby lunch counters. They are used to eating at the better restaurants uptown, where they do not mingle with factory labourers, truck drivers and other industrial workers. Some are talking about the company "going to the dogs" and losing its competitive spirit. Others are grumbling about the "penny-pinching" attitude of the company, and one of the best salesmen was overheard commenting, "The company is on the down-grade; we are no longer pushing ahead; it's all 'retrenchment.'"

What should management do? Some have suggested giving employees a raise to compensate for the move. Others believe that the employees' anxieties will disappear after the move and are advocating taking a "wait and see" approach. Still others are in favour of trying to anticipate employees' real concerns and taking action to respond to them. For example, by opening and closing a half-hour earlier than the main shift at the shipyards, employees could have at least an hour to shop and do errands in the city before the stores close.

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[6] This case study is largely fictional, but it is informed by my reading of similar situations and by my consulting experience.

What would you recommend? Think about this question. For my take, go to the Appendix at the end of the paper.

Communication Failures Can Cause Change Failures

Researchers working on a 2005 study for the Bridges Business Consultancy asked CEOs about the implementation of a new strategy in their organization.[7] After analyzing results from five years' worth of research (between 2000 and 2005) within government bodies and energy and utilities businesses in Southeast Asia and North America, the study revealed that 90 percent of these strategic initiatives were not carried out successfully. Of the one hundred fifty line managers questioned, 97 percent agreed with the statement "Implementation fails because of bad execution, not bad strategy." When asked why, they gave their top ten reasons. The top two reasons were related to communications:

1. Gaining support and action
2. Communicating the change

According to the survey, the most common way for communicating change initiatives to staff was via email (25 percent of the time), followed by briefings and newsletters. The survey also revealed that most communication was front-loaded—there was too much information and activity at the start, but less and less as time went on. Another interesting finding from this research was that the greatest resistance to change within organizations comes from middle managers: 54 percent, versus 13 percent from the executive level and 23 percent from front-line workers.

Many lessons can be drawn from this study. The most important are that change leaders must have a coherent communication strategy, use appropriate communication vehicles (and not rely on email), ensure middle managers are supportive of the change, and persist in communication efforts right to the end of the initiative.

The study's findings are discouraging—almost enough to make you give up on communicating altogether. But what happens when you don't communicate during change? For one, people start making up their own information. They challenge the goals you have set for the change and criticize the change process, and they imagine the worst that can happen and then start to believe their own exaggerated assumptions. Rumours then run rampant, are amplified and made worse. And they spread like wildfire. People start believing the rumours and become angry and mistrustful of their leaders. Don't let that happen. You must communicate early, often and right through to the end of the change initiative. My communications model, presented in Figure 1, can help.

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[7] Speculand, R. (2005). *Bricks to bridges: Make your strategy come alive*. Singapore: Bridges Business Consultancy Int.
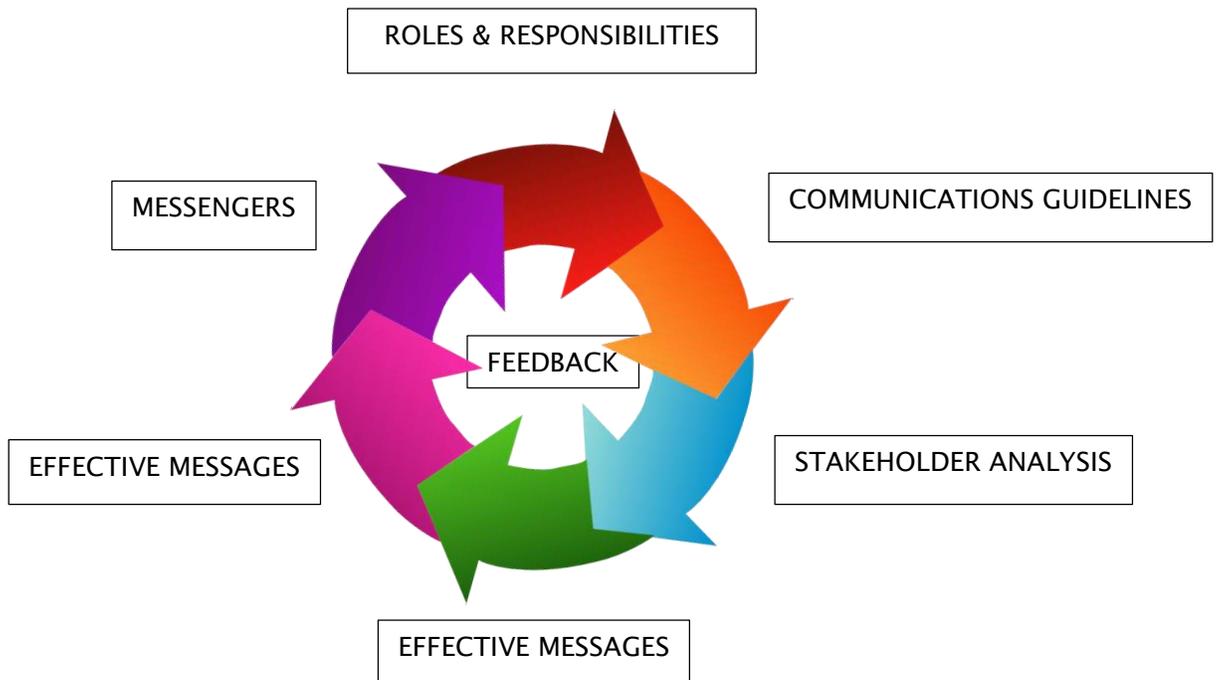
Figure 1: The communications model

The breadth and detail of this model show that communicating change is tough work and should not be an afterthought in your change initiative. Think through the issues in advance to ensure that stakeholders will listen to difficult messages, question old assumptions and consider new ways of accomplishing things. Before you communicate one word about the change, create your communications plan by answering the key questions of the change communications model:

1. What roles and responsibilities will people have in the communications plan?
2. What guidelines should you put in place, and what objective is each communication intended to achieve?
3. Which stakeholders have an interest in this change? How much communication is necessary for each stakeholder group?
4. How will you create effective messages tailored to the needs and interests of each stakeholder group? What are the contents of effective change messages?
5. What are the best media to use for each communication and each stakeholder?
6. Who should communicate with each stakeholder group, and how can you ensure they communicate consistently and effectively?
7. How will the effectiveness of the communications be assessed and improved?

Let's take these questions one by one.

Question 1: What roles and responsibilities will people have in the communications plan?

Steering committee members and even change leaders often fail to realize the need for effective communications during change, and they may let communications activities fall by the wayside when timelines get tight. Avoid these pitfalls by making sure you have communications expertise on the steering committee and project teams. Don't make the mistake of giving the vital task of communications to amateurs. If you have an internal communications function, consider forming a communications team that reports to the change project steering committee, or at the very least, assign a communications professional to the committee. If you do not have this internal expertise, consider hiring a communications consultant to help. If you have no budget for external consultants, then my best advice is to give responsibility for communications to members of the steering committee, and have them go through and answer the questions in my communications model. A complete communications plan should be created, and the steering committee and change leaders should give their input and feedback before it is carried out.

Those responsible for change project communications should plan formal messages and when they'll be communicated, but the change leaders should have the opportunity to give input and authorize the transmission of messages. One cautionary note: change leaders are busy people. Don't let that fact delay communications, because timeliness is crucial, as the following story illustrates.

When the Queen's Industrial Relations Centre consulted in a schoolboard change project, we formed a communications team composed of an internal expert and our own external communications consultant. This team planned stakeholder messages and passed them to the director of education for authorization. The director was a beloved figure, and he believed the messages would have more influence if he rewrote them in his own unique style. But he travelled constantly and never got around to this task. After one embarrassing incident, we proposed and he agreed to us sending him the messages forty-eight hours before distributing them. He could revise them as he wished and send them back within that timeframe. If not, we would send them out as they were. Can you guess how many times he rewrote those messages? Zero. He didn't have the time, the task wasn't high on his agenda and the messages were good enough.

Question 2: What guidelines should you put in place, and what objective is each communication intended to achieve?

A sound communication should have a set of objectives. In other words, you need to be specific about what you hope to accomplish with your messages to each stakeholder. Do you want them to gain knowledge about something or interpret the change in a certain way? Or do you want them to act differently in the future? Thinking through your objectives will help you to avoid scatter-shot communications that may or may not hit the right target.

Also, an effective communications plan should incorporate some fundamental principles, or norms, that guide all communications. For example, when some colleagues and I helped an organization with its change planning, we came up with the following principles:

- Each communication initiative will use more than one communication medium.
- We will share information openly.
- We will not rely on "say," we will rely on "do", (meaning that the leaders would set an example.)

I believe one of the principles you should establish is timely communications, and by timely, I mean quick. Often, leaders justify not communicating change quickly because they don't know all the details yet. Don't wait until you know all the details. Tell people what you know now and promise to fill in the missing details as they become available. Otherwise your employees may come to believe you are hiding something—something sinister.

Another often heard justification for delaying communications is that the information is confidential. This poses a big problem because even though a proposed change is confidential, such as a merger or reorganization, it will probably be leaked long before the official announcement is made. Leaked information will no doubt spread throughout the organization and probably be exaggerated beyond recognition, again as something sinister. So you must communicate quickly. The next case study shows how quickly you must act in this era of instant communications.

