

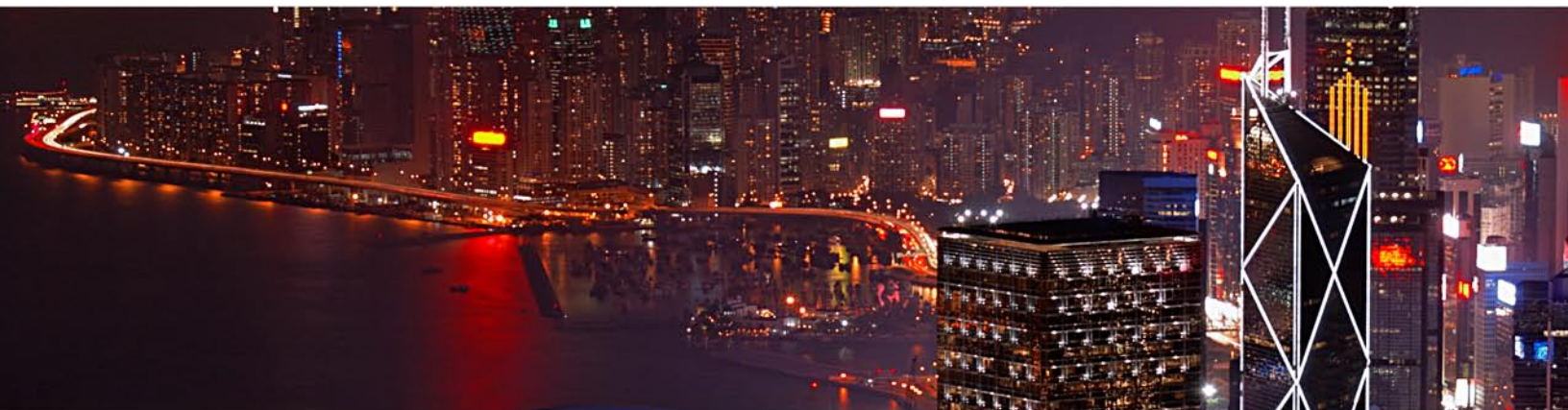


Internal communications from strategy to implementation

Communications Council Best Practices

Creating a Network of Communication Champions

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Communications Council Best Practices

Creating a Network of Communication Champions

A Communications Council is a group of employees nominated to act as communication champions and representatives for their fellow employees. Responsible for checking the pulse of the organization across business, function, and geography, the council meets regularly to discuss vital communication issues, disseminate critical messages, and offer feedback.

Goals

- Find out what employees are concerned about and their thoughts on current company issues.
- Get employee feedback on communication initiatives.
- Test communication plans and messages with employee representatives.
- Increase the visibility of the communications function.

Key Challenges

- Selecting the right people to fill the role.
 - Equipping them to do the job.
 - Keeping them involved and motivated.
 - Getting candid feedback.
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Setting Up a Council

Responsibilities of Council Members

- Informally check the pulse of the business unit, function, or geography represented.
- Watch for communication opportunities and escalate them.
- Review communication plans, management toolkits, and other materials and give feedback from their constituents' point of view.
- Anticipate and suggest frequently asked questions for complex communications.

Commitment Required from Council Members

- Keep close tabs on all company-wide communication issues.
- Stay on top of constituents' communication concerns.
- Participate in regular meetings, usually held monthly for one hour.
- Review advance materials and give thought to advance questions when necessary.
- Agree to not miss two consecutive council meetings and to send a replacement when unable to personally attend a meeting.
- Identify and brief a replacement council member when unable to attend a meeting.

Criteria for Nomination to the Council

- Passionate about the company.
 - Knowledgeable about the company's business and issues.
 - In regular contact with many employees.
 - Known to be open-minded, approachable, and articulate.
 - Represents a constituent business, function, or geography.
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Success Factors for the Council

- Identify and nominate the right people to serve as council members.
- Ensure that all grade levels are equally represented on the council.
- Use a non-communications representative to facilitate council meetings. This will prevent the natural bias that an internal communications manager may have toward his or her own work product and encourage member candor.
- Define and distribute a clear agenda for each meeting well in advance.
- Guarantee each meeting participant at least three to four minutes to share his or her perspective.
- Set expectation with council members that while all feedback is gratefully encouraged, not every suggestion will be acted upon.
- Schedule follow-up conversations directly with the facilitator when council members find they cannot fully express their strong or complex feelings within the four-minute time limit.
- Share summaries of each meeting with president/CEO and the executive staff, with names omitted. Notify council members of any follow-up actions.
- Share openly and keep members involved and motivated at all times.

Suggestions for Getting Council Members to Speak Up

- Create a safe environment. Give assurance of confidentiality. Establish ground rules for mutual respect, tolerance of disagreement, and preventing judgment or attack.
 - Educate and empower. Provide enough information to broaden and sharpen council members' perspectives and be ready to clarify and elaborate issues at hand.
 - Ask provocative questions. Seek information and opinions from members with simple, powerful questions that stimulate thinking and get the discussion going.
 - Use creative approaches. When ideas are not flowing freely, try alternative approaches, such as brainstorming, one-on-one discussions, or breakout group discussions.
 - Stay even and focused. Give everyone an equal opportunity to express their opinions; gently cut off dominating or rambling speakers and guide the discussion back to the agenda. Stay on top of deliverables.
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