



Communicating organisational change – an assessment toolkit

As a result of the COVID19 pandemic many organisations will go through a significant period of change to adapt to new ways of working.

Communicating this change effectively to employees will help ensure they continue to trust in the organisation's ability to support them during this period of uncertainty.

Communication is an important function for any change programme, as it:

- **is inherently social and creates meaning between individuals – its more than just information exchange;**
- **signals the priorities, ethos and values of an organisation, playing a central role in trust development and maintenance;**
- **improves employee acceptance and adoption of change.**

Poorly communicated change however can create an information vacuum for employees. A search for greater clarity about their own personal situation can encourage rumors and misinformation that can increase feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability – conditions that can then evolve into resentment and disaffection.

CPNI research has shown that disaffection is one of the primary motivators for insider acts. The CPNI Insider Data Collection Study (2013) states that:

“The research showed that in many insider cases there was an element of disaffection displayed by the employee. This ranged from being the main reason for the employee deciding to commit an insider act, to simply being disengaged from their employer and therefore not feeling committed to their organisation.”



It is therefore vital that organisations ensure that their processes and procedures are designed to reduce disaffection as much as possible; thereby avoiding potential insider activity. Effective organisational communications, particularly relating to change, will provide staff with accurate and timely information, thus avoiding feelings of uncertainty.

A toolkit to help organisations to assess the effectiveness of their communications

This toolkit of separate questionnaires has been developed by CPNI and is based on academic research by Professor Rosalind Searle and Dr Charis Rice for the Centre for Research and Evidence and Security Threats (CREST). For a fuller explanation of the research that is behind this approach we recommend reading about their work at www.crestresearch.ac.uk/news/managing-organisational-change.

The COVID19 pandemic presented many organisations with significant and often enforced change but the importance of communications is relevant for any business change programme.

It is important that the leadership in an organisation understand how their employees feel. Communication should never be one-way only; organisations need to be in active conversation with staff by having mechanisms in place for their views to be heard and acted on. The questionnaires in this toolkit can be used as a survey with specific groups of employees who may be affected by significant changes in their work, or with all employees in the organisation.

How to use the questionnaires

Each questionnaire focuses on a particular aspect of your organisational communications strategy ie:

- **Topics of Communication**
- **Sources of Communication**
- **Overall Quality of Communication**

The questionnaires can be sent directly to staff by either the organisation's Communications team or the Security Department.



Security managers and organisational leadership may also want to consider completing the questionnaires themselves to compare their perceptions with the results provided by the rest of the organisation.

The questionnaires have been designed for ease of use and can be placed on organisational intranets or other systems to ensure it has wide outreach.

The questionnaires can either be used individually, particularly if you have specific concerns in those areas; or used as a combined piece on all of the organisation's communications delivery.

Responses

The suggested answers for the questionnaires has been purposely left as simple as possible to help facilitate giving feedback.

The results you receive back will give an indication of where the organisation is doing well, or not so well, in terms of what is being communicated; how staff are receiving information; and the overall quality of the information being sent out.

So, for example, if the results of a questionnaire show that staff believe that they have received sufficient amounts of informative and timely communications on change, the organisation will have confidence (and the evidence) that they are providing optimum information and that it is being well received by staff.

However, responses which indicate that staff are unhappy with the amounts of information they receive (ie None or Little) may indicate that the organisation needs to develop or enhance their communications strategy further to ensure that staff are receiving details about change.

Depending on the results and whether the organisation needs to take action, it may be worth repeating the exercise – four or six months afterwards - to see if any enhancements or improvements have made a difference to staff's opinion.



Detail about each questionnaire

TOPICS OF COMMUNICATION (ANNEX A)

The topics of communication are indicative of the kinds of areas likely to be important to individuals experiencing organisational change. Research shows that failure to address these issues contributes to the decline of trust.

Communication strategies that encourage a dialogue between organisations and employees are particularly good practice and signals the trustworthiness of the organisation – consider what the results are for question no 2: “How employees can participate and contribute to the change process after lockdown”.

Similarly, organisations that fully and transparently explain why past promises made to employees are no longer achievable following organisational change, are likely to avoid an integrity breach, which could lead to a decline in trust and the development of counter-productive workplace behaviour.

Ideally, you want to see responses that indicate that there is a large amount of communication on a range of topics. The aim is to a strong and comprehensive communication flow within your organisation.

If the results provided indicate that a range of topics are not being communicated to staff sufficiently (ie None or Little), you should seek to increase communication around these areas.

SOURCES OF COMMUNICATION (ANNEX B)

The results from this questionnaire will help you compare the amount of information perceived to be given by different sources. Attention should be paid towards the role of the informal “grapevine” as a key source compared to other more informed and reliable sources. If there is a great deal of information about organisational change being obtained through the “grapevine” and very little through management or specialist change agents, this would be a cause for concern.