Case Study: Domino's Pizza[8]

Domino's Pizza suddenly faced a communications crisis when two bored employees posted videos of deliberately contaminated food on YouTube on Easter Sunday, April 2009. An estimated one million people viewed these videos before they were pulled two days later. During the first twenty-four hours, Tim McIntyre, vice president of corporate communications, examined the situation and determined that the videos were not a hoax. He then began to consult with the company's social media experts, head of security and senior management team.

By Tuesday, according to McIntyre, the company was responding to customers' queries on Twitter about whether the company knew about the situation, what the company was doing, and why the company had not issued an official statement. By Wednesday, Patrick Doyle, president of Domino's Pizza, recorded an apology that was then uploaded onto YouTube.

McIntyre wanted to convey the message that this incident was "a rogue act of two individuals who thought they were being funny. That they do not represent this brand. That they do not represent the 100,000 people who work every day at Domino's Pizza all over the world."[9] Doyle wanted to express an apology: "We didn't do this. We're sorry. And we want to earn your trust back."[10]

However, in wanting to be truthful and taking responsibility, the company was exposing itself to potential lawsuits and other legal vulnerabilities. So to mitigate the consequences of being truthful and minimize the damage to the organization's reputation, the company collaborated and coordinated with credible sources (the watchdog organizations and local authorities) and partnered with the public to observe and interpret the events, so as to not "act too hastily and alert more consumers to the situation it was attempting to contain." Unfortunately, these deliberations caused a lag in communications.

Because Domino's hesitated, customers began tweeting about whether the company actually knew what was happening and questioning what it was going to do about the videos. Ironically, meanwhile the company was attempting to implement a social media crisis plan that it had previously created. McIntyre: "We didn't want to

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[8] Excerpted from: Young, C., & Flowers, A. (2012). Fight viral with viral: A case study of Domino's Pizza's crisis communication strategies. *Case Studies in Strategic Communication, 1*, article 6, 93-106.

[9] Flandez, R. (2009, April 20). Domino's response offers lessons in crisis management. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved April 7, 2015, from http://blogs.wsj.com/independentstreet/2009/04/20/dominos-response-offers-lessons-in-crisis-management/

[10] Peeples, A., & Vaughn, C. (2010). Domino's "special" delivery: Going viral through social media (Parts A & B). Arthur W. Page Society case study competition in corporate communications. Retrieved April 7, 2015, from http://www.awpagesociety.com/insights/winning-case-studies/2010

just jump in without a strategy. We wanted to do it right. So the irony for us was that we have a plan and we were going to implement it only a week later."[11]

However, because of the public online chatter Domino's decided to speed up the implementation of the social media plan. The company president apologized. He thanked the online community for bringing the issue to his attention. He separated the company from wrongdoers and announced their prosecution. And he outlined steps that Domino's was taking to deal with the issue to make sure it never happened again.[12]

This strategy and decision to fight the crisis' viral nature using YouTube was the tipping point in the crisis. According to communications expert Richard Levick, "Domino's not only demonstrated concern for its customers, but also an understanding of the critical importance of reaching out to a target audience on its own terms and in its own preferred space."[13] The crisis happened online and had to be dealt with online.

If Domino's had followed its original communications plan, the crisis may not have been averted, and permanent damage to its reputation may have resulted. Even if there is not an immediate crisis, in a change situation people are talking and forming opinions. For example, at a recent industrial relations seminar in Alberta, one participant revealed during the break that she had just received a text message announcing the identity of her new deputy minister. She then proceeded to look up this individual on the internet, found a photo and declared: "He looks pretty grouchy!" Before even meeting her new boss, her first impression of him was negative. In today's climate of instant communications, you cannot keep things secret for long. If you do not get in front of change communications, you cannot influence employee and other stakeholder opinions. So communicate as early as possible.

Question 3: Which stakeholders have an interest in this change? What are their issues? How much communication is necessary for each stakeholder group?

Effective communications depend partly on knowing who the stakeholders are and how they should be included in communications initiatives. Most of the research shows that organizations should err on the side of more involvement and two-way communications rather than less[14]. To make these important decisions, I recommend a structured approach that involves several steps:

1. Identifying the stakeholders with whom you need to communicate about the change
2. Mapping the degree of influence and impact for each stakeholder
3. Defining what their interests in the change initiative are likely to be
4. Deciding on the communication and involvement approach you will take with each stakeholder

[11] Jacques, A. (2009, August 17). Domino's delivers during crisis: The company's step-by-step response after a vulgar video goes viral. *The Public Relations Strategist*. Retrieved April 7, 2015, from http://www.prsa.org/Intelligence/TheStrategist/Articles/view/8226/102/Domino_s_delivers_during_crisis_The_company_s_step

[12] Ibid.

[13] Levick, R. S. (2009, April 21). Domino's discovers social media. Bloomberg Business. Retrieved April 7, 2015, from http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/stories/2009-04-21/dominos-discovers-social-mediabusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice

[14] Woodward, S., & Hendry, C. (2004). Leading and coping with change. *Journal of Change Management, 4*(2), 155–183.

Identify the Stakeholders

The first task in stakeholder analysis is to decide who the main stakeholders in this change will be. In other words, who will be most and least impacted by it? Many could be affected, including:

- senior leadership groups
- certain senior executives
- management groups
- certain managers
- supervisors
- specific departments or divisions
- employees
- union(s) or union officers
- clients
- suppliers
- competitors
- partner organizations
- community partners
- regulatory bodies

Stakeholder Map

The second task is to segment these stakeholders into groups by degree of influence and degree of impact. This will help you tailor communications and involvement approaches to each group. Figure 2 presents a stakeholder map that has proven to be a useful tool for this task.
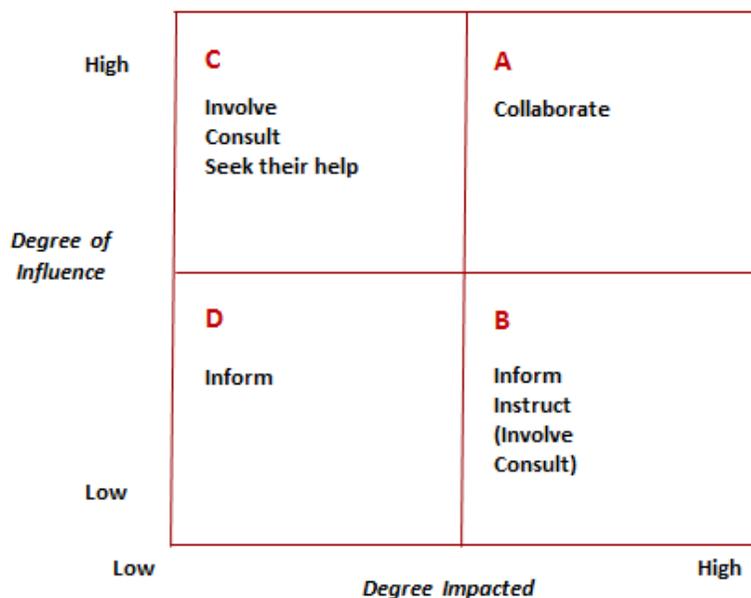

Figure 2: Stakeholder map

Filling in this stakeholder map is a very intensive process if done well, and I recommend that the steering committee undertake this task. One good method is to write the name of each stakeholder on a Post-it note and then to discuss where to put that stakeholder on the map. That way you can move the Post-it notes around before you decide on a final placement. The first decision criterion for placement is the degree of impact. In other words, how much will the proposed change project impact each stakeholder's daily work life? A lot? A little? Then discuss the degree of influence. How much influence should you allow each stakeholder to have over this change? A lot? A little? How much should they contribute? Should they have a veto over certain decisions? After grouping the stakeholders, you can more easily decide on a communication approach for each.

Quadrant A

Stakeholders in quadrant A, those who will be highly impacted by the change and who will exercise a lot of influence over the project, will have important roles as decision makers, planners and doers. You'll get the best results by working closely with these stakeholders, so a high level of communication and involvement is required for them.

Quadrant B

Stakeholders in quadrant B will have to adapt to the change but will have minimal influence on decisions about planning and implementation. Employee groups are often found here. The stakeholder map recommends that you inform and instruct groups in quadrant B about the change. You tell them what's happening and explain in detail how the move is going to affect them. The objective is to develop their understanding of the change, but it's always wise to go beyond merely informing and instructing if you can. The research is clear: If you want cooperation, then consulting the employees about their needs and interests will definitely help. Solicit their feedback on important aspects of the change that will be relevant to them. Furthermore, you may want to involve them in some aspects of the change. Of course, this has to be done within parameters set by the steering committee.

Quadrant C

Who do you think will exercise a high degree of influence over the change project but will not be as highly impacted by it as those in quadrant A? These stakeholders will be in quadrant C. I often find senior management in this quadrant if the change is not a large strategic initiative. Seek help from stakeholders in quadrant C by informing, involving and consulting them at crucial times and by getting their commitment to action. They can also be influential experts and role models. Enlist their help.

Quadrant D

Quadrant D stakeholders will not be highly impacted by the change and will have a low degree of impact on the design of the change project. These stakeholders will have the least communication needs, but your objective should be to make them aware of the change. Your approach will be to merely inform them about the change initiative and what you are trying to achieve with it.

