

# Estates & Facilities Internal Communications Strategy

- **Our aims**
- **Purpose**
- **How we will communicate**
- **A practical guide to planning internal communications**

## Our aims

The Communications Strategy aims to:

- To increase the profile and reputation of E&F within the University.
- To effectively communicate the Aims, Mission and Vision of E&F to our partners, customers and staff.
- To strengthen the flow of communication between the SMT, business units and staff within E&F and to other departments within the University.
- To aid the dissemination of information.
- To develop and foster an atmosphere of belonging and ownership across E&F.
- To open channels to facilitate feedback both internally within E&F and from the wider University community.

We will do this by keeping the Staff, Customers and the wider University informed about:

- **News** - what's happening within E&F.
- **Issues of strategy & policy** - through policy documents, reports and sharing minutes of meetings.
- **Ongoing developments and initiatives** - to communicate their necessity and to publicize their progress.
- **Practical information** - all matters relating to the services provided by E&F departments.
- **Events** - to inform both E&F teams and the wider University community of forthcoming events.
- **Feedback** - we will proactively seek feedback from staff, customers and the wider University community via an online feedback resource, through annual surveys, meetings and reports and 1-2-1 feedback.

## Purpose

The purpose of this communications strategy is to provide consistent, regular and robust communications to and from our Director, SMT and staff within E&F. To increase the profile and reputation of E&F and to provide true benefit to our staff and customers through the services provided by E&F.

Communications play a vital role in the functioning of any organization. This is especially true of E&F as the different teams are geographically spread across the University Campuses and carry out a diverse range of functions. Good communications are vital to support E&F's strategic and organizational development.

Communication has to flow in two directions to be effective. EG our Staff, Customers and members of the wider University have to play their part in engaging fully in communications, this strategy aims to give a framework to facilitate good communications flow

To ensure E&F is successful in its communication teams need:

- Access to and an understanding of, the E&F and departmental business plans, the E&F objectives, mission and values. The organizations purpose and the services it provides, in order to enable full participation and engagement at every level of our business to derive true benefit for all.
- Easily accessible information in order to enable team members to reach information and resources provided by E&F, efficiently and effectively.
- A true sense of community and cohesion amongst team members. Establishing a sense of belonging and ownership of the organization.
- Reinforced core organizational values.
- Developing a culture of encouraging and celebrating success and achievement within the business, encouraging pride in the organization and achieving more unity of purpose towards common goals amongst all staff.

The responsibility of communications is a shared one. Although a certain amount can be achieved through the SMT and managers, a significant degree of responsibility lies with individual team members. Every member of staff plays an important role in disseminating information at business unit level and sharing useful feedback from their colleagues with managers and the SMT. Communication is a two-way process.

E&F staff are the most important of our stakeholders. Each team member has the potential of acting as an ambassador for E&F, spreading and raising its profile and reputation. Staff are more likely to act as good ambassadors if they feel involved and valued by the organization. Improving and maintaining excellent communications is one way of achieving this.

**How we will communicate** \* = possible future initiatives to aid communication

Key members of the SMT will be appointed to oversee the communications that are necessary to inform and appraise our teams of the day to day activities of E&F. The communications will use various channels to reach key groups within the organization, these will include:

**Team Meetings & 1-2-1 Meetings** Each team has regular meetings as well as individuals having 1-2-1 meetings with their supervisor or line manager. These meetings are a fantastic opportunity to openly discuss hot topics, policy changes, general news and updates.

#### **E&F Website**

Team members and the wider University community have access to the general website for news, contacts, events, learning & development initiatives, policy, governance and general enquiries. The website acts as a general information portal.

#### **E&F 24 Seven Newsletter**

E&F produces a quarterly newsletter. This newsletter communicates general news, projects, wider sector news, learning and development activities, procurement news and updates, articles from the Director, managers and team members.

**Departmental Newsletters** Some E&F departments produce newsheets/letters for their specific teams noting news, developments and upcoming events

**No Mushrooms Talks** The Director holds termly talks for all E&F staff updating them on news, issues and plans, This is followed by an open Q&A session for all staff.

#### **Headline Emails**

Email communications are sent from the Director and Deputy Directors PA's highlighting news, updates, forthcoming events, learning and development opportunities, policy changes, general information and alerts.

#### **Events Calendar**

A calendar containing events taking place on campus and details of events run by internal and external organizations, is kept by the PA to the Deputy Director. This list is available and is shared at SMT and is cascaded by HODs to departmental teams.

#### **Departmental Websites**

The E&F departments all have their own dedicated websites containing pertinent information that is kept up to date by those individual departments. These websites are in some cases internally facing to the University community and in others, externally facing to promote the goods and services that are available to the wider community eg conferences, events, catering, sports and hotel services.

