



Stage 2 - LEADERSHIP FOR STRATEGY

Module 15 – ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

The Leadership Academy is a learning and action programme for mayors, senior officials and elected representatives of local government.

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1 MODULE OVERVIEW

1.1 BACKGROUND

- To make its vision come alive, an organisation must be able to communicate with and influence a wide range of organisations, individuals and partners in a cohesive and co-ordinated way.
- Good communication, both internal and external, is fundamental for an organisation to engage with its stakeholders in order to deliver high quality public services. Good communications increase the understanding of the organisation among all stakeholders including the community. Of equal importance is the need to communicate effectively with staff.
- Communication only works when messages are clear and easy to understand, and when it is a two-way process. It's not enough to talk - we have to be able to listen and respond.

1.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To learn tools to develop the highest standards of internal and external communications.

1.3 LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Participants assess the quality of communications in the organisation.
- Participants reflect on the relationship of the organisation with key stakeholder groups.
- Participants understand the nature of communications and learn how engage with different stakeholder groups.
- Participants reflect on the use of different communication methods.
- Participants understand the importance of a communications strategy that creates consistency and professionalism.

As a result of this learning, participants will be able to develop and implement a more professional approach to communications in their organisation.

1.4 DURATION

- 90 minutes

2 MODULE STRUCTURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

- The importance of good communications is explained to participants.

2.2 GROUP EXERCISE 1 – SUCCESS FACTORS IN COMMUNICATIONS

- Participants work in small groups, using the form in Section 5.1 'Self-Assessment: Success Factors in Communications' to assess the quality of communications in their organisation. Participants consider the evidence as a whole group;
- In the feedback session, each group identifies 2 actions that could be taken by the organisation to improve communication.

2.3 GROUP EXERCISE 2 – STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS

- Participants are divided into five groups;
- Each group work on one of the following stakeholders, using the Section 5.2 template:

*(1) Other local government organisation;
(2) Citizens; (3) Media; (4) Local businesses; (5) Local NGOs*

- Each group analyses the relationship between the stakeholder and the organisation:
 - *Why and how the stakeholder is important to the organisation.*
 - *What the stakeholder would expect from the organisation.*
 - *Communication needs of the stakeholder that the organisation should respect.*
- Participants are facilitated into a feedback plenary session.

2.4 GROUP EXERCISE 3 – DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATION APPROACH

- Participants (in groups of 3) select a strategic message that needs to be communicated. This could be an announcement of a new service / change of service / community message etc.;
- Participants are facilitated into a feedback plenary session.

3 WORKING DEFINITIONS

3.1 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

A communications strategy is a document that expresses how communication activity will be used to support the delivery of the organisations overall strategy. This will include how an

organisation wishes to share information with external and internal stakeholders. It should give direction to all media, online, internal, marketing, publications and public relations communications activity undertaken by the organisation.

4 KEY CONCEPTS

Good communications – both internal and external - is fundamental for an organisation for engaging with its stakeholders and for providing high quality public services. Good communications increase the understanding of the organisation among stakeholders; it enables them to focus their efforts in engaging with the organisation; it lays the foundation for sharing a plausible vision for the future in which all groups have a stake and to which each group can contribute.

Good communication is open. It is:

- vertical – from top to bottom (when managers need to keep staff informed) and bottom to top (when managers need to listen to their staff and allow them to take responsibility);
- horizontal, within teams and between teams across the organisation and with external stakeholders, as the foundation of a 'learning organisation', so that lessons from good or bad practice in one area can be learned throughout the organisation and the implications of policy initiatives are understood in their entirety.

Some organisations do not consider the significance and risks associated to a poor approach to communication. Internally this lack of care towards communication can result in disengaged and unproductive staff, externally it can be reputationally damaging with the very communities the organisation is there to provide services for. Managers often expect communications 'to just happen'; they do not plan for it, set aside resources to pay for it, or provide the expertise that good communication requires. The obstacles that prevent good communications (e.g. a culture of hierarchy) are left in place. Managers fail to see the close link between good communication and high levels of performance.