Communicating organisational change – an assessment toolkit

PUBLISH DATE:
July 2020

CLASSIFICATION:
Official

It is important to consider which sources might be **perceived** as the more reliable sources of information. For example, work colleagues compared to different levels of manager – the former, while perhaps more trusted by individual employees than distant leaders, will often lack insight into the detail of the organisational change and why decisions have been made.

Look to see how far each of the different levels of management are involved in visibly delivering the change message. It is important that there are multiple sources that should be giving and confirming consistent information. Specialist employee forums and management talks on organisational change are channels which signal that the organisation cares about individual responses to organisational change and is actively seeking involvement from employees in change development.

QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION (ANNEX C)

This exercise will allow organisations to start a conversation about where it is doing well but also where it could improve.

Ideal results for each category would be that large amounts of information is:

- **Sent with plenty of notice of impending changes;**
- **Easily understood by all and what it means to them;**
- **Credible and actually reflects what changes are happening.**

SUMMARY

When faced with radical change or crisis, leaders support the coping mechanisms and resilience of employees by:

Raising awareness of the background to and benefits of change;

Supporting employees to feel they can make the change;

Creating processes for employees to share their knowledge;

Promoting the instances where employee feedback contributed to the change



Communicating organisational change – an assessment toolkit

PUBLISH DATE:
July 2020

CLASSIFICATION:
Official

Early dialogue and collaboration with individuals on change projects will enable them to feel more in control of their working life, less vulnerable, and reduce unpredictability. How leaders communicate about change – particularly in terms of the topics covered, how it is delivered and the overall quality - provides employees with clues about their trustworthiness and that of the overall organisation.

These questionnaires can be used in conjunction with CPNI guidance: Easing Down after Lockdown; which can be found at:

<https://extranet.cpni.gov.uk/staying-secure-during-covid-19-0>



Communicating organisational change – an assessment toolkit

PUBLISH DATE:
July 2020

CLASSIFICATION:
Official

Suggested form of words to begin and end each questionnaire

The following form of words will provide staff with an explanation why the questionnaires are being sent, and reassure staff that the results will be treated confidentially:

Thank you for your participation.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand staff views about how we have informed you of changes that are being introduced as a result of the COVID19 pandemic/lockdown. We anticipate that the questionnaire should take no longer than 10 minutes for you to complete.

The information you provide will be used to help inform decision-making over the coming weeks.

All your responses will be anonymous and all results will be presented at the group level - meaning no individual will be identifiable. Data will be stored securely in accordance with information compliance.

It is equally important to thank those who have completed the questionnaires and provide a contact number if they have any further queries:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please remember that XXXXXXXX is available on extension 0000 should you wish to discuss any issues raised in this survey.

Your responses will help inform decision-making moving forwards.



Communicating organisational change – an assessment toolkit

PUBLISH DATE:
July 2020

CLASSIFICATION:
Official

ANNEX A

Questionnaire for Topics of Communication

In the following table indicate what best reflects the amount of information on different aspects you think your organisation has sent to you about recent changes:

TOPICS OF COMMUNICATION	None	Little	Some	Large amount	N/A
1. Exact details about changes as a result of returning to work after lockdown	<input type="radio"/>				
2. How employees can participate and contribute to the change process after lockdown	<input type="radio"/>				
3. How the changes after lockdown will affect individual roles	<input type="radio"/>				
4. The new challenges that face the organisation after lockdown	<input type="radio"/>				
5. How organisational change decisions are being reached	<input type="radio"/>				
6. Whether benefits and rewards are affected by changes after lockdown	<input type="radio"/>				
7. How training and development are affected by changes after lockdown	<input type="radio"/>				
8. How the ability to deliver commitments such as pensions and bonuses are affected by changes after lockdown	<input type="radio"/>				

ANNEX B

Questionnaire for Sources of Communication

For each source of communication below, indicate what best represents the amount of information you currently receive about organisational changes.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION	None	Little	Some	Large amount	N/A
1. Immediate work colleagues	<input type="radio"/>				
2. Colleagues in other departments	<input type="radio"/>				
3. Immediate line manager	<input type="radio"/>				
4. Senior Managers	<input type="radio"/>				
5. Special Management talks	<input type="radio"/>				
6. Trade Unions or other staff representation bodies	<input type="radio"/>				
7. Specialised employee forums on organisational change	<input type="radio"/>				
8. The “grapevine”/rumour (word of mouth)	<input type="radio"/>				
9. Organisation’s website or intranet	<input type="radio"/>				

ANNEX C

Survey for Overall Quality of Communication

Indicate how you feel about the amount of overall quality of communication provided in relation to changes that are happening in the organisation because of COVID19:

QUALITY OF INFORMATION	None	Little	Some	Large ammount	N/A
1. How much arrives on time?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. How much helps you understand what is happening?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. How much do you feel is credible and actually reflects what is happening?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>