



Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy – June 2015 (draft)

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Research

This strategy aims to improve employee communication and engagement. It supports the City Council's wider Organisational Development (OD) strategy. The Professor of Management and Director of Knowledge Exchange at Sussex University, Katie Truss, defines the importance of engagement:

“Engagement is about creating wider opportunities for employees to connect with their colleagues, managers and the wider organisation. It is also about creating an environment where employees are motivated to want to connect with their work and really care about doing a good job”.

This view is supported by research:

- engaged employees generate 43% more revenue (Hay Group)
- 59% of engaged employees say that work brings out their most creative ideas, whereas only 3% of the disengaged agree (Gallup)
- engaged staff generally take fewer sick days.

There is consensus across all sectors of business and industry that strong, responsive, two way internal communications lead to a higher degree of staff engagement, commitment and advocacy. To cite some recent examples of available case-studies:

- ANZ Bank's 'Breakout Story'.
- Somerset County Council's 'Let's Make A Difference' campaign.
- Swindon Borough Council's 'A Great Place To Work' programme.

Locally, the council has its own research to draw on although the last Employee Opinion Survey happened in 2010 when 2500 staff took part. More recently as part of the 100:100 initiative, 516

(November 2014) responses were received in response to an internal communications survey between 22 October and 17 November 2014. Key findings included:

- 54 per cent of respondents feel well informed about what's going on in the council, while 44 per cent of respondents are aware of the council's corporate priorities and how they contribute to them
- Employees want to hear news from their line managers. They also want to be able to feedback information, rather than it just being a top-down approach. Currently 56 per cent of respondents said this is how they received council news
- City People is a key source of information for employees, with 94 per cent of them receiving updates from the intranet site. All-staff emails from the Managing Director also proved to be a significant channel of communication, with 75 per cent of respondents saying that that is where they receive news on council developments
- More than half of respondents said that they had team meetings once a month or less – despite the fact that they would prefer to hear news from their managers.
- Only 21 per cent of respondents said that senior managers actively seek their ideas and opinions, which explains the increased desire for two-way communication.

Objectives

1. Increase the number of employees who are aware of the City Council's corporate priorities and understand how they contribute to them from 44 per cent (Nov 14) to 80 per cent by end of November 2015.
2. Increase the number of employees who feel informed about what's going on at the council by 20 per cent from 54 per cent (Nov 14) to 74 per cent by end of November 2015

3. Increase the number of employees who feel proud to serve the people of Wolverhampton and work for the City of Wolverhampton Council (baseline year November 2015)

Strategy

1. The most important thing to note about this strategy is that it is based on evidence – and that this evidence will be generated continuously throughout the internal communications process. As part of the evidence-gathering we will measure :
 - Perceptions and attitudes
 - Performance outcomes (for example, reduced sickness absence, levels of innovation, ideas submitted).
2. The second key element has already been introduced as a guiding principle – that council employees should be aware of any major change or significant challenge before the news reaches the media (including social media).
3. Senior managers are crucial to success and they must be encouraged to lead by example – it is a given that ‘followers’ model leaders’ behaviour. Managers across the organisation will play a vital part in helping employees understand that ‘360° communication’ is everybody’s business.
4. Though the strategy will be ‘digital by design’, it still relies on face-to-face communications, whether in the flesh or through video. This is particularly important given the limits of access to the council’s digital infrastructure for internal communications. That being said, digital channels exist which could be grafted on to our existing infrastructure. We will say a little more about these in the section on **Implementation**.
5. The strategy also depends on the creation of a ‘human intelligence’ network to feed messages up the line to senior managers on behalf of those lacking the confidence to do so themselves.

In other organisations, employees performing this role are known as 'Communications Champions', but that title may not be appropriate for the council. As their function would be to send information 'inwards and upwards' rather than 'downwards and outwards', these people might be better described as 'Advocates'. Rather than making their recruitment the subject of a specific campaign, recruitment messages would be communicated continually through all available channels.

6. In terms of branding, all visual communications will carry the C³ logo as an endorsement. Event names will be variations on the 'Let's Talk' theme – for example, 'Let's Talk Leadership' for the successor to Directions and 'Let's Talk Live' for digital discussion events.
7. Development of a new City People 'social intranet' site for the council, led by Corporate Communications and supported by ICTS, HR and others. This will support enhanced two-way communication.
8. As part of the council's wider OD strategy, the development of a toolkit for managers to support internal communication and engagement.

Implementation

A more detailed view of how we intend to deliver improved internal communication and engagement can be found in the 'Plan-on-a-page' at **Appendix One**.

Key messages:

- First and foremost we're here to serve the people of Wolverhampton and to deliver a stronger economy, stronger communities and a confident, capable council
- Everyone who works for the council – whatever their job role, whether they come into direct contact with the public or not – has a part to play in achieving these corporate priorities

- Despite the financial challenges we face, we want the City of Wolverhampton to be a thriving and prosperous place with opportunities and fairness for all – our job is making this happen
- We are committed to doing all we can to protect and safeguard those who are the most vulnerable in our communities
- The City Council is committed to improving internal employee communication and engagement as part of its C3 transformation programme. '360 communication' – top down, bottom up, across boundaries – is everyone's responsibility. It encourages teamwork, mutual understanding and support and can help us deliver results for our communities
- We are one team – success for one part of the council is success for the whole council and we all have a stake in it
- We need to think smarter about the way we work so our services are efficient, effective and affordable. Working smarter means better use of our assets and technology and closer working with partners to get better value for every pound we spend

1. Target audiences:

- All council employees with access to the corporate network
- All operational council employees without access to the digital network
- Middle managers
- Wider Leadership – Grade 10 and above
- SEB and Service Directors

- Trade Unions (Unison, GMB, Unite)
- Cabinet

2. 'Who does what':

- Cabinet Leads – Cllr Roger Lawrence, Leader of the Council and Cllr Paul Sweet, Cabinet Member for Governance and Performance
- SEB Lead – Keith Ireland, Managing Director
- Communication Leads – Head of Corporate Communications supported by Internal Communications Officer

3. Key communications channels:

- Weekly Core Brief
- Leadership briefings and manager cascades, possibly involving video.
- Interactive digital discussions between senior managers and employees via 'Cover It Live' or a similar digital bolt-on of the type mentioned in the **Strategy** section.
- Specific internal communications campaigns which will require separate plans including launch of the new corporate plan and the Futurespace Programme as priorities for 2015/16
- 'News from the Managing Director' emails and City People stories.
- 'Corporate Core' walkabouts – these will be essential for engaging employees outside

the Civic Centre.

- Payslip inserts – still the most reliable method of reaching ‘offline’ employees.
- The Wall – wall space within the office located on each floor of the Civic Centre for employees to add their thoughts, opinions, ideas and feedback

4. Action plan – see POAP for detailed activity.

Evaluation

1. Objectives 1, 2 and 3:

- November 2014 Internal Communications Survey establishes baseline.
- Snap ‘temperature check’ surveys on specific issues track progress.
- November 2015 Internal Communications Survey tracks shift.
- Campaign reach and number of responses/feedback (for example, levels of engagement with the ‘100:100’ campaign).
- Output measures such as number of City People articles and level of engagement, number of Core Briefs delivered, number of News from the Managing Director emails
- Qualitative analysis/surveys from specific events/briefings eg Leadership Briefings
- Regular quarterly measurement through departmental KPIs produced in week one of July, October, January 2016 and April 2016