This must change if the organisation is to deliver good governance. Communication must be professional and use all opportunities including social media. Each approached needs to be risk

managed – a misplaced comment on a social media site can have significant repercussions.

A Communication Strategy needs to be based upon the principles of good communication, namely;

- Visibility
- Simplicity
- Repetition
- Value
- Variety
- Listening
- Consistency and
- Evaluation

Visibility - strong two-way communications require visibility which leads to recognition and acceptance plus it allows the community to see the breadth and value of what the organisation delivers.

Simplicity – stakeholders are busy with many aspects of their lives so communication must be simple and straight forward to be effective.

Repetition - wherever possible a repetitive schedule should be devised for message placement to ensure it receives community consideration. The more a message is repeated the wider its audience will become.

Value - ensuring a message has a reasonable level of value for the recipient is paramount to gaining his/her attention and interest.

Variety - to ensure a message is received by the community at large it needs to be delivered through a number of different communication vehicles. The more vehicles (website, newspapers, mailing list, etc.) it appears in the wider its likely coverage will be.

Listening - good (and effective) communication requires two parties - the giver and the receiver. If you send a message you must also expect to receive some form of response at times. It is important that feedback on all issues is encouraged and processed. Nothing will dampen

stakeholder's enthusiasm quicker than the belief they are not being listened to.

Communication objectives can be to:

- secure and strengthen the reputation of the organisation as a community leader and an effective and efficient provider of high quality outcomes that are focused on community values and priorities;
- build and maintain a professional corporate identity;
- promote the image of the organisation as an effective, efficient and listening body focused on public needs;
- ensure that messages delivered are consistent and co-ordinated across all

channels to give maximum support to the organisations strategic priorities;

- ensure that all staff understand the priorities of the organisation and feel valued and able to contribute to major changes affecting services they provide;
- ensure that the full diversity of the community has visibility help ensure equality of access for all services.

Internal communication plays a key role in ensuring that staff know the organisations plans and priorities.

Employees need to understand how their actions contribute to the overall achievement of priorities and how their behaviour affects the way the organisation is perceived internally and externally

5 EXERCISES

5.1 EXERCISE 1 – GROUP EXERCISE 1- SELF-ASSESSMENT: SUCCESS FACTORS IN COMMUNICATIONS

Consider the success factors set out in the table below; assess how good your organisation is at communications. Where there is room for improvement, list actions to be taken.

SUCCESS FACTORS IN COMMUNICATIONS	HOW WELL DOES YOUR ORGANISATION ACHIEVE THEM?	ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The organisation gives importance to internal and external communications. ➤ All staff are committed to, and trained in, good communication. ➤ Staff feel they are well informed about the work of the organisation. ➤ Stakeholders feel they are well informed about the work of the organisation. ➤ The organisations communications strategy /policies / plans are realistic. ➤ There is a well-resourced, up-to-date Communications Strategy that is used to direct the organisations communications. ➤ It is clear who speaks on behalf of the organisation officially, what the main messages are, and who the key audiences are. ➤ The organisation uses a wide range of communications tools effectively, including social media. ➤ The organisation is good at listening and getting feedback. ➤ The organisation works well with the media. 		

5.2 EXERCISE 2 – GROUP EXERCISE 2- STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS

	OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS	CITIZENS	MEDIA	BUSINESSES	NGOs
Importance of stakeholder to the organisation.					
Stakeholder's expectations of local government organisation.					
Key communications needs of stakeholder					

5.3 EXERCISE 3 – GROUP EXERCISE 3 – DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATION APPROACH

In groups select an issue that needs to be communicated such as a change in a service provided to citizens and complete the table.

Area for consultation		Key dates/activity/information
Why do you need to consult? (Brief Summary)		
What are the main aims and objectives?		
What do you need to find out?		
What do you already know? (from previous consultation, knowledge or experience)		
Who will you consult with?		
When will you consult?		
How will you consult?		
How will the consultation be communicated/publicised?		
Who will analyse the results from the consultation?		
Who will act on the consultation?		
Who will the results be reported to and when?		
How will you provide feedback to respondents and when?		
Who will evaluate how successful the		

Area for consultation		Key dates/activity/information
consultation has been and when?		

6 REFERENCES
