

# GRADS *of* LIFE

## Change Communications in a Skills-First Movement

Implementing skills-first success requires communicating early and often

### Overview

Skills-first change communication is the dissemination of messaging across key stakeholder groups to help improve their understanding of a skills-first transformation, explain the impact of a skills-first approach across the organization, and provide relevant updates on the current state of implementation.

#### Key Stats

**80%** of projects with effective change communication meet their original goals vs. 52% of projects without

**1.7X** stronger financial performance for companies with effective communication practices

**30%** more likely for change to “stick” when employees are invested in it

**Pre-Work:** Before developing a change communications plan, your team should have already defined the change, identified and engaged key stakeholders, and established leadership accountability.

### Developing A Change Communications Plan

Developing a comprehensive change communications plan for your skills-first practice implementation is best done by a team of change leaders. Proper planning will ensure that change communication is delivered promptly, effectively, consistently, and pervasively.

#### Components of a Communications Plan

##### 1. Key messages by stakeholder

Consider each audience, their role and relationship to the change, their unique information needs, and the primary objective for their communication when crafting messaging. The most effective messages leverage both quantitative (data and research) and qualitative (narrative and storytelling) components.

Of 10 proof points tested by Deloitte and McKinsey, hiring managers found that the two most convincing arguments for adopting or expanding skills-first hiring were attracting and retaining talent. This critical stakeholder analysis insight indicates that data and stories around talent sourcing and retention will resonate most with hiring managers.



## 2. Communications channels and frequency (see tools and resources section)

Evaluate the communication channels at your disposal by considering their capabilities, usability, and intended reach and impact. Schedule communications across priority channels in coordination with your broader strategic communications and implementation plan.

Organizations who incorporate learning and training as a component of their skills-first change communications take into account geographic location, audience size, and scheduling demands when deciding how to format training delivery. These factors often dictate the length and number of sessions and whether those sessions are conducted in-person or virtually (all decisions which can be tracked in a change communications plan).

## 3. Communications objectives and KPIs

Identify and track key success metrics for your change communications and establish feedback channels and support resources. Monitor the impact of different messages and channels to inform and update the communications plan and strategy.

Changes or patterns in self-reported metrics like a survey question rating current understanding of skills-first practices, observable behaviors like utilization of skills-first hiring rubrics, and existing metrics like employee retention can all serve as indicators of progress. Measures and targets for change communication can be incorporated into a change communications plan in order to identify opportunities mitigate risks and accelerate adoption.

## Key Takeaways

### Effective change communications should:

- **Tailor messaging** to align with the motivations, needs, and priorities of key stakeholder groups. This clarifies the “why” behind the change to drive buy-in, enabling them to move from awareness to ownership along the [Change Adoption Curve](#).
- **Consider channel strategy** when crafting a communications plan, optimizing mediums based on messaging, user engagement and communication objectives. Ensure consistency with strategic communications goals and governance.
- **Include regular evaluation** of communication tools and tactics. Track and measure communications efficacy, collecting and incorporating feedback to adjust communications.



## Supporting Resources and Tools

### What are the information needs?

Identify the information each stakeholder needs to successfully perform their role. This takes some time and analysis but it's worth the investment to make sure you have all the stakeholders covered in your plan.

Stakeholder	Stakeholder's Role or Relationship with the Change	Information They Need to Successfully Perform Their Role	Potential Communication Channels (including existing and to-be-created channels)
[stakeholder]			
[stakeholder]			
[stakeholder]			
[stakeholder]			
[stakeholder]			
[stakeholder]			
[stakeholder]			
[stakeholder]			

### What is the tactical communication plan?

The tactical plan brings it all together. This is where you take everything you've identified on the previous pages and create a sequence of messages for everyone, so the plan achieves the goals you described on page 2. It can be useful to put this information in a spreadsheet to actively manage and track your communications.

Target Date	Message Name	Audience	Channel	Description / Purpose	Reviewers / Approvers
<i>Identify the ideal date to distribute the message</i>	<i>Give message a name that makes it easy to refer to</i>	<i>List the stakeholders that will receive this message</i>	<i>Name the channel you're using for the message</i>	<i>Briefly describe the message and the outcomes you want to achieve</i>	<i>List the people that need to review and/or approve the message before it's distributed</i>
[target date]					
[target date]					
[target date]					
[target date]					
[target date]					
[target date]					

