



# Organizational health communications

## Best practices tip sheet

An effective communications plan is critical to the success of any organizational health strategy. It's important for your employees to know what you're doing and why it matters to them.

Here are some tips for your communication planning:



### 1. Leadership endorsement is critical

Communication is most effective when it comes from the top and leaders throughout the organization reinforce the messages. When senior leaders set a good example, they can be a catalyst for change. It's critical that they champion the strategy and communicate their commitment.

**Tip:** People like to know what inspires their leaders. Ask these leaders to share their successes (and obstacles) in organization-wide campaigns, events or team meetings. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Sun Life hosted regular "Ask me anything" sessions for people leaders. At these sessions, people leaders received coaching on how to have mental health check-ins with their teams. The sessions helped to boost engagement and a sense of community.



## 2. Align your organizational health messages with your overall business objectives, values and priorities

Employees need to know that you tie your health objectives to your business performance. This will give them a clear picture of the health of your organization and an overview of your priorities. Share your short and long-term objectives with your employees. And explain how these objectives will benefit them and the organization as a whole.

**Tip:** Consider creating a charter or values statement to show your commitment to organizational health. And consistently refer to the statement within your communications to increase employee awareness and engagement. This will show your commitment to take action. It will also show that you're investing time and resources to create lasting positive change. For example, Sun Life has the following mental health vision:

- Sun Life empowers and supports Employees to achieve optimal mental well-being. We foster a culture that values diversity, where every Employee feels Sun Life is a psychologically safe place to work.

We use this vision to guide our mental health strategy and align our actions and initiatives.



## 3. Communicate often and consistently

Organizational health shouldn't be a one-time message for your company. To create lasting cultural change, you have to repeat your key messages throughout the year. Weave these key messages into communications about other organizational priorities and updates. Don't limit organizational health messages to health and well-being events.

**Tip:** Now more than ever, it's important to inform your employees of the resources available to them. Consider sending a weekly communication about any important updates with information on wellness resources (e.g. an Employee Assistance Program).



## 4. Use a variety of communication channels to increase engagement

For the best results, it's important to communicate often and in ways that are meaningful to your employees. Consider asking them what their preferences are. Consider the demographics of your employees so you can present information in the right style and language. Here are some examples of different communication channels:

- Intranet
- Team meetings/huddles – including safety or well-being minutes at the start of meetings
- E-newsletters
- Safety bulletins
- Printed or online posters and brochures
- Champions/ambassadors

**Tip:** Create a central resource for program information. Examples include a dedicated intranet page or a feature section in a regular e-bulletin. By establishing a central resource for information, you can direct your employees there for answers to their questions. It's also a great way to ensure consistent messaging. Another tip is to brand your organizational health program. This helps employees identify the program and shows your commitment to helping them live healthier lives.



## 5. Communicate results, successes and action plans

Share the short and long-term objectives that will benefit your employees and your organization. Let employees know that you'll be measuring your results and sharing them within your organization. Share your commitment to change anything that isn't working. Keep your employees informed of your organization's progress. This will increase their investment in the process and the broader organizational health objectives.

**Tip:** Share an update of your progress as part of a quarterly "town hall" meeting. Also share successes at organization-wide events or campaigns.



## 6. Encourage and invite employees' input and feedback

Obtaining employees' feedback is the key to getting their buy-in and engagement. Make sure you have a way for employees to share their views. It's also important to share the feedback widely, as well as how you plan to use it. If you launch a survey, you must prepare to take action based on the results. If you don't, you could lose your employees' trust.

Some examples of ways to gather input include:

- Pulse/engagement surveys
- Dedicated email contact
- Suggestion/comment box in your staff room
- Social network/Intranet comment posting capabilities
- Town halls (virtual or in person)
- Incident reporting systems
- Task force/committees (e.g. Health and Safety committees)

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