HR & PAYROLL SOFTWARE

Cascade
IRIS Human Capital Management

A BEST-PRACTICE GUIDE
MAXIMISING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT:
SELF SERVICE ROLLOUT COMMUNICATIONS

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THE CHALLENGE: IT'S NOT ONE SIZE FITS ALL

Once a decision has been made to proceed with a new HR system, the implementation project takes priority (as it should) while you move through the planning and data transfer, and HR user training stages of the project. Once everything else is ready to go, attention turns to sharing the new system with the business, and communications with the end users take centre stage.

Your new vendor will support you through the implementation and rollout stages as best they can, but it is important to remember that internal communications should always be bespoke. Template emails written in 'corporate speak' that don't address any of the original staff concerns will not be as effective as a staged communication strategy that maps out your key messaging, and utilises a variety of channels to reach the staff in your organisation. Ultimately, your plan should be designed to suit your organisation, your project and, most importantly, your people.

To assist you with developing the communications plan for your Self Service rollout, Cascade HR has developed this guide to highlight some of the key areas you should consider, with a view to maximising the positive sentiment amongst your staff to the new system, and achieving excellent engagement levels internally.

This Guide will break internal communications planning into four key areas for your consideration;

* The What: Key Messages

* The Who: Your People

* The When: Timing is Key; and

* The How: Cutting Through the Noise

Each section will provide you with top tips and practical examples to demonstrate the difference that can be made by good planning and forethought.

A supporting strategy template document can also be provided to assist you with getting your plan mapped out clearly ahead of the launch.

TOP TIP: DON'T GO IT ALONE

Consider who in your organisation may have the tools to help you with this part of the project. You may have a dedicated Internal Communications resource who you can ask for help.

If not, ask your Marketing team for some support, as many of the internal communications principles are the same as external marketing.

Systems available to those teams – that they are probably already using – may also assist with engagement tracking throughout the campaign.

THE WHAT: KEY MESSAGES

The first thing you want to consider is exactly what you are trying to say, both overall and within each communication.

Understanding your key messages for the rollout is vital in order to understand how much information there is to disseminate at this stage of the project, and to ensure they are communicated in the most efficient way possible.

Consider the chronology of these messages as well. Timing is crucial, and if one key message relies on your audience accepting another one, you need to ensure they are delivered in the correct order.

The level of detail you need to deliver as part of this campaign, and the tone that should be adopted, will be different for every organisation as it will be dependent on several factors, such as:

- The size and type of organisation

- Internal brand values and drivers

- Previous processes/systems

- Typical computer access and literacy among staff

- Staff awareness levels of the project

- Staff involvement in the early stages of the project, if any

- Pain points in previous system/ process for end users, if any

- The likely impact on the end user

- Roles in relation to the new system e.g. Are people managers being addressed in their capacity as Line Managers, or as End-Users? If both, how are you keeping the two messages clear?

Consider the following two emails. Neither is wrong; but they have been written for different organisations. Which of these would be more appropriate in your own organisation, and what changes would you make?

Good Morning,

We are excited to announce that, in line with our business objectives for the year, we will be launching a new HR software system to the business next week, called Cascade. This is an important investment in our people and will give us the ability to make the most of the company's most important asset: you.

In addition to real-time reporting ability, the system will provide us with a more secure and convenient one-stop shop for the important policies and documents kept by the HR team that we want you to have access to.

Later this week, user guides will be available that will provide all the information you need to login to the system and perform tasks such as booking holidays and updating your personal information in the system, etc.

The launch is the culmination of a lot of hard work by several teams across the business, but particularly HR and IT, who have been working to identify the right supplier for us for the past 6 months. We are all excited to see what it can do.

Regards, CEO

Hi,

You may have heard the good news about Cascade, our new HR software which will be launched on <DATE>.

I wanted to let you know today about three of the key features that will be available to you in the system:

- *EASY HOLIDAY BOOKING: No forms and no lengthy approval processes. The online request takes less than a minute to submit, and the system will calculate your days remaining instantly, so you know exactly what you have left.*

- *YOU CAN ACCESS ALL YOUR PAYSLIPS WHENEVER YOU NEED THEM: Simply login for access to your payslips. Whether you need to view or print them, it's as easy as that.*

- *MANAGE YOUR OWN ACCOUNT INFORMATION: If you change your bank account or move address, you can login and update the record yourself, so you can be confident the details will be spot on!*

Links to user guides that will step you through the system will be available next week, and each team will have a 'superuser' they can go to with questions. Naturally, the HR team will also be on hand to help everyone find their way around the new system.

