



The 5 pitfalls of change communication part 2

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Last week we shared Part 1 of a two part article with you - 5 Pitfalls of Change Communication to be Careful of and one HUGE Opportunity. This excerpt is from the soon-to-be-released book, *Conversations of Change: A guide to implementing workplace change*. The author, Jennifer Frahm has also written a few other nuggets about communicating change. You can download [The Transformation Treasure Trove at conversationofchange.com](http://conversationofchange.com).

So how do you manage the Goldilocks version of change communication? Where what you deliver is 'just right'? It's harder than it looks, and this is where change people with communication expertise are well worth the investment. Some of the things to look out for are:

- > A change communication strategy that is developed after research has been conducted on the change audiences – what their communicative preferences are (source, frequency, channels, jargon and language).
- > An understanding of the communicative climate – what is acceptable and also what is taboo.
- > An understanding of the balance between dialogue and top-down messaging.

- > A communications plan tailored to the different stages of change commitment.
- > The change communication plan has been reviewed and approved by the people you want to communicate to and with (not the project team / managers).
- > A communication calendar which maps the various messaging from all the various initiatives and provides opportunity to 'cluster' the messages for simplicity's sake.

The Opportunity: But what of social media?

One of the opportunities for change programs now is social media. This is particularly so if you have customers or clients as one of your change targets, but also applicable to those whose change only affects the internal audiences. If there is a chance that your change will be discussed publicly on social channels, then you need to include your companies' social media team on briefings, so they know how to respond and when to escalate. Do you remember how once upon a time people used to hear about their factory closing down on the radio? It's now twitter...

I think that we can take the lead from content curators in the social media space. One of the common challenges in organizations is that communicating the changes to all the identified stakeholders can be very difficult. They all use varying custom communications outlets; this can

require a fragmented approach. Of course, this usually assumes a top-down one-way approach – that you are communicating to an audience, not with an audience.

The alternative perspective of change communication in social media involves the generation of a content strategy. Making the information about the changes easily searchable, shareable, categorised, and findable. Potentially providing a daily or weekly digest, which makes it easy for all the stakeholders to find what they would like. If the underlying organizational systems support and promote multimedia content, then that shouldn't be too difficult.

The first steps include determining what to curate – what content currently exists, and what would be easy to generate around the change to be implemented? What are the sources that could be used? For example, YouTube, newsletter, intranet, SharePoint, industry articles, online news, company website, employee blogs.

Depending on how large and complex the organization is, the role of content curator in change may need to be an enterprise role, one that has oversight of all the changes coming through so that the organizing taxonomy makes sense. An employee receiving 12 different aggregation emails will be just as overloaded as the employee receiving the fragmented yet tailored pieces of information.

Social content expert Rohit Bhargava provides five models to consider in social marketing for content curation and I think you can apply them to change management.

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Five Models to Consider

1. **Aggregation** – curating the most relevant information about a particular change in a single location.
2. **Distillation** – pulling out the most simple and important messages within the change agenda.
3. **Elevation** – curating by identifying a larger trend or insights from smaller daily musings (e.g., the 'small wins and snowball' approach of change).
4. **Mashups** – unique, curated juxtapositions where content is merged to create a new point of view (a fabulous way of embedding culture change and supporting behaviour change or highlighting the gap analysis).
5. **Chronology** – bringing together historical information to show an evolving understanding (the change journey?).

So, there you have it – five things you may want to avoid but are easy to fall into. And one great opportunity that can have you doing the impossible – creating change communication cut-through in overcrowded communication-sphere! An excerpt from Conversations of Change: A Guide to Implementing Workplace Change (due July 2017)



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