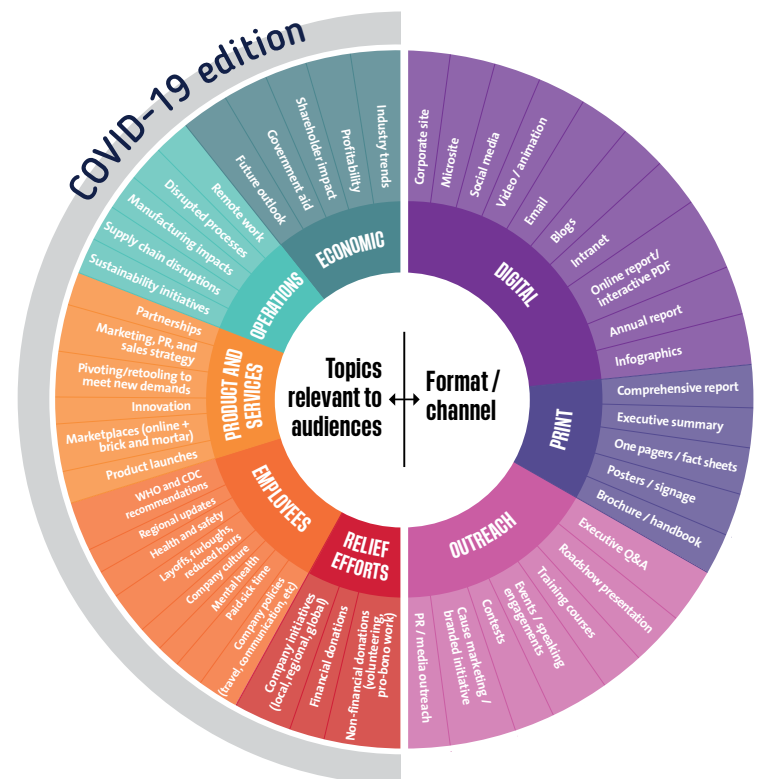


A practical guide to purpose-driven internal communication during COVID-19

Worksheets

Templates

The COVID-19 crisis has disrupted businesses across industries. Nobody is feeling these social and economic shocks more than employees struggling to adapt to this “new normal.” A purpose-driven approach to internal communication offers a path forward which can both inform and reassure employees. This practical guide is intended to help corporate leaders and communicators better infuse purpose into internal communications during this crisis and beyond.



Step 1: Identify **key issues** to communicate

COVID-19 is impacting all businesses differently — issues that may be more important to one organization may be less so for another. Identifying the issues most relevant to your company will help you focus internal communication more effectively. Use this page to write down all the ways COVID-19 has affected your business, using the diagram to the right for inspiration.

Enter your key issues:

Star the most important issues or number them in order of importance.



Step 2: Determine how your **purpose and values** can help address key issues

More than ever, your employees need to feel valued as part of something greater than themselves. By infusing your company's purpose and values into your internal communication, you can provide employees with a stronger sense of stability and agency to carry them through these turbulent times. Use this space to write down your purpose and/or core values. If your company does not have a formal purpose statement or values, write down six words or phrases that embody the most important elements of your company culture.

Enter your purpose and/or core values:



Purpose: an organization's aspirational reason for being beyond profit



Values: the deeply ingrained principles that define what the organization stands for and believes in

Step 3: Refine your purpose-driven messaging

This is not the time for impersonal corporate communications. Balancing empathy with information is critical to internal communications during COVID-19. Begin populating a messaging map (template on page 10), using the formula below to develop key messages for the issues you listed on page 10.

Internal messaging map

A messaging map includes key messages with supporting proof points for each key issue, as well as audience-specific messaging and distribution channels. The map aids in creating cohesion and consistency across COVID-19 communications.

Key Issues	Key Issue #1	Key Issue #2	Key Issue #3	Key Issue #4	Key Issue #5
Key messages					
Emotions					
Approach					
Action					
Hope					
Audience-specific message					
Employee segment #1					
Employee segment #2					
Employee segment #3					
Employee segment #4					
Employee segment #5					
Distribution					
Channel(s)					
Messenger(s)					

Add rows and columns for additional key issues and employee segments as needed.

COVID-19 communication action guide

1

EMOTIONS: Draft one sentence that recognizes and legitimizes the emotional response associated with this topic. Weave in your purpose and values to let your unique company culture shine through.