We have been working hard to find the right system for us; Cascade will not only deliver on business objectives, it will make life a little easier for everyone across the business, and we are very excited.

Regards, HR Business Partner

THE WHO: YOUR PEOPLE

The most important factor in drafting any communication is the audience. This is the main reason why any software vendor shouldn't try to design your communication strategy for you: they don't know your people the way you do.

The success of your communication strategy will depend on you being able to put yourself in the shoes of your audience and think about what you would want to know if you were them. What questions would you want answered, and what kind of communication strategy would you engage with?

TOP TIP: GET FEEDBACK EARLY

One way to do this is to discuss the project with an early adopters group and listen to their feedback.

If they raise issues that could apply to different people across the business, then you should consider addressing these issues up front in your communications to get ahead of potential issues or negativity.

Some of the audience factors that might influence your communications strategy might be:

- Staff demographics
- Typical computer literacy across the business
- The general attitude towards change in the organisation
- Are staff all in one location and easy to reach, or do you need to account for spread across multiple geographies/sites?
- Does the company have the right email distribution list/s in place to ensure you get your message to everyone it needs to reach?

You may also like to think about who the messaging will be coming from, as different people within the business will invoke different reactions from the staff.

For example, in a smaller organisation in a single office the CEO may have great rapport with all the staff and communicate with them regularly, so the messaging could start there. However, in a larger organisation, an email from the CEO may not be as engaging for end-users on the ground. In that case, you may consider sending the communications from HR, line managers, or a variety of people throughout the campaign.

Consider the following communications. They demonstrate the impact on content, language and tone that the intended audience may have on a message. The same messaging has been delivered first to the CEO, then to line managers, before finally being tweaked for end users.

TO CEO: "Cascade's absence management is second to none; it will provide us with the ability to automatically produce detailed and bespoke reports regularly, based on real time information. This level of intelligence can then be used to proactively address patterns of absence across the business to minimise the resulting cost to the business".

TO LINE MANAGERS: "Cascade's absence management is excellent; it offers you the ability to easily manage your team's holiday requests from anywhere, while also giving you access to real time information around patterns of absence, such as Bradford Factor Scores."

TO END USERS: "Cascade makes boking holidays easy, with online requests that take less than a minute, and a personal dashboard calculating your days remaining for you instantly. The calendar also shows your team so you can easily see when others are already planning leave.

Sick leave is even easier. Your manager will open the case in the system when you call them. All you have to do is close it when you return to work...but the system will remind you to do that as well."

THE WHEN: TIMING IS KEY

Once you know what to say, and who you are talking to, it's time to consider when you are going to say it. There will be loads of information you need to give your staff about the new system, from the announcement of a new system coming, to training materials and contact details for anybody with questions or problems. The key to a good communications plan is timing.

Phasing the communications to avoid information overload while maximising engagement is the ideal result, but isn't always easy to achieve.

Think about your communications strategy as part of the larger project plan, and develop it in line with key project milestones. For example, your communications around launch should naturally correlate to your launch date, but each of your 'countdown to launch' communications might also align with other key project dates, depending on how early you are telling staff about the software.

How early you begin communicating will depend on several factors internally, but factors such as the size of the organisation and the location of staff will impact it in obvious ways – the larger and more spread out your workforce is, the more extensive your communications strategy will need to be.

Other influencing factors for timing might be less obvious and planned. If, for instance, your organisation has lengthy approval processes for emails going to the whole organisation, the planning and drafting timeframe may need to be shortened to allow for those reviews.

You should also think about the impact of timing on the key messages. Consider that each time a piece of communication reaches an audience member, it impacts their attitude toward the new system. Each touchpoint has the potential to be positive or negative, but once an individual has had a negative experience with the campaign, it will translate to their engagement with the final system.

Consider the impact on engagement *if staff are invited to visit an intranet page for more information by a poster in the office.*

Imagine a staff member, engaged by the poster, visits the page, but finds the page is not live yet and receives an error message.

This negative experience could then taint the rest of the communications they receive in relation to the change, which could then also impact their inclination or ability to engage with the system itself when it is launched.

TOP TIP: LEARN FROM OTHERS' MISTAKES

Think about a time an organisation you worked for launched a new system or process that impacted you. How did you feel as an end user? Did they communicate well in the lead up to the change? If not, what could they have done to better address the negative feelings you had? How did that poor communication impact your own engagement levels?