The stakeholder map raises the much-discussed issue of how stakeholders should be involved during a change initiative. Rune Lines addressed this issue when studying data from a major strategic reorientation of a national telecommunications firm in order to assess the outcomes of participation in strategic change.[15] The

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[15] Lines, R. (2004). Influence of participation in strategic change: Resistance, organizational commitment and change goal achievement. *Journal of Change Management, 4*(3), 193-215.

study showed that there was a strong positive relationship between participation of stakeholders and goal achievement and a strong negative relationship between participation and resistance. But what level of participation is optimal and in what types of change decisions? Here, Abraham Sagie and Meni Koslowski found that subordinate participation in tactical decisions, as opposed to strategic decisions, was a better predictor of an increase in change acceptance.[16]

Stakeholder Issues

The third task in stakeholder analysis is to find out what each stakeholder's issues are likely to be, which will help you address their concerns in your communications to them. Do not guess what their issues are. Online, telephone and mail surveys are the most efficient method to uncover them, especially when there are a lot of stakeholders to contact. Focus groups of representative groups of stakeholders can be used to drill down and also to create content for survey questions. Interviews are effective but time-consuming and best used to discover as much information as possible from highly influential stakeholders. Remember: this is an iterative process, not a one-time action, and it is very important. One respected researcher found that fully half of the decisions studied failed because the decision makers did not consider the interests and information held by stakeholders sufficiently.[17]

Tailor Communications to the Stakeholder

The fourth and final task is to design communications that address each stakeholder's issues. One size does not fit all. For example, during a reorganization initiative, some departments may be affected more than others. The highly affected groups will need much more information and details about how their jobs will change, if group membership will change, if they will be relocated and if so, where, etc. Departments that will be affected less will not be interested in this level of detail. Each stakeholder group is unique, so communications should be tailored to each group's specific interests even though the message must remain consistent across groups.

Follow these steps and avoid the mistakes highlighted in the following case study.

Case Study: Failure to Consult Stakeholders Leads to Project Failure[18]

In 1993, the National Society for French Railroads (SNCF) introduced the Official Computerised Reservation System for European Tourism (SOCRATE) as the official reservation system for all European train travel. The system was an adaptation of Sabre, the successful American airline reservation system used by United Airlines. Before implementation, management consulted a few representative stakeholder groups but manipulated the data to serve the overarching objective of a set installation date. When the system was initiated, chaos ensued immediately. It took much longer to buy a ticket than with the old system and staff could not understand how to use the ticketing system, much of which was caused by the poorly designed user interface. The system implementation was of equally poor quality, with frequent system crashes happening daily. Ticket orders could be entered several times both automatically and manually, which resulted in double bookings as well as empty seats because the system showed them as occupied. The automatic ticket dispensing machines were

[16] Sagie, A., & Koslowsky, M. (1994). Organizational attitudes and behaviors as a function of participation in strategic and tactical decisions: An application of path-goal theory. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 15*(1), 37-47.

[17] Nutt, P. (2002). Why Decisions Fail: Avoiding the Blunders and Traps That Lead to Debacles, San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers

[18] Excerpted from: Price, J., & Cybulski, J. (2006). The importance of IS stakeholder perspectives and perceptions to requirements negotiation. Australian Workshop on Requirements Engineering. Retrieved April 8, 2015, from http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.95.1706&rep=rep1&type=pdf

difficult to use, so commuters generally avoided them. Many trains travelled empty because people were waiting in line to buy tickets. Some staff refused to use the new system or gave out free fares in protest. In error, the system often produced tickets where the fare cost was zero. Some tickets were even provided for non-existent trains.

All of the chaos could have been avoided if management had been willing to consult and involve stakeholders appropriately. Remember the old adage: If you don't have time to do it right the first time, how will you find the time to do it over?

Question 4: How will you create effective messages tailored to the needs and interests of each stakeholder group? What are the contents of effective change messages?

Communication efforts during a large change initiative attempt to persuade stakeholders to adopt a new view of the future, and to help them arrive at this new conviction, three things must be absolutely clear. First, answers to the "why" and "why now" questions—what is the compelling reason for the change and why can it not be postponed? Second, the vision of the preferred future, or the answer to the "what we are striving to become?" question, must be clear, motivating and address the most important question: "What's in it for me?" Third, the "how," or the change plan that will allow the organization to reach the final destination, must be well-defined.

Good change communications also reduce anxiety by explaining what is not changing and how the organization will act to minimize the perceived downsides of the change. And to inspire genuine belief and confidence, change communications must withstand harsh scrutiny right from the start.

Furthermore, communications often rely heavily on rational arguments, but emotional appeals can be just as or even more effective than rational ones. Take, for example, the communication efforts of management at a large U.S. financial services company during a cost reduction program.[19] Initially, they communicated a rational change story that "ticked all the boxes" of conventional change management wisdom, but three months into the program, they were frustrated with employee resistance inhibiting implementation. In response, management rewrote the cost program's story to include emotional elements related to society (to deliver affordable housing, services must be affordable), customers (increased simplicity, flexibility, fewer errors, more competitive prices), the company (expenses are growing faster than revenues, which is not sustainable), working teams (less duplication, more delegation, increased accountability, faster pace), and individuals (bigger, more attractive jobs create a great opportunity to "make your own" institution). This relatively simple shift in approach lifted employee motivation measures from 35.4 percent to 57.1 percent in a month, and the program went on to achieve 10 percent efficiency improvements in the first year—a run rate far above initial expectations.
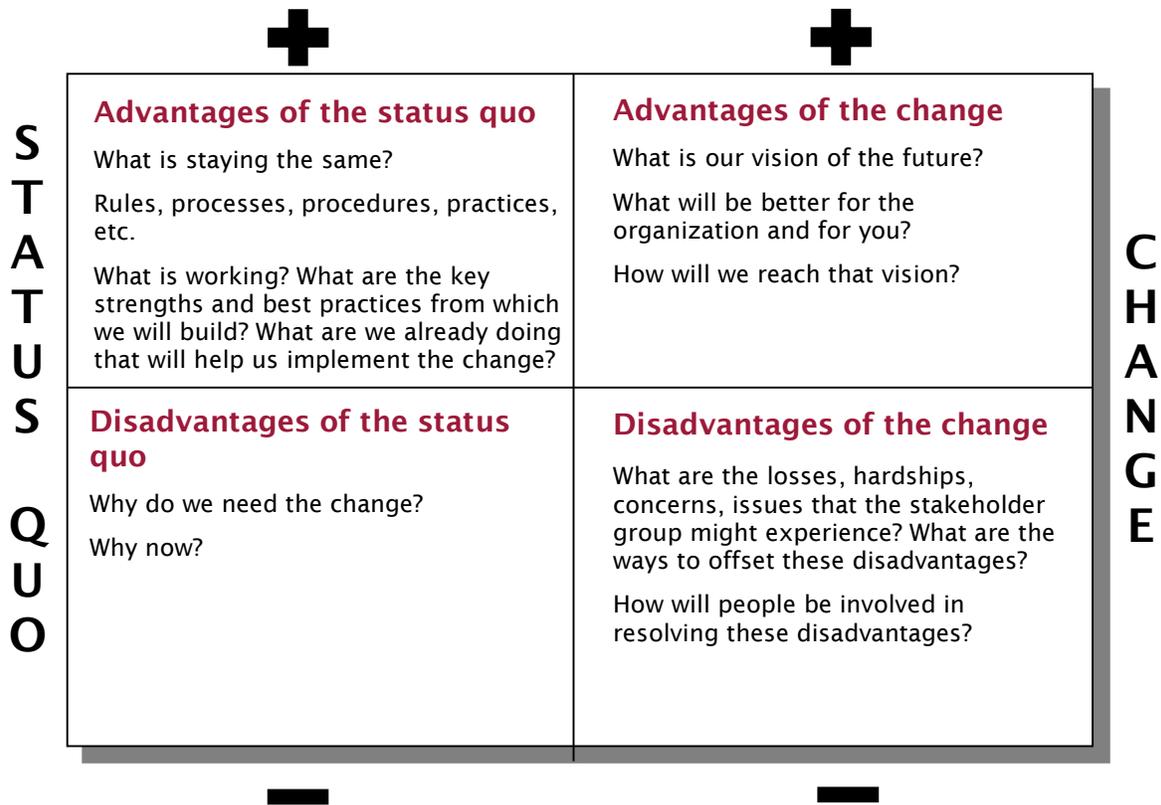
The Change Communications Grid

One tool that will help you plan these crucial communications is the Change Communications Grid. It is adapted from Barry Johnson's book, Polarity Management.[20]

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[19] Keller, S., & Aiken, C. (2000). The inconvenient truth about change management. *McKinsey Quarterly*. Retrieved March 5, 2015, from http://www.mckinsey.com/app_media/reports/financial_services/the_inconvenient_truth_about_change_management.pdf
[20] Johnson, B. (1994). *Polarity management: Identifying and managing unsolvable problems*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press.

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S T A T U S Q U O	**Advantages of the status quo** What is staying the same? Rules, processes, procedures, practices, etc. What is working? What are the key strengths and best practices from which we will build? What are we already doing that will help us implement the change?	**Advantages of the change** What is our vision of the future? What will be better for the organization and for you? How will we reach that vision?	**C H A N G E**
	Disadvantages of the status quo Why do we need the change? Why now?	**Disadvantages of the change** What are the losses, hardships, concerns, issues that the stakeholder group might experience? What are the ways to offset these disadvantages? How will people be involved in resolving these disadvantages?	
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Figure 3: Change Polarity Map

Often, when change leaders communicate their change messages, they discuss the disadvantages of the status quo and the advantages of the change initiative. But their audience is mostly thinking about the disadvantages of the change and the advantages of the status quo. The two groups are like ships passing in the night. A complete change message deals with both groups' issues, because until the audience hears that you know and will respond to their concerns—and that not everything will be changing—they won't accept the change message.

