

CHOOSING A COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

Channel	At its best	Potential downsides	Think about
Team meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can make communication personal and relevant to the team involved Opportunity for discussion, feedback, questioning and ideas Good line manager can facilitate a lively and interactive session Can help build understanding and involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success depends on skill of leader Time commitment for both manager and audience Beware of content overload; other channels are more effective for information delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making the best possible use of this time – it's valuable Training line managers Making sure you uphold meeting discipline if you want them to happen
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can reach mass audiences fast Cost effective and simple to use Consistent and controlled message Reaches the recipient directly Good for information, awareness or instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not everyone may have access Impersonal and open to misinterpretation Can result quickly in information overload Can't tell if messages have been read Doesn't prioritize messages Can't generate dialogue or discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controlling access to mass distribution lists Using the subject box to get across your key message Keeping it short and simple Using headings and bullet points for key messages and to break up the text
Intranet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast and consistent Possibilities are endless – can be entertaining and visually snappy Good for information store, reference and raising awareness Info shares and bulletin boards good for involvement and discussion Web stats show who is reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not everyone may have access Relies on people seeking out information People may not have time to read it Difficult to police Can become unwieldy, hard to navigate and full of outdated information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including “killer content” to draw people in (expenses forms, classified ads and processes people need to do their jobs)
Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative and entertaining Shows real people talking about their experiences The camera never lies – can show proof of progress Makes people and places accessible for a mass audience Consistent, controlled message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially expensive Not interactive on its own Can be seen as glossy corporate propaganda Talking heads alone are rarely engaging Can be difficult for mobile workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using as part of a briefing session to stimulate debate Using “real people” to talk about their experiences, not just senior execs
Print magazine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach the entire company with a consistent message Even time-pressured staff can read in coffee breaks, on trains, etc. Can address/reflect staff feedback and respond Can show how everything fits together and reinforce company brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be seen as biased and not credible Information dates quickly Challenging to make it relevant to all audiences No opportunity for discussion or checking understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to encourage people to open it, e.g., a competition Using a staff editorial board to test content and make sure articles address the real issues

An employee magazine is just one channel among many that are available to you to convey your messages. Use this tool to check the advantages and disadvantages of each channel.

Channel	At its best	Potential downsides	Think about
Audio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good for remote workforces Effective for information and instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relies on people choosing to play it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including a hook that will make people listen (e.g. as above, a competition)
Notice boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visible and may catch people's eye when too time pressured to read anything else Good for instructions and information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not be read Usually no owner – how often do you see out-of-date posters? Lose their impact if over-used by every project in the company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting a “display until” date on posters Posting in prominent places such as in the lift or by the coffee machine
Text messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good for reaching remote workers Good for crisis communication Can be used to direct people to further sources of information Can update senior managers on important news whilst on leave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will annoy people very quickly if overused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making sure you have mobile contact details for all your senior team in case of crisis
Events / roadshows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for key people to reach mass audiences face-to-face Flexible and responsive Can include Q&A sessions, break-out groups and involve people Can build team spirit and motivate Can be used to address controversial issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be one way “tell” sessions Agenda set by center may not be what the audience wants May be expensive Time consuming for organizers, presenters and audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involving staff in setting the agenda and format Involving staff in event itself, as hosts or facilitators Using interactive voting technology to maximize audience involvement
Open forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives opportunity to raise and discuss the real issues Genuine open dialogue Helps leaders to understand how things really are Enables people to feel heard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissive or aggressive response to questions can close down dialogue Line managers can feel disempowered if their decisions are over-ruled or contradicted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issuing a summary of discussion for everyone to see Proactively raising difficult issues or asking for questions in advance to prompt the real debate
Site visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows leaders are listening and want to see what the real issues are Keeps leaders in touch with the real issues Promotes dialogue and understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders won't experience the real issues if treated as “royal visits” May do more harm than good if leaders show by what they say that they are out of touch Time-consuming for senior leaders to visit multiple sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including a spell of work shadowing/call listening alongside organised forums Giving leaders a good brief on site issues before they visit Tracking issues raised and reporting back on actions
Voicemail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helpful for remote workers Opportunity to hear about issues from senior leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People will hang up if the message is too long 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using a text message to alert remote workers to an urgent voicemail announcement
Web-casting and similar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for senior leaders to reach mass audiences with a consistent message in real time Can involve Q&A sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be expensive Need the right technology in place Noise levels may be inappropriate in some offices May be difficult for all staff to be available at the same time (e.g., call centers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding out about new technology continually emerging in this area

This table is also available on Melcrum's Internal Comms Hub, go to: www.internalcommshub.com/trial/channels/toolkit/choosechannel.shtml