Selecting the Right Channel

The following pages give an overview of the various communications channels that are available to managers. The purpose is to outline each channels strengths, weaknesses and considerations. We hope this will enable managers to decide the best way to deliver their message. Managers should match their choice of channel to the intended outcome, e.g. whether you wish to raise awareness or to gain commitment.

Channel	At its best	Potential Downsides	Think About
Team Meetings	- Can make communication personal and relevant to the team involved - Opportunity for discussion, feedback, questions, ideas - A good line manager can facilitate a lively session - Can help build understanding and involvement	- Success depends on skill of leader - Time commitment for both manager and team - Beware of content overload; other channels are more effective for information delivery	- Making the best possible use of this time - Training line managers - Making sure you uphold meeting discipline
E-mail	- Can reach mass audiences quickly - Cost effective and simple to use - Consistent and controlled message - Reaches the recipient directly - Good for information, awareness and instruction - Enables remote access via Blackberry	- Not everyone has access - Impersonal and open to misinterpretation - Can result quickly in information overload - Can't tell if messages have been read or understood - Doesn't prioritise messages - Can't generate dialogue	- Controlling access to User distribution lists - Using the subject box to get across your key message - Keep it short and simple - Using headings and bullet points for key messages and to break up text
Intranet	- Fast and consistent - Possibilities are endless – can be visually powerful - Good for strong information - Info shares, blogs and bulletin boards good for involvement and discussion - Web stats show numbers accessing intranet	- Not everyone may have access - Relies on staff seeking information - People may not have time to read/access it - Difficult to police - Can become unwieldy and full of outdated information	Including 'killer content' to draw people in (expenses forms; leave forms; processes people need to access for work)
Video	- Creative and entertaining - Can show real people talking about their experiences - Camera never lies – can show proof of progress - Makes people and places accessible for a large audience - Consistent, controlled message	- Expensive medium - Not interactive - Can be seen as corporate propaganda - Can be difficult for a mobile workforce	- Using as part of a briefing session to stimulate debate - Using 'real people' to talk about their experiences not just senior executives
Staff Magazine	Can reach the entire organisation with consistent messages	- Can be seen as biased - Information dates quickly - Challenging to make it	How to encourage people to open it, e.g. a competition, profiles of front line staff or

	• Even time-pressured staff can read it on coffee breaks; train etc • Can reflect staff feedback • Can show how everything fits together and progress on developments • Can highlight positive stories from a staff perspective • Can be used to share learning	relevant to all audiences in the HSE • No opportunity for discussion or to check understanding	services • Using a staff editorial board to test content and ensure articles address the real issues
Notice boards	• Visible and may catch people's eye when time pressured • Good for instructions and information • Can be updated quickly • Minimal resources required to update information	• May not be read • Usually no identified owner • Lose impact if overused and information not removed • Can look untidy and uninviting	• Nominating a member of staff to control the board • Putting a display until date on information • Posting in a prominent place – next to the water filter etc
Text messaging	• 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 events when out of the office • Fast	• Will annoy people very quickly if overused • Can be intrusive	• Make sure that mobile phone contact lists are updated on a regular basis
Events/road shows	• Opportunity for key managers to reach mass audiences face to face • Flexible and responsive • Can include Q&A sessions • Can build team spirit and motivate • Can be used to address controversial issues by the best communicators	• Can be time consuming for organisers, presenters and audience • Relatively expensive • Agenda is set by the senior management team • Can be seen as corporate propaganda	• Involving staff in setting the agenda and format • Involving staff in the event itself as hosts or facilitators • Using interactive communications to maximise audience participation – workshops, focus groups etc
Open Forum	• Gives opportunity to raise and discuss real issues for staff • Genuine open dialogue • Helps leaders to understand how things are on the ground • Enables peoples feelings and concerns to be heard	• Dismissive or hostile response to questions may close down dialogue • Staff can feel overpowered and unsure about asking questions in an open forum • Line managers can feel disempowered if their decisions are over-ruled	• Issuing a summary of discussion following the forum • Proactively raising difficult questions in advance to prompt further debate
Site Visits	• Shows leaders are listening and interested in front line • Keeps leaders in touch with real issues • Promotes dialogue and understanding	• Leaders won't experience real issues if treated as 'royal visits' • May do more harm than good if leaders are seen to be out of touch • Time consuming for senior managers to visit multiple sites around the country	• Giving leaders an in-depth brief before the visit • Tracking issues raised and reporting back on them

Voice mail messages	• Helpful for remote workers • Opportunity to hear about issues from senior managers • Consistent message	• People will hang up if the message is too long • No feedback or interaction	• Using text messaging to advise staff that a voice mail message is available