The first questions people want answered are: Why are we making this change? Why now? How will this change improve things? What's wrong with the status quo? Advocating change implies insult. When you say you need to change things, many will take this as criticism of the way things currently are, so you must phrase this message carefully with no blame attributed to people, present or past.

Then they need to have an overall picture of what the organization is trying to achieve with the change. In other words, what's the vision of the bright future after the change is accomplished? What are you changing to? What will it look like when the change is fully implemented? What are the goals? How will this change move the organization forward? Within this step, be sure to answer the "what's in it for me?" question from the stakeholder's point of view.

And then they want to know how you are going to accomplish the change. What is the change plan or roadmap? Who is leading the change effort? What is their role in this change? What is expected of them?

But that's not enough. They also need to know you understand their concerns and have thought about how to address them. This is a key part of an effective message. You'll hopefully already know these concerns because you have already discovered them when completing your stakeholder map from question three.

And finally, address what will be staying the same. There is a tendency for people to see a change as bigger and more disruptive than it really is. Tell them that not everything they know and love will be changing, that you won't be throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Communicate how much of your organization and culture already supports the vision and can therefore remain as part of the status quo. Keep as much as possible, and carry forward the best of what works.

It is important to remember that each of these messages must be tailored to each stakeholder's point of view. The messages you send out must not be contradictory, but they should be adapted to appeal to every interested party. Communicate openly and honestly throughout this process. Employees may not like the message, but they will never forgive you for hiding the truth or for outright lies.

One final caveat about this is that organizations will often send two different kinds of messages about change. One is the formal kind: speeches, newsletters, corporate videos, memos, meetings, etc. The other is the informal kind, delivered through off-the-record remarks and inconsistent behaviour. Skeptical employees are on alert for these informal messages, which may convey empty rhetoric and company propaganda. What change leaders do and say in the hallways is more powerful than any formal communications.

In order to develop the right message tracks, and to know what needs to be measured during a change process, it's best to start with qualitative employee research. Conduct some focus groups to get employees talking about:

- How they see the company's current position
- What they think the company should be doing differently
- What it would take for them to make changes in their own jobs that would be consistent with the company's new direction

Question 5: What are the best media to use for each communication and each stakeholder?

There are many channels and mechanisms to choose from when delivering messages, including face-to-face meetings and written and electronic communications. To complicate things even more, the choice has been expanded recently by the rise of social media. Each medium has advantages and disadvantages. But a key finding from my research and that of others is that you should use many different channels and that you should over-communicate. However, change leaders should choose the best delivery mechanisms given the audience, the group size and location, the message complexity, message frequency, and the stage in the change process. People take in information in different ways, so communicate the same messages in different ways for maximum impact. Furthermore, research has also highlighted the importance of informal communication or social networks, such as well-connected individuals, subgroups, close colleagues and friends, during change initiatives.[21]

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[21] Kitchen, P, J. & Daly. F. (2002). Internal communication during change management. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 15*(2), 169-83.

And make sure you keep up your communications efforts right to the end of the project—don't let them tail off and disappear. Thinking about how often you will deliver each message using each type of medium will help you sustain those efforts.

Let's now take a closer look at the different types of communication media, their advantages and their disadvantages.

Print Media

Print media can be effective for conveying routine information or when large numbers of people must be reached quickly and at the same time. They can also be used effectively when formal communication is appropriate, when people are not receiving the message for the first time and when a record of the information is needed. But they don't promote two-way communication, so it's hard to convey empathy. It can be time-consuming to prepare them as well, and so sometimes they can be distributed too late to be effective. Be aware that without two-way dialogue, people may filter the message through their own biases, which means you cannot be sure whether the message received is the same as the message intended. Backing up these cautions is a 2004 study that showed employees prefer face-to-face communication in focus groups, teams or staff meetings over memos, bulletins on notice boards, staff newsletters, individual emails and telephone calls.[22]

Table 1: Print media examples and their advantages and disadvantages when used to communicate change

Print media examples	Advantages	Disadvantages
Newsletters Information kits FAQ or fact sheets Reports Business unit publication Memos Surveys Learning maps Storyboards Newsflashes	• High portability • Ease of mass distribution • Relatively low cost • Low technology production • Supports and reinforces face-to-face communication	• Preparation can be time-consuming • Potential lack of timeliness • Empathy not conveyed • One-way communication • Must use language all can understand • Potential for filtering or screening

Face-to-Face Communications

Face-to-face communications are most powerful if used right, although many organizations minimize their use because of the effort involved. Face-to-face communications allow you to get messages out in a more timely fashion, and you can build in opportunities for two-way communication, which helps convey empathy. When the message is complex, which is the case in most change initiatives, face-to-face communications enable you to obtain important feedback. They also allow you to tailor the messages to the audience much better than other media.

There are disadvantages, however. It's difficult to control a face-to-face meeting; you never know what employees will say or ask. So you'll have to prepare and coach whoever is talking with them. Also, it's not

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[22] Goodman, J., & Truss, C. (2004). The medium and the message: Communicating effectively during a major change initiative. *Journal of Change Management*, *4*(3), 217-228.

always possible to get employees to attend the important meetings, and even when they do, they often filter and screen the messages in ways you won't anticipate.

Some experts believe that the essence of change is communication; that is, that communication produces change rather than merely serving as one tool in its implementation.[23] Shel Holtz goes so far as to suggest that "any communication that is not face-to-face is a corruption of face-to-face communication," because people are not able to interpret the nonverbal features of the message, such as body language and voice tone.[24] Holtz also argues that despite the superiority of face-to-face communication, it has fallen into disuse because of the proliferation of online communication tools: "It is easier to send everybody an e-mail message than to convene a group meeting. It is less confrontational to chastise a colleague from the isolation of a keyboard than it is to articulate a problem with him or her face-to-face."[25]

Table 2: Face-to-face media examples and their advantages and disadvantages when used to communicate change

Face-to-face examples	Advantages	Disadvantages
Open panels Forums Brown bags Video conferencing Meetings of all types: · Town halls · Staff · Departmental	• Timely • Empathy can be conveyed • Allow for two-way dialogue • Ease of access for employees • Possible to assess understanding, response, issues and concerns • Language can be tailored to audience	• Limited portability • Onus on employee to participate • Can be difficult to control • High potential for filtering, screening • Key communicators may require coaching and skills in handling conflict

Electronic Media

Electronic media can be fast and timely, and organizations can get messages out to everyone quickly using this method. They can also be enhanced by adding visual spice. However, electronic media don't usually allow for much dialogue, and it's hard to convey empathy with email. If you're using video, that will add richness but will require scripting, rehearsing and adopting new technologies.

Beware of relying heavily on email. Studies have shown that most people lie at least once during a ten-minute conversation—and new research reveals that when communication takes place by computer, the incidence of deception rises. In an experiment involving fifteen-minute conversations between 110 pairs of undergraduate students, Mattitiyahu Zimbler and Robert Feldman found that people conversing by email told five times as many lies as people speaking face-to-face.[26] The relative impersonality of email decreases self-restraint, the researchers say; it also affects the kinds of deceptions, with emailed lies typically being more self-serving than

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[23] Ford, J.,& Ford, L. (1995). The role of conversations in producing intentional change in organizations. *Academy of Management Review, 20*(3), 541-570.

[24] Holtz, S. (2004). *Corporate conversations: A guide to crafting effective and appropriate internal communications* (p. 68). New York, NY: AMACOM.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Zimbler, M., & Feldman, R. (2011). Liar, liar, hard drive on fire: How media context affects lying behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 41*(10), 2492–2507.

those told in person. Savvy employees and other stakeholders may well discount email communications in light of these findings.

Table 3: Electronic media examples and their advantages and disadvantages when used to communicate change

Electronic media examples	Advantages	Disadvantages
Intranet Email Voicemail, Podcasts Distributed video, Internal TV Broadcasts Video conferencing Internet forum	• Rapid, broad reach • Low potential for filtering or screening • Some dialogue possible • Suitable for repetitive delivery • Permits sharing by end users • Can be visually exciting	• Primarily one-way • Limited potential for conveying empathy • Audio requires scripting and rehearsal • Video requires significant time and cost to produce • Limited portability of messages for future reference • Requires changes in technology to support distribution of some media

Social Media

Social media can be fast, timely and up-to-date with the latest information. They can also allow your employees to contribute their opinions, diffuse the rumour mill, allow you to take the pulse of the organization, and promote dialogue across all levels instead of just up and down the hierarchy. But social media can be time-consuming to manage, and you will need expertise and resources to use them effectively. As well, protecting proprietary information has been a concern at many organizations that use social media. You will have to make sure that you don't let employees post negative and hurtful messages about others. And be careful, too, about the potential for wasted time when using social media; many organizations have found that employee productivity can go down when they spend too much time on social media.

Table 4: Social media examples and their advantages and disadvantages when used to communicate change

Social media examples	Advantages	Disadvantages
Intranet Blogs Micro-blogging Podcasts Wikis Facebook	• Fast, timely, up-to-date • Can take the pulse of employees • Promotes dialogue across levels • Allow employees to contribute their own ideas • Can diffuse the rumour mill • Adding voice can humanize the message	• Can lower productivity • Negative messages may harm relationships • Time-consuming • Need expertise and resources • Must protect proprietary information • Requires changes in technology to support distribution of some media

Obviously, there are many communications media choices to be made, and those choices can seem daunting. The following case study may help you think through these issues.

