Communicating and engaging during change

Purpose of this guide:

- This guide will help you think through your communications and engagement needs for change on any scale.

- For larger scale or formal change programmes (such as Fit for the Future Stations or formal organisational restructures), your Communications Business Partner(s) will work with you to ensure the communications and engagement approach is the right one. This guide will help you to consider what you might need to prepare for meetings with them.

- For smaller scale change programmes (with minimal impact on people) you may feel able to handle the communications and engagement on your own. This guide will help provide you with some simple tips and advice to support you.

- If you're not sure whether you should be speaking to the Employee Communications and Engagement team or you'd like help and advice at any stage, please email employeecommunications@tfl.gov.uk

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Change can be confronting, intimidating, exciting or rewarding for staff

- People react in many different ways to change (see Understanding and Managing the Impact of Change for details of the Change Curve) and it is important to consider the impact of change on your team to ensure you can manage their reactions to support them in seeing change in a positive light.

- It is important to plan for communications and engagement throughout a change process to ensure you have thoroughly prepared in advance and that you're able to keep people updated throughout the process.

- The more people feel involved in and informed of change that impacts them, the more likely they are to engage with it.

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Be prepared

There are six key things people want to know and you will need to have the information ready before you start communicating.

1. The context: what is happening and how does this fit into the bigger picture?

2. Why this is happening: what is the compelling case for change?

3. The timeline for change: what will happen when?

4. What impact is this going to have on them personally?

5. What are the steps along the change process?

6. The conclusion: what it will look like?

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Plan your communications carefully

- Work out what needs communicating, to whom, how and when

- Timing is important. If possible, managers concerned should be informed first, so they are prepared to support their teams throughout change

- If appropriate, check your messages with Employee Relations

- Consider how you are going to share your messages with people. Are you going to use email, newsletters, or face to face briefings? You could use a mix of channels depending on what suits.

- Options to consider include:

  - Weekly update (face-to-face with follow up email)

  - Drop-in sessions

  - Staff briefings

  - 1-2-1 meetings

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Map out your messages and timing

- Avoid secrets or surprises wherever possible

- Avoid Chinese whispers by ensuring information is shared with everyone involved in a timely manner

- Remember your team members may want certainty more than they want a say: give as much clear and accurate information as you can at all times

- Be honest if you haven't got all of the information, and commit to coming back with updates

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Be a consistent and confident leader

- The more confident you are about the change, the more confident your team will be

- Role-model new behaviours, which will encourage others to adopt them too

- Keep your rationale and key messages for change consistent. Understanding the reason for change will help your staff stay focused on what needs to be done.

- Remember to treat everyone with equal respect, no matter where they might be in the change

- Make time for your team, no matter how busy you are

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Involve managers in planning and communicating

- Your leadership team can play an important role in keeping your people informed, and identifying and addressing concerns.

- They will also be well placed to know of any individuals who might be more resistant to the change, and help work through issues.

- Make sure they have the information they need to answer questions.
  If answers won't be available until later in the process because the change is still evolving, make sure they know decision deadlines.

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Understand when to engage your people

- The sooner you involve people in change or engage with them on the impact of change, the more time they have to be able to understand and support it.

- However, you need to have thought through how the change will affect them and what their likely reactions will be before engaging with them.

- If the change requires a formal consultation process or will have an impact on Trades Unions, you'll need to discuss this with Employee Relations, HR and Employee Communications before sharing with any of your people.

Inform AND listen

- Communicating with people about change is a continuous process. Always provide regular updates to avoid an information vacuum as this can worry the people involved

- Communication should always be two-way: invite feedback and respond to it, acting on ideas and concerns

- If you're asked questions that could be relevant to everyone involved, develop Q&As to share with everyone. You could even consider creating these in advance if you know what questions are likely to be asked

- Put yourself in your people's shoes. Think about the Change Curve and how people may react emotionally. Sometimes the smallest things can have the biggest impact so be sensitive to how your people might be feeling

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Involve people in planning and implementation

- When you can, try to create opportunities to enable people to feed into proposed changes. Factor in their views and if you're not able to take any suggestions on board, explain fully why not

- Consider whether you could create teams to work on specific aspects of the change

- Remember that your team members have a close knowledge of your systems and processes, and may have valuable suggestions

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