

ABC Company Internal Communications Plan

For the Environment, Health, Safety, Security and Regulatory Compliance Functions

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This is the outline plan for the communications internal to the company from the ABC cross-functional group of EHS, Security and Regulatory Compliance. Such communications are commonly referred to as *managed communications*, due to their importance and value to a business. They fall under the overall category of business Internal Communications (IC), which is why some of the messages will be defined and delivered collaboratively with the ABC Corporate Communications Team and/or HR Team members.

Plan Purpose

The plan's purpose is to standardize, and improve where appropriate, several categories of internal communications. These include notices regarding awareness issues, events and activities (including informational and advisory pieces), and communications about projects being performed and programs being implemented. They also include various types of presentations in yearly management meetings and monthly Business Council meetings.

This plan constitutes a small but important improvement in our cross-functional group's level of service to our internal customers.

Plan Objectives

The plan objectives are to ensure that:

- Stakeholders of our functional areas issues, events and activities are kept well-informed and advised
- Communication is effective, well-received, and meets stakeholder needs and expectations
- Communication is actionable, in that the recipients have all the information they need to form whatever decisions or conclusions are called for, or that they are well-enough informed to begin taking whatever follow-up actions may be required
- Guidance exists for the internal team members, regarding the types of communications they need to provide, that must be consistent and must meet specific level or standard.

Objectives for Effective Communication

The four key principles of effective communications are to be: clear, concise, correct and complete. To achieve the intent of these principles, each type of communication must be:

- Accurate
- Clear
- Concise
- Complete
- Credible
- Consistent
- Constructive
- Relevant
- Reliable
- Timely

Following these objectives will keep messages instantly actionable, prevent wasted time spent on back-and-forth clarification efforts, and keep errors or mistakes from occurring due to stakeholder wrong impressions or not being informed quickly enough.

Accurate. Good facts enable others to objectively make conclusions and decisions, and correctly plan actions, based upon their own roles and responsibilities.

Clear. Be sure that the wording is unambiguous, and can only be interpreted in the way that you intend. This avoids confusion.

Complete. Account for the level of knowledge that the various recipients will have, so that correctly understanding the message doesn't require knowledge any individuals may not have. If follow-up actions are called for, make sure that the message is informative enough that stakeholders are pointed in the right direction for follow-up.

Concise. Given typical workloads, it is best to get to the point quickly. Not being concise can delay important responses if the recipient can't take the time to read and digest the message.

Credible. Being factual has a lot to do with credibility. Factualness means being concerned with what is actually the case rather than interpretations of or reactions to it. Opinions must be labeled as such, so that they aren't misinterpreted as being conclusions based upon factual analysis.

Consistent. There are several aspects of consistency. Each type of communication should be consistent in its content. Overall that makes the communications more credible, and won't leave recipients wondering if the content was complete. Additionally, delivery for each type or category of information should be consistent. Each type of communication should be delivered in the same way each time. All stakeholders must be included each time. Thus, the recipients for each type of message must be identified as part of communications planning, and recipient lists (information stakeholders) must be periodically updated.

Constructive. Sometimes messages of a correcting nature have a negative effect if not written from a positive and considerate perspective. Doing so ensures that the communication will be fully effective and will prompt positive follow-up.

Relevant. Even if information is interesting, if it's not highly relevant to the purpose of the message, omit it. It can distract from the message purpose and even undermine its importance.

Reliable. In an organization, relationships among individuals and groups are important. It strengthens relationships, and thus strengthens the organization, when communications can be relied upon, and when there is certainty that communication will occur as scheduled, or when needed based upon circumstances. These objectives are key factors in establishing the reliability of communications.

Timely. Some messages have delivery time frame that are important. Be sure to prioritize the work on such messages so that stakeholders are promptly informed.

For the first few times creating each type of communication, review these objectives prior to crafting each message. Review them periodically thereafter.

Message Purposes

Key message purposes Include:

- Informing
- Building understanding
- Promoting engagement
- Enhancing relationships
- Reinforcing values
- Prompting or requesting action
- Preparing people for upcoming changes or events

Keeping the specific purpose in mind for each communication helps you to craft an effective and well-received message.