Case Study: Using Communications Media at Royal Bank of Canada[27]

Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) recently implemented a major restructuring known as the "Client First Initiative." The strategy resulted in a new management structure, an aggressive plan to grow revenues, and an increased focus on a more collaborative and accountable culture to put the customer first. In such a large change initiative, the communication strategy was of vital importance. David Moorcroft, then senior vice-president of corporate communications, told what he and his team did to communicate this major change.

In advance of the communications strategy, ten thousand employees (out of a worldwide base of seventy thousand) were invited to participate in a survey. Key findings:

- 91 percent said online communication was their primary source of information.
- 88 percent said they wanted more information that impacted their clients.
- 79 percent said they wanted more information about corporate strategies and goals and how it connected to their jobs.
- 33 percent said they wanted better context and understanding of how events and information affect them as employees.
- In addition, the expensive feature magazine for employees failed to rank in the top five sources of information valued by employees.

After the above information was gathered, the company set four objectives to guide its communications plan:

1. Help employees develop a better understanding of how their roles relate to the organization's vision, strategies and goals.
2. Create a more dynamic and interactive communication environment that involves employees in thinking about and understanding how they can influence business results.
3. Ensure employees are getting the information they need to help frame and guide their day-to-day decisions.
4. Promote and recognize the desired behaviors and outcomes in the communication plan.

The company eliminated the flagship employee magazine and developed a number of vehicles in its place, including a state-of the-art online newsletter site, to which employee volunteers contributed story ideas and suggestions on a regular basis. Also taking the place of the employee magazine:

- "FYI," an online site that provided employees with one-stop shopping for information about the company's history, culture, policies, issues, organization and more.
- "Take 5," a weekly showcase for interesting or new facts about a business or function that employees could learn about in only five minutes.
- "New and Notable," a section of the landing page that provided breaking news and important information about the organization on a global basis.

Online communications were balanced with print and face-to-face opportunities. The flagship employee magazine was replaced with a print piece, sent to all employees twice a year, which focused on storytelling.

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[27] Excerpted from: Moorcroft, D. (2006). Realizing RBC's new vision for employee communication. *Strategic Communication Management. 10*(6).

The CEO's quarterly conference call with employees was revamped to make it more useful and engaging. Employees were able to connect with the CEO every financial quarter by telephone or webcast, submit questions orally or in writing, follow the supporting slides on paper or over the internet, rate the usefulness of the call electronically, and view a transcript or listen to a replay of the call for up to a month. Expanding the ways employees could access the call, most notably by webcast, created a significant increase in participation, questions and satisfaction ratings overall.

The company also created a process to help employees build a stronger line of sight between their day-to-day efforts and the organizational goals. This process was called the "RBC Leader Led Dialogues," and it involved a series of cascading meetings in which managers and their direct reports discussed the relationship between their personal contribution, their unit's priorities, the goals of their business or function, and the overall vision of RBC. Prior to engaging in the Leader Led Dialogues, one business line's employees rated their understanding of business strategy and its connection to their work as 5.9 out of a possible 10 points. After the dialogues, they rated their understanding at 8.2 out of 10—a significant improvement with positive bottom line implications.

Question 6: Who should communicate with each stakeholder group, and how can you ensure they communicate consistently and effectively?

Part of the communications plan is deciding who should be responsible for communicating with each stakeholder group. Credible messengers are needed to deliver messages that will be believed. Think of who has credibility with each group, and ensure that your messenger communicates effectively. Make sure that messengers know what they can and cannot say, coach them if necessary and provide materials, details, resources, tools and talking points as needed.

In this chapter, we deal mainly with the communications roles played by senior leaders and first-line supervisors because the research suggests that these change messengers are the most important. For example, James Allen and his associates examined the impact that different sources of communication play on employees' change-related uncertainty in a large government department.[28] They found that direct supervisors were the preferred sources of implementation-related and job-relevant information during change, while senior managers were preferred for delivering more strategic information. Furthermore, the results indicated that trust influences which sources employees seek information from and how they appraise the information they receive.

While the organization's senior leaders should communicate the big picture, supervisors have an even more important communication role to play. Much research (for example, Holt and associates[29] and Larkin & Larkin[30]) shows that managers and supervisors may have more impact on shaping employees' reactions to a transition than senior executives. As suggested by Larkin & Larkin,[31] for any type of change, the first information about it should be communicated to the employees from the person with whom they are closest, their supervisors. Unfortunately, because change communications are often sparse and guarded, supervisors are often not adequately informed, and so cannot play as positive a role in the change as would otherwise be

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[28] Allen, J., Jimmieson, N., Bordia, P., & Irmer, B. (2007). Uncertainty during organizational change: Managing perceptions through communication. *Journal of Change Management, 7*(2), 187-210.

[29] Holt, D. T., Self, D. R., Thal, A. E. Jr., & Lo, S. W. (2003). Facilitating organizational change: A test of leadership strategies. *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal, 24*(5), 262-272.

[30] Larkin, T., & Larkin, S. (1996). Reaching and changing frontline employees. *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, 95-104.

[31] Ibid.

the case. As Patricia Witherspoon and Kathy Wohlert reported, change information is often treated as a scarce resource to be guarded rather than shared, and so communications may freeze at the middle level before reaching front line supervisors.[32]

Ironically, employees turn to their supervisors for answers to the most important questions about the change: "What does this have to do with me?" "How does it affect the work I do?" "Why should I care?" "What's in it for me and this department if we take the trouble to try and implement this change?" "What do you think of this change?" The fact that supervisors represent the front lines of communication means that they should also be the focus of significant communication efforts. They need the resources, information, tools and training to ensure they're able to translate messages, answer questions, and build employee trust and commitment. That is no easy task! Some organizations prepare briefing notes for managers and supervisors to make sure they're not out to sea when employees ask questions. The following case study shows how one organization prepared messengers to deliver the right change messages effectively.

Case Study: Preparing a Change Information Toolkit[33]

An under-resourced communication team at the Provincial Health Services Authority of British Columbia shifted communications responsibility from themselves to organizational managers by developing a communications toolkit to guide their efforts. Before designing it, the team conducted in-depth research through interviews and an online survey, and they identified where the managers needed help with communication. Some of their concerns included managing the volume of information, passing on inaccurate or incomplete information, packaging information in a way that was relevant, communicating wrong or too much information, and not having enough time to "absorb and turn around information."

This investigation confirmed that the toolkit should include: checklists, project and change summaries, a stakeholder identification process, key message development, and sample communication plans. The majority also wanted some training on how to use the toolkit. In addition, most wanted it available in electronic format, but 30 percent wanted a print version as well. Focus groups were used to review the draft materials to confirm their usefulness. From these efforts, ten templates were designed to walk managers through communication planning, delivery, follow-up and measurement for each initiative. This process was deemed an unqualified success by both the communications team and the organizational leaders.

Question 7: How will the effectiveness of the communications be assessed and improved?

It is important to revisit your communications plan throughout the change initiative and get feedback about whether or not your communications are having the desired effect. Don't wait until the end, when it's too late. Get the feedback in a variety of ways, such as through focus groups, surveys and communications liaisons, and then use the feedback to improve the communications plan.

Unfortunately, management's key messages often don't work towards achieving the goals they're striving to reach—or management is simply unaware of some of the messages that really need to be communicated.[34] To avoid these pitfalls, find out how stakeholders react to the change and the organization's current state, as well

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[32] Witherspoon, P. D., & Wohlert, K. L. (1996). An approach to developing communication strategies for enhancing organizational diversity. *The Journal of Business Communication, 33*(4), 375-387.

[33] Dunn-Roy, D. (2006). Shifting the role of communicator to leaders and managers at PHSA. *Strategic Communication Management, 11*(1), 30.

[34] Sinickas, A. (2009). Measuring the right change issues. *Strategic Communication Management, 13*(5), 11.

as what it would take for them to make the required changes in their own behaviour. This information will help you identify the key messages that employees need to buy into to adopt the change initiative. And further feedback will help you track the uptake of those messages once they have been disseminated.

Summary

In summary, effective communications are essential to change success, and change leaders need to think through a comprehensive communications strategy before implementation begins. If they lack communications expertise, then they would be well advised to put together a communications committee, perhaps with a hired consultant to help. By answering the seven key questions in detail, change leaders will put themselves on track to a successful change communications plan.

Case Study: Harold Kenny and the Transformation of Moncton Shops[35]

In the following case study, we examine how Harold Kenny, the General Manager of the Canada Lands Company used his formidable communications skills to lead an award-winning remediation project which transformed a contaminated piece of land in downtown Moncton New Brunswick into a vibrant and useful community neighbourhood.

The Challenge

The remediation of contaminated land is a challenging change initiative that often creates conflict and political controversy. Such was the case of the former Canadian National Railway (CNR) site, known to Moncton city residents as the "Moncton Shops." This site, the original repair site for CNR in Atlantic Canada for 80 years, had been closed since the early 1980s. Surrounded by a barbed-wire topped fence and adorned with "No Trespassing" signs, it was both an eyesore and constant worry to the local citizens. During the privatization of CNR, the federal government took over ownership and responsibility for this property, and the Canada Lands Corporation (CLC), a self-financing federal crown corporation, was created to purchase and remediate this and other properties formally owned by government departments and agencies.

