# CHOOSING A COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

## Channel | At its best | Potential downsides | Think about
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**Team meetings** | • Can make communication personal and relevant to the team involved<br>• Opportunity for discussion, feedback, questioning and ideas<br>• Good line manager can facilitate a lively and interactive session<br>• Can help build understanding and involvement | • Success depends on skill of leader<br>• Time commitment for both manager and audience<br>• Awareness of content overload: other channels are more effective for information delivery | • Making the best possible use of this time – it’s valuable<br>• Training line managers<br>• Making sure you uphold meeting discipline if you want them to happen

**Email** | • Can reach mass audiences fast<br>• Cost effective and simple to use<br>• Consistent and controlled message<br>• Reaches the recipient directly<br>• Good for information, awareness or instruction | • Not everyone may have access<br>• Impersonal and open to misinterpretation<br>• Can result quickly in information overload<br>• Can’t tell if messages have been read<br>• Doesn’t prioritize messages<br>• Can’t generate dialogue or discussion | • Controlling access to mass distribution lists<br>• Using the subject box to get across your key message<br>• Keeping it short and simple<br>• Using headings and bullet points for key messages and to break up the text

**Intranet** | • Fast and consistent<br>• Possibilities are endless – can be entertaining and visually snappy<br>• Good for information store, reference and raising awareness<br>• Info shares and bulletin boards good for involvement and discussion<br>• Web stats show who is reading | • Not everyone may have access<br>• Requires people seeking out information<br>• People may not have time to read it<br>• Difficult to police<br>• Can become unwieldy, hard to navigate and full of outdated information | • Including “killer content” to draw people in (<em>in person</em> events, classified ads and processes people need to do their jobs)

**Video** | • Creative and entertaining<br>• Shows real people talking about their experiences<br>• The camera never lies – can show proof of progress<br>• Makes people and places accessible for a mass audience<br>• Consistent, controlled message | • Potentially expensive<br>• Not interactive on its own<br>• Can be seen as glossy corporate propaganda<br>• Talking heads alone are rarely engaging<br>• Can be difficult for mobile workforce<br>• Using as part of a briefing session to stimulate debate<br>• Using “real people” to talk about their experiences, not just senior execs | • Using headings and bullet points for key messages and to break up the text

**Print magazine** | • Reach the entire company with a consistent message<br>• Even time-pressured staff can read in coffee breaks, on trains, etc.<br>• Can address/reflect staff feedback and respond<br>• Can show how everything fits together and reinforce company brand | • Can be seen as biased and not credible<br>• Information dated quickly<br>• Challenging to make it relevant to all audiences<br>• No opportunity for discussion or checking understanding | • How to encourage people to open it, e.g., a competition<br>• Using a staff editorial board to test content and make sure articles address the real issues

**Audio** | • Good for remote workforces<br>• Effective for information and instruction | • Relies on people choosing to play it<br>• Including a hook that will make people listen (e.g., as above, a competition)

**Notice boards** | • Visible and may catch people’s eye when too<br>• Usually less perceived by them<br>• Good for instructions and information | • May not be read<br>• Usually no owner – how often do you see out-of-date posters?<br>• Lose their impact if over-used by every project in the company | • Putting a “display until” date on posters<br>• Posting in prominent places such as in the lift or by the coffee machine

**Text messaging** | • Good for reaching remote workers<br>• Good for crisis communications<br>• Can be used to direct people to further sources of information<br>• Can update senior managers on important news whilst on leave | • Will annoy people very quickly if discovered<br>• May create a culture of treatment “informed” | • Making sure you have mobile contact details<br>• For all your senior team in case of crisis

**Events / roadshows** | • Opportunity for key people to reach mass audiences face-to-face<br>• Flexible and responsive<br>• Can include Q&A sessions, breakout groups and involve people<br>• Can build team spirit and motivate<br>• Can be used to address controversial issues<br>• Including “killer content” to draw people in (<em>in person</em> events, classified ads and processes people need to do their jobs) | • Can be one way “tell” sessions<br>• Agenda set by center may not be what the audience wants<br>• May be expensive<br>• Time consuming for organizers, presenters and audience | • Involving staff in setting the agenda and format<br>• Involving staff in event itself, as hosts or facilitators<br>• Using interactive voting technology to maximize audience involvement

**Open forum** | • Gives opportunity to raise and discuss the real issues<br>• Genuine open dialogue<br>• Helps leaders understand how things really are<br>• Enables people to feel heard | • Discursive or aggressive response to questions can close down dialogue<br>• Line managers can feel disempowered if their decisions are overt-ruled or contradicted<br>• Issuing a summary of discussion for everyone to see<br>• Practically raising difficult issues or asking for questions in advance to prompt the real debate | • Issuing a summary of discussion for everyone to see

**Site visits** | • Shows leaders are listening and want to see what the real issues are<br>• Keeps leaders in touch with the real issues<br>• Promotes dialogue and understanding<br>• Helps leaders see what the real issues are<br>• Enables people to feel heard | • Leaders won’t experience the real issues if treated as “royal visits”<br>• May do more harm than good if leaders show by what they say that they are out of touch<br>• Time-consuming for senior leaders to visit multiple sites<br>• Involving staff in setting the agenda and format<br>• Involving staff in event itself, as hosts or facilitators<br>• Using interactive voting technology to maximize audience involvement

**Voice mail** | • Helpful for remote workers<br>• Opportunity to hear about issues from senior leaders | • People will hang up if the message is too long<br>• Using a text message to alert remote workers to an urgent voicemail announcement

**Web-casting and similar** | • Opportunity for senior leaders to reach mass audiences with a consistent message in real time<br>• Can involve Q&A sessions | • May be expensive<br>• Need the right technology in place<br>• Noise levels may be inappropriate in some offices<br>• May be difficult for all staff to be available at the same time (e.g., call centers) | • Finding out about new technology continually emerging in this area

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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.

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