ABC as a Multi-Cultural Environment

ABC is a multi-cultural environment, and it is important to be mindful of the cultural differences if its personnel, visitors and contractors. These include time zone differences that apply to telephone communications, and the language differences for those for whom English is a second language. Additionally, there are differences regarding social aspects of communication, and the level of formality considered appropriate in meetings and conversation.

It is important to not create offense and not take offense, where none is intended. Even within the U.S., there are many cultural differences based upon local area culture as well as family heritage.

For example, closely related to time management is the American tendency to focus on getting things accomplished, so much so that building rapport with people gets overlooked. In more traditional cultures people focus on establishing rapport first and ensuring harmony in interactions with others.

Particularly noticeable to non-Americans are the differences in the hospitality customs in dealing with visitors, in contrast with the customs of other cultures, especially for those traveling from outside the U.S. It can be important to take business hospitality customs of the visitor countries into account.

Americans are fundamentally optimistic, place faith in the future and value change, linking it to progress, development, and growth. Older traditional cultures consider change to be disruptive, unpredictable – and negative.

American culture values equality. It is a defining aspect of American culture. This differs from other cultures that embrace a set social hierarchy. The American preference for collapsing social hierarchy leads to informality in social interactions, shown in a well-known tendency to use first names when addressing others, even strangers. This degree of informality can make people from some other cultures uncomfortable, especially when there is a perceived status difference between people.

There are many other ways in which American culture differs from that of other countries, and many countries where “American” traits are even stronger. It is also true that we are all individuals, and no two people belonging to the same culture are guaranteed to respond in exactly the same way. In any meeting or discussion there will be a variety of personal and cultural factors involved. The key to cross-cultural success is to develop an understanding and respect for the differences.

In-Person Communications

The preceding sections, *Objectives for Effective Communication* and *Message Purposes*, are critically important to in-person communications. Whether delivering information by presentation, during meeting discussion, or in one-on-one conversations, preparation that includes attention to communication objectives and purposes can make a huge difference in the results you achieve.

Messages must be professionally crafted and professionally delivered, whether the communication is formal or informal. In an informal situation, preparation (being ready) is what makes the difference between a message recipient walking away with the right ideas and conclusions, or walking away unimpressed and unaffected—or engaged, satisfied and ready to follow up if appropriate.

If you seek to achieve the communications objectives explained above, and you understand the purpose for communicating the information (which sometimes means understanding the purpose behind question being asked of you), you can easily be highly successful. Whether the message is delivered in formal or informal settings, an appropriate level of preparation is required. Eloquence of delivery is much less important than conveying the information in a simple and organized way. Clarity of thought on your part is an absolute requirement to achieving clarity of thought in your listener.

An important consideration is the intended outcome of a presentation, conversation or discussion. What should be accomplished? Do any opinions need to be established or changed? Do any decisions need supporting or enabling? Is it important to improve understanding or awareness of an issue? Discussions or conversations can take many directions once started; it is important to ensure that your original objectives are accomplished before concluding.

Meeting and discussion preparation may be as simple as making a list of discussion topics and making sure that the thoughts and ideas to be conveyed are clear and can be articulated well, whether in response to questions or in contribution to an overall discussion.

In some cases, working with a peer may be helpful, if just to make sure that your explanations mean what you expect them to mean to others.

Meetings

In addition to the templates provided for specific types of meetings, the following guidance applies to all meetings in general:

Invitations and Notices. A meeting notice should include the time, place, participants, purpose, agenda and intended outcome for a meeting. Invitations should be issued sufficiently in advance that the participants have time to prepare. Some meetings will require that participants be provided material to review in advance of the meeting.

Agendas. Every meeting should have an agenda that is communicated in advance of the meeting; ideally it will be included in the meeting invitation or notice. An agenda should guide the flow of the meeting, and help assure that all meeting objectives are accomplished.

Preparation. All participants should come to the meeting prepared to contribute per their related roles and responsibilities, and should consider how they can help achieve the intended outcomes of the meeting, and what specific outcomes they may want to achieve for themselves or their own areas.