Harold Kenny, the newly appointed General Manager Atlantic Region for the CLC, was given the task of transforming this site into a piece of property valued by its community and its owners and used for recreational, commercial and residential developments. At the project's inception, many believed that the land would never be safe again due to the cumulative contamination. A press release identified the most significant environmental issues, which included:

1. Perchloroethylene (degreasing solvent used in the dry-cleaning process) used to clean the diesel locomotives before being repaired, which had been discharged into the groundwater.
2. Metal (copper, lead, zinc and iron) contamination of soils concentrated in southeast corner of property. This is where the gondola cars used by Brunswick Mines to transport ore concentrate were cleaned prior to receiving maintenance.
3. Foundry sand containing various metals including brass were found in the western sector soils
4. Construction and operations debris such as scrap metal from rail cars, bridge building timbers and metal rods and other rail related solid waste were found in the western sector.

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[35] This case study was written from materials and interviews provided by Mr. Harold Kenny, as well as information from Barker Scott, B. & Sutcliffe, C. (2004). *Moncton Shops turn Green.* Kingston, ON: IRC Press.

5. Building debris residue from the demolition of the various shop buildings were found buried in the Eastern sector.
6. Petroleum hydrocarbon contamination was found mainly along the rail network servicing the shops and rail equipment storage before and after maintenance.

It was projected that remediation would cost between $60 and $75 million and require at least ten years to complete. But in reality the project was completed for $14 million, and all environmental remediation was finished in only four years. The credit goes to the Canada Lands Company senior executive, particularly Roman Winnicki VP, Harold Kenny GM, and his team. Let's find out how Harold used his formidable powers of leadership and communication in the transformation of Moncton Shops into an award-winning Greenfield community.

Harold planned for a year in advance how to tackle this mammoth challenge. The initial task was to organize the project and figure out the best ways to manage and communicate problems regarding the clean-up. He started by finding out what the ordinary people of Moncton were thinking about the Moncton Shops site. Surmising that the general population might believe the property badly contaminated with dangerous chemicals, he hired a facilitator who organized a focus group of community members. Questions included: What perceptions did they have of the property? Whose information would they trust? Did they blame anyone for the property's contamination? This information would be critical to creating a stakeholder communication plan that would have impact and gain stakeholders' trust.

Recognizing that time was of the essence, Harold needed to initiate multiple steps all at once. He explained: "Parallel processing; this was extremely critical, to get all the key stakeholders involved at the same time, in the same place. A huge part of the process was actually implementing the remedial clean-up while all of the stakeholder relations were going on." Three parallel processes were important to manage: an environmental process, a municipal zoning approval process, and the process to communicate to, and involve the public. In reality, all three of these processes would involve the public. Rezoning of the land would take nine months and require public consultation by law. While the pathway through the zoning process was well understood, the environmental remediation process would have to be created from scratch. This process needed to include the identification of the contaminants, a remediation plan to return the site to an acceptable standard based on its projected uses and an environmental management plan to deal with all of the issues raised. The entire remediation process would have to be documented and submitted in a plan to the Ministry of Environment.

Harold gathered his team right from the outset. Don MacCallum, P. Eng. was to be the environmental site engineer and as such he was the team leader of Loran Speiran (site engineering technician) and Beverly Golding (CLC office manager). Dr. Scott McKnight and Dr. Torgny Vigerstad, both accredited university professors and scientists with OCL Group Environmental Management Consultants, were contracted to become the lead environmental scientists. Dr. Jacques Allard, a mathematics professor at the University of Moncton with a specialty in statistics, was retained to keep track of and report on the laboratory soil and groundwater test results. In addition, CLC contracted with a maritime based environment company, Jacques Whitford Environment Limited, led by Robert Smith, P. Eng. All of the above were on contract except for Don, Loren, and Beverly. To round out the team Julia Bray (formerly Chadwick), a communications specialist with Info-Plexus, was contracted to provide the necessary project communications.

After this core team of engineers, scientists and communication professionals was contracted, an Environmental Management Advisory Team (EMAT) was established, and approved by the CLC executive and Board of Directors. Under Harold's guidance, the team was determined that they would solve the Moncton Shops contamination issues. The team started by dividing the site into twelve property development

units. For each, a remediation plan would be prepared and submitted to the regulatory authorities so that they could work their way across the site systematically. A geographic information system (GIS) contractor, Dan Harper, was hired to establish a GIS grid over the entire site so that the test results for all twelve property development units could be entered into a database.

The GIS turned out to be a very significant tool. For example, it helped the team discover a way to save over $50 million in project costs. Here's how. A part of the Moncton Shops site had been used to wash rail cars from Brunswick Mines during regular maintenance. Lead, copper, zinc and iron ore from this washing seeped into the soil. Originally the suggestion had been to transport this contaminated soil 1,662 km, 17.5 hours to Sudbury, Ontario for storage in a containment cell. This would have cost $33 million ($275.00 per ton x 120,000 tons) plus another $18 million in transportation, (4000 truckloads x $4500.00 per trip) for a grand total of $50 million plus. But after comprehensive consultation with stakeholders, in particular the Provincial Department of the Environment and the Department of Natural Resources, the EMAT worked with Brunswick Mines to show stakeholders that this soil, although contaminated with metals, could be considered ore concentrate. The DOE and DNR agreed to reclassify the 120,000 tons of soil to ore inventory that could be transported back to Brunswick Mines for processing. Trucking the soil to the mines cost CLC $2.5 million a saving of $50 million. Brunswick Mines also benefitted two-fold: first by obtaining this ore at minimal costs and second because the mine could use the processed soil to secure their tailing pond as required by the Department of Natural Resources. So it became a win-win scenario for CLC and Brunswick Mines. Now let's turn our attention to Harold's communications plan.

Harold's communications plan answered all seven of our recommended questions:

1. What roles and responsibilities will people have in the communications plan?

As champion of the project and senior leader of CLC Atlantic Region, Harold served as a visible spokesperson and role model for the project. The community needed to see a leader who was committed and accountable for the project and who could hold others accountable. He communicated personally through various community associations; made himself available to respond to inquiries, concerns and complaints; and soon became a frequently requested speaker at many community groups, including the real estate association, ratepayers association, local developers, Chamber of Commerce, and City council. His goal at these events was to educate people on the more complex details of the project. He also encouraged EMAT project members to do as many presentations as possible and to be available to address technical inquiries made by members of the community, professional groups, university and community colleges. Emphasis was always to keep the process transparent and consistent. Informal communications occurred throughout continual open houses on the site, town hall meetings, community schools, Tim Horton's coffee shops, local pubs, the Royal Canadian Legions, and so forth.

The other chief communicator was the site manager, Don MacCallum, who wrote and distributed the "Site Manager's Report" every Monday morning. His report was posted it on the CLC website, and hard copies were mailed to selected stakeholders who might not have had access to the internet. Among other things, it outlined the week's progress, including site health and safety, volume of soils moved off site, test results, contaminants identified and actions taken to remediate, site visitors and their queries, etc. His detailed report also included many weekly site pictures to reach people who didn't have a lot of time for reading reports. Anyone could look at the website and find out what had taken place on at the site the previous week and what the upcoming work would be.

As mentioned earlier, Harold recruited a communications professional, Julia Chadwick, owner of "Info Plexus" to help create a complete communications plan, including setting up a website. This plan was based on reaching out to citizens, groups and associations to inform education and seek feedback. Armed with knowledge from focus groups about stakeholder interests and needs, Julia developed and implemented a multi-channel public outreach, education and consultation program and prepared a final report. Other parts of the communications strategy included: arranging site visits for a variety of stakeholder and interest groups, planning and preparing materials for public open houses and town hall meetings, preparation of advertising, newsletter, factsheets and reports on technical issues. Julia also reviewed all French translations, was a key member of EMAT and reported directly to the General Managers on all communications matters.

Julia developed script and participated in post-production of two very important bilingual videos entitled "Brownfield to Greenfield - Closing the Loop". Worthy of note was their ability to illustrate and highlight all the facets of the project in detail. All details were explained by members of EMAT and other participants of the project. The first video was information for the initial steps taken on the project. The second video was about the complete operations and ongoing activities on the site. The video was formatted in the various world video formats and distributed globally to interested parties.

2. What guidelines should you put in place, and what objective is each communication intended to achieve?

Early on, Harold realized the need for developing and holding to positive communications principles—principles designed to cultivate trust and a comprehensive understanding of the remediation process. Negativity regarding the state of the site was not to be tolerated, not even in jest. The underlying message was there was that nothing on the site that couldn't be resolved.

"When people have complete, clear and quality information, they make good decisions," he says. "They ask better questions and reach a level of understanding that leads to acceptance of the project and methods used."

The following communications principles guided the project:

- **Trust:** We need to create trust with the Department of Environment, City Councils, CLC senior management, the media and especially with the citizens of Moncton.
- **Integrity:** The team steadfastly adhere to high moral principles and professional standards. We need to behave with integrity; do what we say we would, show tangible results and use common sense.
- **Confidence:** By involving the right technical professionals and decision makers, we can instill confidence that we are proceeding in a healthy, safe and effective way.
- **Commitment:** We need to model commitment to this project. We will show the building blocks for what we are learning along the way and how it is influencing decisions. We will have a successful and completed safe property for the use of the citizens of Moncton.
- **Brand:** Our branding from "Brownfield to Greenfield" will provide a visual map of our progress. As the project progresses and milestones are met, all communication vehicles from presentations to pamphlets will become greener.
- **Objectives:** Removal of the barbwire-topped fence surrounding the property more than 10 years and "No Trespassing" signs to prove to the people of Moncton that we are serious.

These communications principles imposed discipline on the communications efforts and suggested the need to involve trusted community experts and professionals who played important roles as decision makers, community representatives and spokespersons. Open access to comprehensive information was also necessary to uphold the principles of integrity and trust. Harold and his team ensured that the information was consistent and constantly available, conveyed in plain language and delivered in all available communications channels.

