# How to draw up a communication plan

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Whenever we take a decision which affects many people, we need to communicate. This sometimes requires a communication plan. Such a plan could address how best to communicate a new study programme, a research project, an organisational change, a new IT system – or something completely different.

If you methodically answer all the questions below, you will end up with a communication plan.

## 1. Current situation and background

Why are communication initiatives required? What needs are to be met? What problems do you want to solve? In what way can communication help – are other initiatives perhaps (also) needed?

A plan starts with an analysis of the current situation. A brief background description ensures a consensus on the conditions among you and your colleagues.

## 2. What is the purpose and goal?

Why do you need to communicate and what do you wish to achieve? Increased awareness? Better understanding? A change in behaviour? Communication is not an end in itself but rather a means to achieving a result at work.

Many goals? Prioritise! And remember that a goal must be s-m-a-r-t (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound).

## 3. Target groups and stakeholders

Whom are you addressing? What are their needs, knowledge and wishes? What do you want the target group to know, think, do and perhaps feel?

Sometimes it is more helpful to start from the broader concept of the stakeholder. Unlike target groups, stakeholders cannot be chosen, they are an existing group which affects outcomes whether or not you communicate with them. Find out who they are by mapping the stakeholders in the issue at hand. If there are many different ones, group them according to a common denominator, such as their need for information and participation or influence and interest.

## 4. Message

What do you want to say? Are your messages relevant and appropriate for your target groups? In order for a message to be interesting, comprehensible and usable, it must be formulated from the target group’s perspective: What does this mean for me? How can this information facilitate my work? etc.

Telling everybody everything usually results in nothing reaching anyone. Not least since we live in an information overload in which messages often have to be very succinct and sharp in order to get through.

What effect do you wish to achieve with your messages? Consider this both in a general way and for each activity. For example, before an important meeting: what do you want the participants to remember/think/do after the meeting?

## 5. What channels shall I use?

Where do your target groups usually search for information? Online, in meetings, from colleagues, social media? A combination of different platforms is often the most effective.

People are different and also want variety. Moreover, a message needs to be repeated and coordinated, both in different channels and over time, in order to produce an effect. Remember that even an activity such as leading a workshop or a training session for one or several target groups can count as part of your communication plan.

Choose the channel on the basis of what you want to achieve with your communication. Information in newsletters or online can work very well if the goal is for the target group to become aware of something.

The more complex the information, the greater the need for meetings and dialogue. It is usually in conversation that understanding, meaning and participation are generated. The most important source of information for employees is often their manager and other colleagues.

Written information – perhaps a personal blog which you regularly update, or a question and answer document – can then function as a complement. Or why not use infographics? People process images a great deal faster than text.

## 6. Who should say it?

Who is the best messenger? Are there any “ambassadors” who can help to disseminate the message? The ability to grasp a message varies depending on who delivers it.

## 7. When shall I say it?

At what point is it best to communicate? If you are drawing up a communication plan for a project, it needs to contain a timetable and plan of activities based on the important milestones of the project (see point 11).

## 8. What does it cost?

What resources do you have – in terms of time, money and expertise? Are the costs in reasonable proportion to what you want to achieve? What does it cost to do nothing? Prepare a budget and allocate responsibilities.

## 9. How should one evaluate the initiative and check its effect?

Consider what methods you can use to evaluate your communication initiative. How are the results to be followed up? Are the effects measurable?

## 10. Is your plan based on Lund University’s guidelines and rules for communication and its graphic profile?

There are guidelines for Lund University’s communication and a graphic profile which is to be followed. The aim of these rules is to facilitate your work and to ensure clarity in the University’s communication.

If you need advice and support, please contact Corporate Communications or the communications officer within your part of the organisation. For further information and tools for communication, see: <http://www.staff.lu.se/support-and-tools/communication-and-graphic-profile>

## 11. Activity plan

Once the communication plan is ready, you should produce a clear, concrete overview of planned activities.

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| **Activity** | **Target group** | **Message** | **Goal** | **Budget** | **Person in charge** | **Deadline** |
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