Conducting the Meeting. One individual must assume or be assigned the responsibility to conduct the meeting. It is up to that meeting leader to direct the meeting so that the agenda is followed, discussions remain on-topic, and the meeting objectives and outcomes are achieved, and that the meeting is run at a pace that fits the scheduled meeting time. Sometimes individual points need to be resolved outside the meeting, and these should be scheduled as follow up actions.

The meeting leader may be called on to moderate discussions, if sensitive or touchy topics are brought up, or if participants become emotional. Sometimes a point of discussion must be deferred to a different time and place, if it cannot be productively or conclusively dealt with in the current meeting, but this should be a rare occurrence.

Follow-Up. Ideally all matters would be concluded during a meeting. However, some meetings will require follow-up based upon what has been learned, or assigned, during the meeting. It is important to document the follow-up action items, who is responsible, and what the response time frame is. Additionally, someone should assume or be assigned the duty of managing the follow-up actions to ensure that they are accomplished and that final communications or distribution of information occurs.

Communication Awareness

In crafting the various types of messages, it is important to consider the situations of the recipients as well as the message that you want to get across. How will the message read or sound to the recipient? Is it a sensitive subject in general, or for the recipient or in the recipient's functional area? If you were in the recipient's place, how would the message come across? If you are making a request, giving an instruction or an order, or making a change that will impact the recipient—have you considered how it is likely to impact the recipient or the recipient's work? Have you explored the possibility of unintended consequences?

Communications Tools and Templates

Templates have been developed for the following communication tools, to help standardize the use of these tools. For in-person communications, preparation and delivery checklists are provided. The different types of communication they apply to are:

- Announcement
- Briefing
- Document (such as Project Charter)
- Email
- Meeting
- Memo
- Newsletter
- PowerPoint-Based Document
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Report

Each tool has a section containing guidance information about using the tool.

Some of the tools that have been created are described below. More detailed information is provided in the *Managed Internal Communications Chart*.

Project Communications

Project Charter. These documents present the scope, objectives, purposes, and intended results of projects and programs. They contain the basis for project approval, and inform the stakeholders

sufficiently to enable them to perform their role in supporting the project. Charters identify the communication stakeholders for the project or program.

Project and Program Implementation Status Notices. Email notices are used to keep stakeholders and participants informed of the progressive status of projects, including projects that implement programs. *Note that programs contain their own plan for the ongoing communications of the program stakeholders.* This communications plan deals only with the communications involved in the program implementation projects.

Project and Program Implementation Completion Notices. Email notification is used to inform stakeholders about the completion of a project and any follow-up or transition steps that may be involved.

Project Management Tool (PMT). The Project Management Tool is a simple spreadsheet that is an important and required companion tool to the Project Charter. The PMT template contains a description of each of the information items in the spreadsheet. It also contains guidance on updating project stakeholders as the project progresses.

Event Communications

Event Announcement. Any event that will have an impact on company personnel or facility operations, including regulatory impacts such as compliance inspections or discovered compliance deviations, will be announced to the affected personnel via email or memo. If a negative impact is anticipated, or a change in activity is required, advice or direction will be included in the announcement. If planned or ad hoc roles or responsibilities must be assigned, such assignments will be included in an announcement memo.

End of Event Notice. An event completion notice will be issued to acknowledge the end or completion of the event, and provide summary information if warranted. Where normal operations were modified or suspended due to the event, a notification to resume normal operations will be issued.

Corporate Level Changes

Change Notification. Corporate level changes are company-wide EHS, Security or Regulatory Compliance policy or procedure changes. Notification will be provided by Email or Memo.

Monthly Business Council Meeting

Business Council Meeting Presentation. Monthly Business Council meetings are conducted to present, discuss, and provide updates on Facility impacts/risks relating to functional area responsibilities. A PowerPoint presentation is provided to inform and guide the activity.

Annual Management Status and Objectives Reports

Review annual targets and goals. The Functional Goal Tracker is used as the basis for an explanatory presentation to, and discussions with, management.