3. Which stakeholders have an interest in this change? What are their issues? How much communication is necessary for each stakeholder group?

Harold identified the key stakeholders as the citizens of Moncton, local business groups, City politicians, provincial government, and youth of the community who inherited the problem, former workers of the Moncton shops, media, and many others. In particular the New Brunswick Department of Environment and the CLC's board of directors and senior managers were extremely important stakeholders.

While all stakeholders had a vested interest in supporting the project and ensuring its success, most were skeptical that the project was possible due to its scope and complexity. Focus groups were used to discover stakeholder and citizen concerns and fears. Residents and local politicians were not convinced that the property could be remediated for community use. Environmentalists believed that all of the dirt needed to be removed and trucked away, and they did not see this as being feasible or cost-effective. Community builders and real estate developers didn't believe that they would be able to safely build homes on the property. And business people were concerned that if the project was a resounding success by creating a new "hub" in downtown Moncton, their current businesses might be devalued and they might not be able to compete with the proposed development.

The focus group conversations with stakeholder groups also produced intelligence to help communicate effectively with each. Trained professionals organized the focus groups, leaving Harold free to observe behind a two-way glass. What he learned was invaluable. In essence, people revealed that they did not trust politicians, especially those from outside of Moncton. They preferred to hear information directly from scientists or university professors (whose objectivity and integrity they respected), even better if the messenger was a woman. Harold also found out that participants had no idea what was wrong with the property (not surprising because nobody had spoken to them about it for 10 years), but that they were scared because they feared their children would be adversely affected by it. The focus groups also uncovered that people wanted input on how the land would be used and on any proposed development. They wanted first-hand information to allay their fears about safety. Finally, Harold noted a strong undercurrent of guilt; a large percentage of the population had earned their living from the Moncton Shops site and felt responsible for creating the contamination.

Having gathered this intelligence, the project team discussed how to convert these stakeholders into believers that the site could be cleaned up. Dr. Scott McKnight (chemistry) and Dr. Torgny Vigerstad, (human toxicology and risk assessment) led environmental scientists for the project and suggested giving a community roundtable a try. First introduced by Environment Canada to vet and explore solutions for environmental issues, the roundtable's purpose was to make recommendations, not decisions. While untried in this setting, Harold thought it could serve as a model of consensus building, and given good facilitators, it could be the effective vehicle to communicate to a broad segment of the stakeholder community. "What's important about this new roundtable, and what will make it a critical contributor to the project, is the fact that it is from the community and will function for the community."

The roundtable was made up of ten representative stakeholders and two co-chairs, Dr. Louis LaPierre, a professor from the University of Moncton and Aldea Landry, a well-known community development consultant. It was no accident that these two were approached to act as co-chairs. The focus groups had revealed they would likely be trusted: both were bilingual Acadians and highly respected community leaders. LaPierre worked with Environment Canada's first roundtable on the "Environment and the Economy" and frequently acted as advisor to governments on the environment. Landry was a woman, a former minister of the provincial cabinet who had served as deputy premier. Landry's ability to facilitate groups and her Acadian background complemented Louis's academic credibility and experience.

While the CLC established the roundtable, they were careful to remain at an arms-length from the group so that the stakeholders would trust both the process and its autonomy from political influence. Thus, LaPierre and Landry were given full responsibility for selecting the volunteer members. Together the ten members represented the entire community. Meeting bi-weekly over four months, the members included a high school teacher, a student in environmental studies, a real estate developer, two Moncton residents, a representative of the downtown business association, two local business people, two former CNR employees and a representative of the Midtown Resident's Association. Each member was an unpaid volunteer, including the two co-chairs, although the CLC paid for everything related to the group's activities. McKnight and Vigerstad attended every meeting, gave project updates and answered questions from the members.

The roundtable was an important bridge between the citizens of Moncton and the technical experts on the project. They translated complex scientific data to help ordinary citizens understand and participate in the project. But the communication was also two-way. As citizens brought up issues, the roundtable was expected to investigate and make recommendations for resolving them. Therefore, the roundtable was given full access to CLC staff, City staff, the regional planning commission and the New Brunswick Department of Environment. A good example of this two-way communication happened when citizens raised questions about oil levels in a pond that flowed into the Petticodiac River. In response, the team dug test pits to the source depth to discover that there was very little contaminant and the source was easily cleaned up to the satisfaction of the regional authority. EMAT Chair Don MacCallum commented: "When deciding critical issues, we always made sure to go back to include and test the concerns of the roundtable." In the end, the roundtable made nineteen recommendations that were included in the remediation plan, and the CLC received a unanimous sign-off from all community roundtable members on the plan.

How did Harold feel when he empowered the roundtable to begin its mission? It went something like this: "This is like when my son, who turned sixteen the day after I bought a brand new Oldsmobile. The next day, my son came to me for the keys to the new car to go downtown, and I handed them over and hoped for the best. When he returned, I took the keys and checked the car and all was fine." Harold hoped that like his son, the Roundtable would do its job well, without bumps, dents and bruises.

Although a relatively risky approach, the roundtable facilitated transparency in the process and offered stakeholders an opportunity to become intimately involved. The EMAT also created opportunities for community involvement beyond the roundtable. For example, a series of four town hall meetings enabled Moncton citizens to question experts involved in the remediation process. At the end of each town hall meeting, citizens were surveyed to determine what other information they wanted. Other open public meetings were held and during the day, bus tours were made available of the Moncton Shops land so that all citizens could see first-hand what was happening on the property.

4. How will you create effective messages tailored to the needs and interests of each stakeholder group? What are the contents of effective change messages?

"You can't go wrong with a proper budget and plenty of information," says Harold. "Once you get it going, keep up the momentum. If you think communication and public participation programs are expensive, try doing a project like the Moncton Shops without a proper budget."

His favorite phrase when asked for information was "you can fill your back pack," and he made sure people had more than enough. Everyone was encouraged to visit the CLC offices, and when there could have full access to all reports. Very few people actually took advantage of this opportunity with the exception of an ace reporter who, having conducted his own research, moved from being a skeptic to an enthusiastic supporter. In fact, the reporter ended up writing a glowing article about the project.

As suggested above, the content of change messages should focus on the "why," "what" and "how" of a change initiative, plus it should reduce anxiety by explaining how stakeholder concerns will be addressed. Also, rational arguments should be supplemented by emotional appeals. A video about the project will serve as an example of how the team structured its messages and incorporated important content. Approximately five hundred copies of this video were distributed to various community groups and public libraries. The video was also played on televisions in the local pub, schools, community centres and so forth. So it was important to make it effective. Drawing upon the intelligence from the focus groups, the video incorporated narration by a woman; lots of pictures, graphs and charts; and professors and scientists to establish trust and credibility.

The Why: The video clearly showed why the site needed to be remediated. Ugly pictures and movies of the contaminated site, sound bites of citizens' questions, and scenes of young people talking about their environmental concerns and their hopes for future employment once the site supported business again, demonstrated why the status quo was not acceptable. The What: The video also gave a vision of the remediated site including a business park, a residential area and a recreation area with football, soccer and baseball fields. Claudette Bradshaw, the local MP, was shown talking about how the remediated site would ensure the safety of youth and the city.

By far, however, the video paid the most attention to the "How" of the project, simultaneously addressing the community's concerns as revealed in the focus groups. Environmental consultants McKnight and Vigerstad and professor LaPierre described the surveys and the findings of the scientific examination of the site, and how each source of contamination was being addressed, such as trucking away vast amounts of soil. They described the extraordinary efforts taken to clean even small pockets of contamination. The Geographic Information System (GIS) was used to help analyze every square meter of the site and demonstrated that a thorough job was being done and that everything was being documented for all to examine and judge. This part of the video went into great detail describing every last source of contamination and how it was being handled to ensure the highest level of safety for the community and its inhabitants. Near the end of the video, Aldea Landry and others described the high level of community communication and consultation that would serve as a cornerstone of the project. These consultations went a long way to show that the citizens' concerns would be taken care of.

The video used the principles of neuro-linguistic programming, a set of "techniques or strategies for enhancing communication and personal influence," which have been based on the study of human language patterns.[36] Harold used his knowledge of these techniques to incorporate appeals to:

- **Visuals:** The video used lots of pictures, captions, graphs, etc.
- **Auditories:** It used great answers to questions from the focus groups, included conversations and solid verbal answers.
- **Kinesthetics**: It used appeals to personal feelings and sensations, such as shots of trucks taking away contaminated soil.

5. What are the best media to use for each communication and each stakeholder?

The communications plan tapped into every medium available. The EMAT detailed its communications plan in a binder that grew to be several inches thick. The first step taken in reaching out to stakeholders was to create the video described above to build awareness and sensitize the community.

The project team also made sure members of the press had whatever information they needed. In addition, flyers were sent out every quarter during the site remediation to the residents physically closest to the site. During the project, the stakeholders were informed through the website, printed reports, a telephone hotline, flyers, the video, other media such as TV and radio, face-to-face activities such as roundtable meetings, open houses and town hall sessions.