Ultimately, how extensive the campaign is will also come down to how much information you have to share, and how much time you have to do it. For smaller organisations in one office, with staff who are receptive to change, two emails and a link to an intranet housing user guides might be more than enough. For larger organisations, however, the campaign might be comprised of teasers, an announcement, countdown emails, user guides, video content, training of superusers placed strategically through the business, intranet promotions or internal events such as morning teas or lunches.

THE HOW: CUTTING THROUGH THE NOISE

Finally, the last thing you will need to consider in developing your communications strategy is what channels are available to you. Get creative and think outside the inbox!

Emails are a great reliable channel that is free, and can be traced so you can check they have reached everyone. However, as a communication channel, it has its downfalls. The most difficult thing with any email is understanding if it cut through the rest of the noise in the recipient's inbox. Did they read it thoroughly and engage with the content?

Including images and video content has been shown to increase interactivity with email communications, but there are so many options available to you. Consider what you could do to increase engagement with the project – just make sure the channels you use are reading from the same hymn sheet.

The visual design elements should be consistent so your audience is always left with no doubt that it is all part of the same campaign. Even more important than the visual design is the content itself – the key messages should, naturally, all be consistent with one another.

Consider the following options *for possible channels you could include in the communications strategy. Which ones could you utilise to get the most from your campaign?*

- *Email/e-Newsletters*

- *Video content*
  - Save money by filming these yourself...the more you get the staff involved in the video production, the more they will engage with the final product regardless of the video quality)

- *Posters/flyers around the office*

- *Intranet articles*

- *Events*
  - Brand up some cookies and invite your staff to morning tea information sessions.
  - Order lunch in and run a lunch 'n' learn session with team. No one can resist a free lunch!

- *Promotional items*
  - Put some balloons around the office on launch day.
  - Print some branded t-shirts for superusers.
  - Produce desk pads or mouse pads for everyone.

TOP TIP: GET FEEDBACK EARLY

One way to do this is to discuss the project with an early adopters group and listen to their feedback. If they raise issues that could apply to different people across the business, then you should consider addressing these issues up front in your communications to get ahead of potential issues or negativity.

Ultimately, the objective of this exercise is to maximise engagement and interactivity. Using multiple channels opens up a range of possibilities for measuring engagement throughout your campaign. Including a 'call to action' in emails (e.g. incluion of surveys, requesting feedback, etc.) can offer excellent insights for you.

Getting some of the staff involved in the project early as 'superusers' or 'early adopters' will also give you a direct line of communication into, and out of, teams. This will also help post-launch as you manage and prioritise training needs.

There are also e-newsletter systems that can track things such as opens/clicks on email content. There is a good chance your Marketing team will already be using one of these systems for external marketing communications, so ask them for their advice.

CONCLUSION: THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAIL

Every communication strategy for Self Service rollout will (and should) look different. The more a strategy takes the individual organisation and project into account, the more effective and relevant it will be.

The most important thing when designing it is to envision the implementation/change from the end user's perspective. Communicate with them based on what they need to know, and what they would want to know. Reporting functionality has no impact on end users, but if the process for submitting their expenses is going to be easier for them, focus on that.

The other thing to consider when communicating the benefits of your new system is that talk is cheap. If you can show something, as opposed to saying it, then show it. So, in the same example mentioned above, rather than telling them the expenses process is going to be easier – give them evidence. Tell them which part of the process is going to be eliminated, or show them a video demonstrating the new process.

A communication plan is recommended for every company, but medium to large organisations may have slightly more extensive communication plans, so mapping them out can be a useful exercise. In support of this guide, we have also provided a template layout for your communications strategy (see more information below), with some example lines completed as a guide.

Working through your plan will also help you to identify any budget that would be useful in bringing the communication strategy to fruition.

Finally, the strategy will require time and effort to be the best it can be. However, once it is mapped, don't be afraid to amend it as you go. The best internal communications strategies all have engagement measures throughout and invite honest feedback. Should you receive feedback early in the campaign, be sure to address it as you move through the other stages in the plan.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Template Rollout Communications Plan

This template document offers a tool that you can use to map your own communications plan as you develop it.

Once it is completed, you will easily be able to identify any gaps in the plan, and follow it to ensure each step of the process is carried out on time and according to the original plan.

The communications plan can also be useful for the purpose of sharing your plans with the relevant stakeholders in the business, either for approval or as a courtesy for their reference.

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