2

APPROACH: Draft a simple (no more than three sentences) summary of what your company is doing to manage this topic.

3

ACTIONS: Build upon this high-level statement with proof points, stats, and impact stories. Use information from reputable sources only.

4

HOPE: Conclude your key message with a forward-looking, optimistic statement that circles back to your values and purpose, while staying honest, transparent, and realistic.

Note that because of the unpredictable nature of COVID-19, this messaging map must be a living, evolving document that should be revisited frequently.

Step 4: Personalize key messages for internal audiences

During times of crisis, internal messaging must be targeted and sincere to make employees feel heard, cared for, and understood. In the space below, write down the different audience segments at your organization, such as managers, corporate employees, furloughed employees, and factory workers.

Enter your audience segments:



Build upon your messaging map and populate the audience-specific messaging for each important topic. Adapt the key message depending on how it will resonate differently for each group.

thinkPARALLAX

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Action					
Role					
Audience-specific message					
Employee segment #1					
Employee segment #2					
Employee segment #3					
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COVID-19 communication action guide

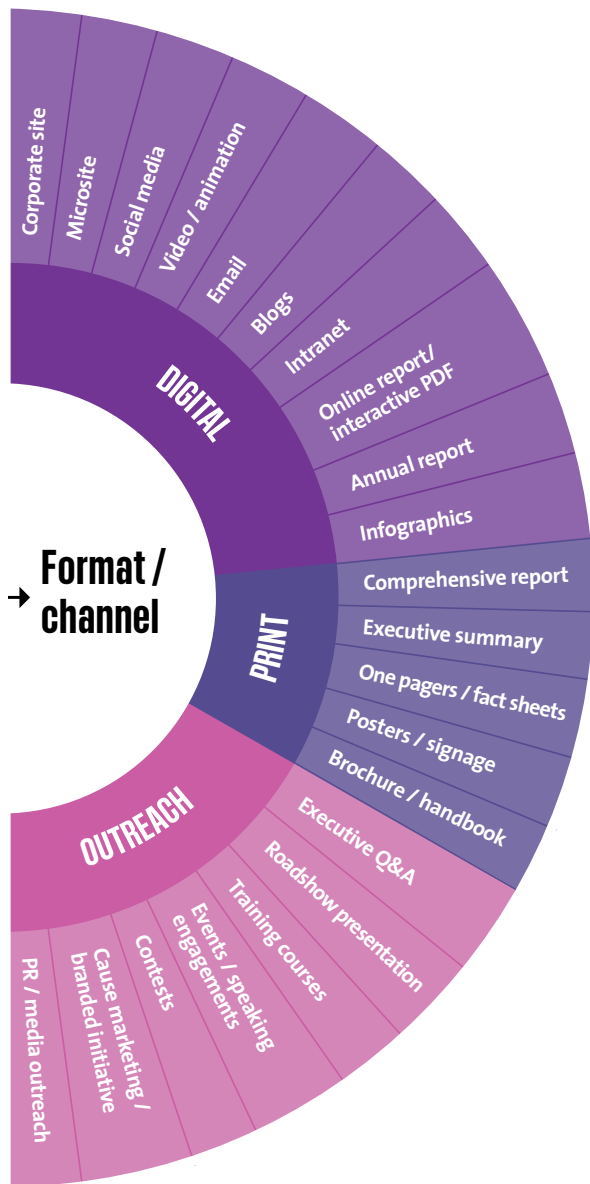
Step 5A: Identify channels and messengers

For sensitive topics like COVID-19, delivery is just as important as the message. A sudden shift to remote work may mean you are more dependent on digital tools such as email, Slack, and video conferencing. Use this space to list all of your existing communications channels, referencing the diagram to the left for inspiration.

List your existing communications channels:

Building and maintaining trust during these uncertain times can be achieved by leveraging the influence of your top executives and senior leaders. Use this space to write down a handful of trusted, well-respected leaders, such as your CEO, HR leaders, and managers.

Enter the names of your trusted, well-respected leaders:



Step 5B: Decide on the appropriate channels to use

COVID-19 communications is not one-size-fits-all. Determining the most appropriate way to communicate each message to each audience segment should be guided by empathy. Return to your messaging map and think through questions like: *How sensitive is this message?* *Should this be communicated over email or is a one-on-one conversation with a manager more appropriate?* Then, use your messaging map to list appropriate channels and messengers for each key issue.