Mid-Year review of targets and goals. The Functional Goal Tracker is used as the basis for the review discussions with management.

End-of-Year review of targets and goals. The Functional Goal Tracker is used as the basis for the review discussions with management.

Education and Awareness

E & A Newsletter. Newsletter format PDF document.

Awareness Notification. This will be an email notification about something that personnel should be made aware of, apart from an Event or other activity covered elsewhere.

Education and Information. The specific message types and their formats are to be determined. They will likely include posters, Intranet postings & pages, video messages, and others.

Facility External Agency Inspections

Inspection Notifications. The Honeywell Mass Notification System will be utilized to inform facility management and affected personnel when the inspectors arrive and depart on any day. As soon as the functional area becomes aware of the inspection to take place, a notice of the inspection is issued, this will be in advance of the inspection for scheduled inspections, or as soon as possible for unscheduled inspections, which typically will be following the opening meeting, in which the purpose and scope of the inspection will be conveyed.

End-of-Day Recap. A summary of the day's inspection activities will be provided by memo or email message to facility management and affected personnel. On the final day of inspections, the recap is also used to provide notification that the overall inspection itself is completed.

Inspection Closing Summary. A summary of the inspection visit will be provided to facility management via email in a Word and/or PDF document.

Internal Audits and Assessments

Coordination of Activity. A project charter will be used to outline the audit or assessment project including the scope, purpose and objectives, and provide direction per the needs of the project. Sometimes internal audits are referred to as mock audits, when done in preparation for external agency inspections or audits.

On-Site Agenda. An on-site activity agenda will be developed and provided to participants and stakeholders by memo or email message.

End-of-Day Recap. A summary of the day's activities will be provided by email message.

Inspection/Assessment Closing Summary. An overall summary of inspection or assessment will be provided by email message

Assessment Report. A full report on the assessment will be provided in PDF format to the Facility stakeholders.

Management Meetings

Business Council Meetings. Preparation that applies the In-Person Communications section's guidance (on page 4) must account for the information that the management-level participants will want or need,

and what each functional area needs to communicate. Preparation must also consider the type of feedback (opinion, advice, direction, etc.) that is desired from the management-level participants.

Annual Management Status and Objectives Reports. Preparation must include the need to be concise and organized in the presentation of information.

Use of the Tools

For all notifications and announcements, peer or senior review should be utilized to ensure that:

The needs and interests of each audience type or recipient type are accounted for in the notification/announcement content. Many of the tools provide checklists or other guidance, and the previous sections of this plan provide guidance, which should be applied to each communication. Review by a peer or senior should consult the guidance material to ensure that the scope of the review is complete. After a while, it will no longer be necessary to keep referring to the guidance material.

It cannot be overstressed how important the peer review step is in crafting any important communication. The hardest thing for a writer to do is to step into the shoes of the readers, and view the communication as they would, and to experience the impact of it. That's one reason why peer review is important. The other reason is to make sure that the words used convey one and only one meaning. Choosing the correct wording means that the reader will not be able to misinterpret your message.

For example, "My Last Message", as the subject to an email, was once interpreted by the recipients in another country to mean that the writer was severing the business relationship. The only English-speaking personnel were out of the office, and panic ensued because the rest of the email could not be clearly understood or translated online—because it was being viewed from the wrong perspective. It turned out, after emergency phone calls to and from the travelling senior executive, that the writer was only trying to correct a mistake in his previous email. The subject should have read, "Correcting mistake in my last email." Then there would have been no ambiguity and no crisis.

Standardizing Messaging

It is important that certain messaging elements be defined and used standardly. For example, each functional area should have a simple one-sentence statement of its purpose, and the cross-functional group as a whole should have one as well.

- Functional area standard message elements include:
 - Vision
 - Purpose
 - Slogan or Motto

For the cross-functional group, "Helping to create a safe, productive and healthy workplace" would be an appropriate slogan.

Template Repository

The most current version of each guidance and template document will be made available in a network folder accessible to those who need to use them. Templates will be reviewed annually and updated as needed.