

Communication Strategies for Dynamics Delivery

5 S's for Success

In a world of digital transformation, introducing a new system into an organisation invariably involves a level of behavioural and cultural change. Engaging people isn't a 'nice to have', or only a way to reduce resistance to change, it's an essential component of the successful delivery of the project. Lack of, or poor communication could impact on productivity, cost, timescales and compliance with the new system.

A robust communication strategy needs to encompass engagement across your whole organisation, from updates to senior and key stakeholders through to all-employees explaining what's going to change and any actions people need to take.

Dynamics 365 isn't just about processes, it's a system that empowers people. Your change and communication plans need to reflect that, by involving people from the get-go, and delivering communications that engage and inspire, not just to get the system in place, but to leverage its capabilities and create future transformation of the organisation.

In this blog I'm outlining the '5 Ss' that represent best practice for communicating change strategically, and how to create a compelling communication and engagement strategy for your Dynamics rollout.

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Humans are **much better** at communicating and interpreting tone in vocal messages than in text-based ones, and face-to-face requests are **34 times** more effective than emailed requests.



01 —

Seek leadership sponsorship

A Dynamics implementation is likely to be a significant investment for your organisation. Involving the Executive team at an early stage in developing your communication strategy ensures they understand, endorse and are part of the story, preferably playing a key role in the storytelling process. Their advocacy for the change and articulation of how it fits into the bigger strategic picture, lends a trusted voice to the communication plan.



People may hear your words,
but they feel your attitude.

John C. Maxwell

Particularly when asking people to behave differently or shift the culture of an organisation, your senior team should be visibly leading by example. Face to face channels such as town halls, roadshows, workshops, or digital versions including webinars and videos can have a significant impact here, allowing your leaders to demonstrate through both verbal and non-verbal indicators, their support and commitment to the change.

02 —

Sell the story

We humans love to tell and hear stories. Stories play a critical role in the sharing of knowledge, help us understand and remember information and create empathy. When we hear stories about people it brings us closer to an experience.

In the context of implementing Dynamics, storytelling provides an opportunity to focus your audience on the 'why', by providing context, being clear on where the change fits into the bigger strategic picture and sharing the vision of what future success looks like.

As part of the change management process, outlined in my [blog](#) in December 2019, your impact assessment of key changes will help to articulate what is changing and how it will impact people. Your story should reflect that human experience and what the change means to people, in language that is clear and means something to the audience.

Start by talking about what's happening. 'We're going to make things quicker and easier', is better than 'We're planning a digital transformation to bring new solutions.' Create a story that your employees will want to support. It should be easy and natural to tell, memorable and authentic. It also needs to evoke the audience's interest, attention, or admiration in a powerfully irresistible way.



Stories constitute the single
most powerful weapon in a
leader's arsenal.

*Dr Howard Gardner
Professor, Harvard University*

03 —

Set a rhythm

Now your story is crafted, keep telling it. Great communication focuses on the audience. It's not about the information you think you need to impart – consider what your audience needs and what will keep them interested. A good technique to use is **'Think, Feel, Do'**. What outcome should your communication achieve, what should the audience think, feel or do as a result?

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Communication works
for those who work at it.

John Powell

Make sure your communication plan is comprehensive, targeted to your different audiences and tells the story from all angles, with fresh ways to repeat the core messages. There is no 'one and done' solution. Remember that people accept and adapt to change in their own time. Your communications need to support people along that journey but engaging them and getting buy-in will take time and depend on the scale and impact of the change.

Ensure your communication plan is clear on the who, what, when and how. Creating that clear picture will ensure you avoid doing too much at once, giving people time to absorb your messages.

04 —

Stakeholder engagement

When you involve people in a change, you connect and engage them and give them a reason to care. From a communications perspective, this means utilising your subject matter experts, change champions and influencer groups. Involve them early, share your plans, use them as a sounding board and leverage that engagement by asking them to help cascade and embed messages across the organisation.

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Tell me and I'll forget.
Show me and I might
remember. Involve me
and I will understand.

Benjamin Franklin

Give these stakeholder groups a role to play in your story. Get them to share their experience and reflect on what's changing for them and how they feel about it.



05 —

Share and listen

As well as having measurement tactics in place for your communications, you should ensure two-way communication channels are available at every opportunity and a feedback loop is in place.

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Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.

Stephen R. Covey

Don't ever ask for feedback you are not willing to action. Make the routes to contacting your project team clear and personal. Create simple and effective engagement points as the project journey develops e.g. chat groups, drop-in clinics, Q&A sessions, and a shared mailbox to allow people a voice for questions or concerns. Share feedback and questions you receive, tell people what you're going to do as a result and keep an up to date frequently asked questions document available for everyone to access.

Use your change readiness assessments as a tool to adjust your communication plan and respond to what employees are asking for. Be prepared to be agile with your communication plan. Test and learn with your channels and approach. Mostly importantly, demonstrate that you are listening.



Summary

If you spend as much time and effort on change management and communication as you do on your technical and process plan, you are setting your project up for success. Want to learn more about how to implement a robust Change Management & Communication program to avoid costly failures?

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