Face-to-face meetings played an important role throughout the project. The roundtable hosted a series of open houses to provide community members with information on accomplishments to date, key findings and next steps. Scientists were present to answer specific technical questions. Bus tours of the site were offered, and key technical information was displayed in simple yet effective posters showing, in some cases, aerial photographs of work in progress. As the project progressed, the scientists were able to show an actual mapping of the type and location of contaminants via the use of a Geographic Information System (GIS). The GIS was a critical tool in helping people track how the cleanup was progressing. The GIS was also invaluable for budget and projection presentations to CLC senior executives who had to approve the project expenditures. Data sheets with key facts were available, and feedback sheets were collected to assess the level of understanding and support of the progress to date. Several of the open houses were followed by town hall meetings to give stakeholders an opportunity to ask important questions and publicly offer opinions. These meetings were extremely effective in showing all stakeholders that the CLC and EMAT were working in their best interests.

Another communication vehicle used was the weekly site manager's report. The report was distributed to City officials, the province, CLC senior management, EMAT, and the roundtable, and it was also available to the public via the website. Described as the "National Geographic" of reports, it was filled with pictures and graphs to appeal to people who needed the information but did not have the time to sift through a technical manifesto each week. As MacCallum recalled, they knew the report was useful when they slipped on getting it out on time one week. The following morning they received calls asking for it.

Throughout the project, Harold and his team used various vehicles to get the messages out and to keep people informed and educated. Wherever possible, the vehicles had an audio, visual and emotional component so that they would appeal to and match the preferred learning styles of his audience. Moreover, all written

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[36] Neuro-linguistic programming. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved April 9, 2015, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neuro-linguistic_programming

communications used a friendly, non-technical tone, as if they were "speaking to a neighbour across the street." Knowing that Moncton Shops was the hot topic for the citizens of Moncton, communications consultant Julia Chadwick spent much time thinking about how to shape the information so that people could refer to it and discuss it in a meaningful way whether they were at the local Tim Horton's, the schools, the Legion, or the neighbourhood tavern.

Harold and his team were masterful at matching the communication mechanisms with the complexity of the messaging. They made sure that all messages were conveyed by the right people (respected technical experts) in the right forums (face-to-face delivery backed up by written documentation) and via vehicles that appealed to the audience. Following the principals of neuro-linguistic programming, Harold ensured each important message contained appeals to visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners, thereby maximizing effective message reception.

In summary, the following communications media and methods were used:

- Site visits
- Town hall meetings
- Video
- Open houses
- Regular presentations and reports to senior CLC management
- Site manager's weekly report to the City, province, senior CLC management and the roundtable (also available to the public on the project website)
- Fact sheets sent out to the project mailing list and distributed at public events
- Newsletter distributed every two to three months to five thousand households and mailed to 250 principal stakeholders
- For transparency, the original technical contaminant analysis was sent from the independent lab directly to the Department of Environment and all the scientists involved in the project
- Media tours and formal meetings, press releases
- "Student Days" for Dalhousie University School of Architecture and the New Brunswick Community College on the topics of architecture, urban planning, sustainable development, and environmental science and engineering
- "Sustainable City Conference" held in May 1997. During the conference more than twenty-five presentations were given and additional meetings were held afterwards with twelve local community groups. Upwards of four hundred people participated in the sessions.

6. Who should communicate with each stakeholder group, and how can you ensure they communicate consistently and effectively?

In this case, the main change messenger included Harold Kenny, who communicated with all of the relevant stakeholders at one time or other. He was a skilled communicator, but even so, he put a lot of thought into each message. Don MacCallum was responsible for the weekly written reports to the community and presentations with a variety of stakeholder groups, while Julia Chadwick designed the overall communications strategy. Several others contributed as well, including Louis LaPierre and Aldea Landry, who co-chaired the roundtable, and media experts, who helped create the video and other materials. Site manager Don MacCallum held many meetings to communicate and enforce a rigorous site health and safety program. As a result there were no accidents or loss of time, not even a broken finger nail. Harold assembled a group of communicators who were experts in their fields and who needed minimal coaching or supervision. He made sure they understood their

roles as communicators in the change initiative and emphasized that using common sense was a paramount consideration before communicating anything.

As well, Harold considered the contractors, sub-contractors and their workers stakeholders and informal communicators. They participated directly in site activities and were encouraged to share them with friends and families. Many of them became great ambassadors for the project, along with local taxi drivers and police who were served free coffee and doughnuts on occasion.

7. How will the effectiveness of the communications be assessed and improved?

Public opinion tracking began early in the project with the focus groups and continued via three formal surveys and four hundred telephone surveys. The telephone surveys confirmed the high level of awareness of the project, support for the cleanup and that the newspaper was the main source of information for the community.

Successes and Outcomes

"It seemed like all of a sudden we arrived at a point where all of the different stakeholders had a vested interest in the positive end result," Harold reported.

The Moncton Shops Brownfield initiative was responsible for transforming a 265 acre contaminated property into a Crown Jewel of eastern Canada. Today, the site is home to:

- The CN Sportplex (121 acres), which includes 16 professional quality softball, baseball, football, and soccer fields, a two-ice surface skating and hockey arena.
- The Emmerson Business and Technology Park (60 acres), a technology park consisting of two 55,000 square-foot buildings and another under construction. There are plans to build another eight buildings as market demands grows that will provide for thousands of new full time jobs.
- Franklin Yard (61 acres), a proposed site for a residential development.
- The former DND-CFB Moncton 23 acre site now has two new apartment buildings, a new YMCA facility, and a Veterans Special Care Facility, with plans for a community shopping mall.

Awards

In 2003, the Moncton CN Shops project was presented with the international Environmental Phoenix Award by the USA Environmental Protections Agency (EPA). The Phoenix award is presented to a local government or private sector company or consortium which has demonstrated outstanding leadership in transforming a Brownfield site into a thriving, revitalized community or business area (Greenfield). There were 52 projects in contention from around the world for this Award, with the Sydney Australian Olympic site being the runner up meaning the Moncton Shops project was judged best in the world for that year.

Closer to home, the project received recognition from the Globe Foundation, a private, non-profit foundation a wholly owned subsidiary of the Asia pacific Foundation of Canada. This award was presented to CLC by the Federal Minister of Environment, for excellence in redevelopment of a Brownfield

In 2002 The Canadian Urban Institute at their National Conference in Toronto for the first time Awarded Two Brownie awards to the same winners in a year. It presented the first Brownie award in the category of Sustainability in Community Building to the Canada Lands Company for the Moncton Properties at their

national conference in Toronto. The Brownie recognizes outstanding efforts in promoting sustainability through the use or communication of innovative benchmarking techniques, community participation, stakeholder collaboration or public-private partnerships. The awards committee stated it was impressed by CLC's active outreach program to the Moncton public and by the innovative use of a GIS to communicate complex data regarding the cleanup of contaminants, by the use of community representatives to develop potential ideas for redevelopment and by the company's partnerships with several local universities to provide students with hands-on experience with issues of sustainability.

The Canadian Urban Institute awarded a second Brownie to the Moncton Shops project in the category of Best Overall Project, commending the individuals responsible for their role in helping to establish and then follow through on implementing a vision for rejuvenating an important site. The committee also declared the project as a true community achievement, involving the full participation and commitment of the local citizens and stated that the project was a text book example of how to marry extensive multi-disciplinary professional expertise with human ingenuity to create a mixed use development that promised to make a major contribution to the future of Moncton.

Appendix

Coastal Petroleum Case: Suggested Answers

1. Should management give employees a raise to compensate for the move?

No. The problem is not compensation, and throwing money at it will be counterproductive.

2. Should management take a "wait and see" approach? Will employees' anxieties disappear after the move?

No. Problems rarely correct themselves. Although anxieties may lessen over time, morale will suffer in the meantime and you may well lose valuable employees.

3. Should management try to anticipate employees' real concerns and take action to respond to them? For example, should they open and close the office a half-hour earlier than the main shift so employees can shop and do errands in the city before the stores close?

Perhaps. But trying to guess at the employees' concerns rather than actually discovering what they are is less than optimal. Perhaps the shift time change will help, perhaps not.

4. What should management do?

Communicate the "why," "what" and "how" of the change. The employees are anxious because they have too many unanswered questions. Find out their concerns and make plans to address the major ones. Communicate what's not going to change. Communicate in many ways, and make sure you include a lot of two-way dialogue in your communications plan.

About the Author

Carol Beatty is former Director of the Industrial Relations Centre at Queen's University at Kingston, Ontario, and an Associate Professor with Queen's School of Business, where she has taught in undergraduate, graduate and executive education programs.

An acknowledged expert on change management, strategy development, high performance teams and facilitation, Dr. Beatty focuses her consulting on human and organizational issues in modern organizations. She has studied the implementation of change for over 25 years, including technological change, strategic change, mergers and acquisitions, structural change, and employee buyouts.

An active researcher, she is currently completing a multi-faceted study on the key success factors of change management, comprised of a large-scale survey and several detailed case studies. She is also well-known for her major study of high-performance teams in which she isolated the three skill sets teams need to develop to be effective. Dr. Beatty's publications have appeared in such journals as the *Sloan Management Review, Human Relations,* the *California Management Review* and the *Business Quarterly*. She completed her MBA and PhD at the Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario.

Carol is a sought-after consultant and speaker who has helped many private and public sector organizations become more effective. She is a trained facilitator in Future Search (Weisbord and Janoff) and Whole System Change (Dannemiller Tyson).

Recent publications include *Building Smart Teams: A Roadmap to High Performance Teams* (2004 with B. Barker), and *Employee Ownership: The New Source of Competitive Advantage* (2001 with H. Schachter). In addition, Dr. Beatty has authored several complex multimedia business simulations used in high-level human resources education: Panorama at the Crossroads, Change-O-Meter, and Harmon Health.

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