

Matching Communication to Risk

Communication needs must be assessed on the facts of their own circumstances. It is an important factor for getting involvement and support for your change outcomes.

Risk is taken here to mean the level of importance for you of ensuring an outcome and/or avoiding a harmful result. This importance could be determined using a typical harm and likelihood assessment matrix. Examples of a high risk could be the value of an outcome to the organisation or the cost to the organisation or individuals if something become an issue. A low risk could be something where it is nice if it happens but there are no serious impacts if it doesn't.

The table below is a risk based approach to communication that illustrates some options for different levels of risk. It is not about the content of the communication but about processes.

The table combines four elements of communication processes in parallel scales:

<i>Intensity</i>	Lean to Fat: the level information sharing that the process makes possible.
<i>Structure</i>	Informal to Formal: the level of structure in the process.
<i>Flow</i>	Mono or Multi directional: the level of interaction between participants in the process.
<i>Record</i>	Low to high documentation: how the process tracks or verifies itself and decisions.

The columns show options for each element, however the overall communication will be a series of interlinked activities.

Notes



Risk	Intensity Fat	Structure Formal	Flow Multi-directional	Record High Documentation
Very High	Face to Face, multiple events, Follow-up contact, Meetings with individuals and/or small groups	Scheduled meetings, Facilitation, Witnesses	Flexible and structured stakeholder input, Issues clarification, Agreements, Follow up actions	Signed minutes, Joint statements, Reports, Statement of process, events, outcomes.
High	Special events, meetings or presentations for individuals or groups	Process based Work time events, Visit to groups by presenter	Group processes, Feedback tools, Forum / Plenary time for input and questions	Verified statement of outcomes, Handouts and notes
Moderate	Team meeting agenda item	Part of meeting, Notify absentees	Group discussion	Meeting agenda and/ or minutes
Low	Web Page, Brochures, Email, Newsletters, Payslips	Intranet site, Direct email, Distribute via work units, lunch rooms, payslip message or insert	Feedback box or email address, Reply option for emails	The Web pages and/or brochures, The emails and/or payslip notes
Very low	Notices, Posters, Word of mouth	Notice boards and walls, Ad hoc conversations	Author details, Contact phone number	The notices or posters
	Lean	Informal	Mono-directional	Low Documentation

As the table suggests, most day to day communication in organisations would be classed as Moderate to Very Low. However, change situations are typically a period of higher risk for an organisation. This suggests a higher number of communication process should occur that match the categories of High to Very High.

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