#### **\*Yammer, Facebook & Twitter**

E&F could use Yammer, Facebook and Twitter to engage with team members and customers via a dedicated Yammer group or Facebook Page or Twitter account. These will contain real-time announcements and news updates and will be managed at departmental level. (Catering, VR and SportsPark are already using with great results)

#### **Standardized Templates & Visual Identity**

E&F has developed and set up standardized templates for reports/handbooks/service level agreements/business plans/posters/flyers/letters and other written communication tools to allow all teams to communicate internally with team members and externally with the wider University community, contractors and customers within an agreed corporate template/visual identity. These templates are hosted electronically for ease of access.

#### **\*Shared SMT and Management Team Meetings Minutes**

Abridged copies of minutes from SMT and departmental team meetings could be posted to the website. These could be hosted on the secure E&F Staff login pages of the website. This would allow for shared learning and will increase communication between E&F teams.

**\*Directors Blog** News and events from the Directors desk. Hot news topics, thoughts and ideas that the Director wishes to share with the wider team.

**\*All staff Text Messages (Emergency use only)** for emergency announcements eg during heavy snow fall, calling staff to help clear roads and paths.

## A Practical guide to planning internal communications

### WHAT & WHY / WHO/ WHAT / HOW /WHEN

#### What are you communicating and why?

Instead of thinking about what you want to communicate, think about what your audience needs to know and how you want them to think or feel or what action you would like them to take. Always remember, communications must be appropriate and useful.

#### Are you clear about your communication objectives?

Ask yourself:

- What do I want people to do after they have received my communication?
- What do I want them to think?
- How do I want them to feel?

These objectives may not be the same as our corporate objectives but the two should be linked.

EG If the corporate objective is to get all managers to check and, if necessary, update their staff contact address details in the WREN database, then the communication objective could be that all managers should have read and understood the guidance note on how to update their staff contact detail information and why this is important.

#### Who do you need to talk to?

Once you have a clear idea of what you want to achieve from your communication you can start to identify who needs to know (your target audience).

This will obviously include those who are directly affected by the information in the communication, but could also be those not directly affected but who could influence the success or not of the project or initiative. Different groups will often need different messages and one size rarely fits all.

#### How do I define my audiences?

Ask yourself the following questions and you may find that the various groups of people you need to target become clearer:

- Who needs to do what?
- What is their existing level of knowledge on the subject?
- Do they have access to the same communication channels?
- How are they likely to feel about your communication?
- How do you want them to feel?

#### What do you want to say?

Keep your message simple and relevant to that particular audience. Ask yourself what's in it for your audience and why is it in their interest to read/listen/interact with your communication. Make sure you address this in your communication.

#### Developing your key messages:

- Prioritize your messages – put the most important one first.
- Be clear – get straight to the point and keep it simple and direct. Try to avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Be positive – talk about the benefits and be clear what this means to your audience.
- Be engaging – think about using 'we' and 'you', instead of 'The University or E&F'.

## How will you deliver your communication?

You need to give your communication the best chance of being read or seen or heard and for it to be understood and acted on. So choosing the right communication channel or combination of channels is crucial. It's also vital to ensure that communications are consistent across all methods.

There are a number of communication channels currently in use by E&F. Some or all of these will be at your disposal depending on your teams' current use:

- E&F Website (To submit a news item, please email Director and Deputy Directors Pa's.
- E&F Departmental Websites
- Targeted headline email from the Director and Deputy Directors PA's
- Events Calendar (Managed by the Deputy Directors PA).
- SMT meetings – encouraging channelling & cascading of news and corporate messages/policies.
- Special purpose meetings (eg. MAD, Best Practice & Working Parties).
- E&F Team meetings.
- Staff Councils/forums
- Shared Minutes of meetings
- Written reports
- Business plans
- Verbal communications
- No Mushrooms Talks

### Tips for choosing the right channel:

- Make sure your audience has access to the channel you're using.
- Think about how urgent the message is; some channels have longer lead-in times than others.
- It may be that a combination of channels is the best approach to add impact and longevity.

### When to say it:

The impact of your communication will be wasted if the audience doesn't receive it when they need it: too early and people may forget when they need to do something; too late and people will feel like they haven't had a chance to understand the information and get involved.

### Tips for communicating at the right time:

- Timing is everything – decide when your message will have the most impact.
- Consider if your audience is expected to respond to the communication. If so, have you factored in that time...and who do they need to respond to?
- Do you know what else is going on at the same time? Will anything else happen to distract your audience's attention away? Can you plan around this?
- If the message is complex or sensitive then face-to-face communication may be the best approach and that can take time to achieve effectively.

### Measuring success

If you don't measure the impact and effectiveness of your communication, it will be difficult to know if you have met your objectives. Tools such as Google analytics and annual surveys can be used to measure some communications success, but simply ask yourself the following to help evaluate success:

- Has the communication been received?
- Has the communication been understood?
- Has the communication been acted upon?
- How can the communication be improved?
- Is there more to be done?