Communicating for change

The [Leadership competencies for Queensland](#) outlines the responsibility leaders have to generate workforce readiness through proactive consultation and timely communication.

Best practice in transition and change

The top five contributors to overall success of change and transition are:

1. Visible and effective sponsorship by the Director-General/Commissioner and their senior leaders
2. Buy in from leaders at all levels and their teams through a clear understanding of how the change and transition connects to the agency's vision and strategic plan
3. Exceptional transition team members – the skills, expertise, experience and commitment of the team are critical
4. Continuous and targeted communication – a critical success factor is consistent, open and honest communication, directed to specific recipients through a variety of media
5. Well planned and organised approach that begins early, is effective in managing the expectations of team members, and includes strategies for managing resistance or hesitation. Organisation and planning contribute to the success of transition and implementation. It includes the use of a plan, initiation of transition activities early in the project, a systematic approach to the transition and most importantly, managing the expectations of teams and the anticipation of, and planning for, resistance.

Consultation

- Factor staff into the development of your change management plan through their active participation

- Establish regular contact points (weekly is ideal during critical periods), including one-on-one discussions, group and team meetings, interactive presentations and dedicated workshops

- Don't just rely on emails and flyers/posters to communicate, while efficient and positive, the best use of these channels is to reinforce your in-person discussions.

In addition, research tells us that a major obstacle to success for major change projects is employee resistance combined with ineffective management of the human element of change. The goal of transitioning is to ease people through the changes. When you address people's need for certainty by making them aware of the vision for change; their fears, doubts and hesitation will be reduced. Provide the development opportunities to build the skills needed for your team to make changes in the workplace, then your agency strategic goals are more easily achieved, productivity and morale are higher, and implementation will become a positive experience for everyone.

Effective communication tactics

Develop a compelling story

- Provide a context for the change
- Focus on why, why now, what and how
- Develop high-level messages that capture the gist of the vision

Keep it simple

- Use short statements
- Avoid jargon specific to a profession

Use metaphors and analogies

- Use images to depict the future state
- Use an analogy to explain the different phases in the process of change

Build linkages to initiatives

- Explain how all the change initiatives contribute to the achievement of the vision

Integrate communication initiatives

- Build a common set of key messages that can be integrated into all communications

Repeat, repeat, repeat

- Use every opportunity to link day-to-day business activities and decisions with the vision
- Continue to reinforce the messages throughout the entire change process

Message delivery

- Research indicates that messages coming from employees' immediate supervisors and from an agency's Director-General/Commissioner and senior leadership teams are the most trusted and believed.

Use different forums to spread the message

- Make it a habit to refer to elements of the vision in all communication, formal and informal
- Have all teams seek ways to repeat and reinforce the key messages

Make it multidirectional

- The vision will live through the interactions with people. Encourage as many people as possible to talk about it – peer-to-peer, frontline managers to staff, staff to clients

Align leadership actions to communications

- Ensure leadership actions and decisions are consistent with building the preferred organisational culture
- Explicitly address all inconsistencies
- Shape and reinforce existing congruent behaviours
- Have the transition teams model the expected behaviours

Successfully communicating for transition

- Establish a formal consultative process

- Work collaboratively with your team to keep them informed and involved, you will maximise their input and garner ideas in the process by consulting with them regularly

- Determine what are the "givens" in the changes and identify the decisions the team will have input into, and those they can make decisions about themselves

- Tell them about the current situation and the rationale for the change

- Share your vision for the team and services after the change takes place, aligning with the vision

- Tell them the basics of what is not changing, what is changing, how it will change and when it will transition

- Share the goals and objectives for the change

- Your expectation that change will happen and is not a choice, indicate what are the risks of not changing

- Give status updates on the performance of the transition

- Communicate the procedure for getting personal and/or professional assistance during the transition

Start-up phase

- Identify the key leaders who are needed to support the transition and negotiate to determine their expectations and desired outcomes

- Provide information on the vision and current organisational readiness

- Help create key messages for yourself and others to communicate to the team

- Create identifiable actions that you can do to support the transition/change

Design and implementation phase

- Work to develop leadership and change capabilities. What do leaders need to be doing to support the transition, how can they best accomplish those goals with their team?

- Provide on-going updates on progress and issues, seek the team input on critical issues

- Identify any resistant team members and engage with them to address issues personally

- Provide the transition teams with concrete activities they can use to support the implementation of the change

- Deal with any roadblocks promptly

Communication plan template

This template example has been developed to assist communication to all stakeholders, clients and the team.

Communication Action	Key Messages	Audience Targeted	Due Date	Channel	Develop	Review Approve	Deliver	Status
**Outline new performance development system*	*New performance and development system Streamlining processes Results from feedback from staff Training provided Outline why previous system not working*	*leaders*	*31/03*	*Senior leaders meeting and follow up email*	*Bob to develop content*	*Jane to approve content*	*Bob and Jane to deliver presentation*	*Content currently being developed*