

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

Communicating Through Organisational Transformation

An anonymised executive briefing: how a large organisation maintained confidence, clarity and delivery through a complex programme of structural change.

The situation

A large organisation embarked on a programme of structural change affecting thousands of staff and multiple stakeholder groups. Uncertainty was high, trust was fragile, and operational delivery had to continue throughout. Early communications had been accurate but reactive: information followed decisions at a distance, and rumour consistently arrived first.

The challenge

The organisation did not lack communications capacity. It lacked alignment between the change programme, its leaders and its communicators. Messages were approved individually but contradicted each other in aggregate; staff heard about decisions from external sources; and engagement activity measured attendance rather than understanding.

The approach

- **Governance first.** Communications was positioned inside the transformation programme's decision-making, not downstream of it, so that engagement could be planned alongside decisions rather than after them.
- **Leadership visibility.** Senior leaders were supported to communicate directly, regularly and honestly, including about what was not yet decided.
- **Staged, honest engagement.** Each phase of change had a defined engagement plan built on Think-Feel-Do: what staff needed to understand, how they could reasonably be expected to feel, and what they were being asked to do.
- **Listening as evidence.** Structured feedback channels fed staff sentiment and questions into the programme weekly, shaping both decisions and communications.
- **Outcome measurement.** Success was measured by understanding, confidence and adoption, not by the volume of communications produced.

What changed

- Change delivered to timetable, with staff understanding measurably improved at each phase.
- Leaders reported more constructive conversations, grounded in a single shared narrative.
- The engagement model was adopted as standard practice for subsequent phases of the programme.

Lessons for leaders

- People can accept difficult change; what corrodes trust is discovering it second-hand.
- Communications belongs inside change governance, not at the end of it.
- "We don't know yet" is a legitimate message, and more credible than silence.
- Measure understanding and adoption, not activity delivered.
- Listening is not a courtesy; it is the evidence base for the next decision.

Organisations don't change through communications alone. They change when strategy, people and behaviour move in the same direction.

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