Template

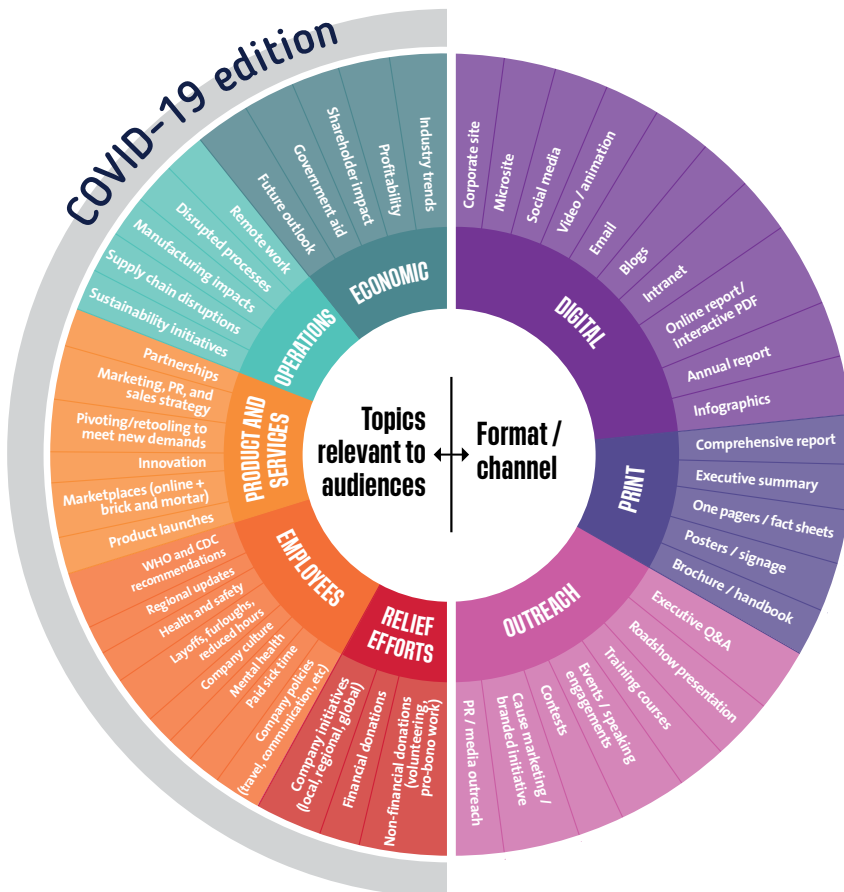
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COVID-19 communication action guide



Updates regarding the most important key issues identified on page 2 should be communicated by your CEO or senior leaders on a regular, consistent basis, in the most personal and human way possible. See page 12 for a leadership conversation guide.

Step 6: Create a plan to ensure consistency

As the COVID-19 crisis continues to unfold, providing regular updates around issues that matter to employees keeps everyone informed while demonstrating compassion. Build out a tentative communications plan (template on page 11) that outlines the messages and channels you will use to create a steady and reliable flow of information in the coming months. Allow for flexibility as things may suddenly change.



Internal communication plan

A communications plan maps out your internal touchpoint by channel and audience segment to ensure a consistent drumbeat of COVID-19 communications. Note that the plan should be considered tentative and allow for flexibility as things may suddenly change.

	Month #1				Month #2			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
All employees	CEO video statement				CEO video statement			
Remote employees	Every Monday: all-hands Zoom meeting for important updates + Q&A (led by senior leadership)				Every Monday: all-hands Zoom meeting for important updates + Q&A (led by senior leadership)			
	Announce monthly wellness challenge (Slack)	Manager one-on-one check-in (phone or Zoom)	Intranet content + promoted by email: feel better, faster, together	Manager one-on-one check-in (phone or Zoom)	Announce monthly wellness challenge (Slack)	Manager one-on-one check-in (phone or Zoom)	Intranet content + promoted by email: feel better, faster, together	Manager one-on-one check-in (phone or Zoom)
	Every Friday: Slack update (from senior leadership)				Every Friday: Slack update (from senior leadership)			
Managers and communicators	CEO brief (Zoom)	Manager town hall		Manager town hall		Manager town hall		Manager town hall
	Every Monday: share updated messaging documents and FAQ (email)				Every Monday: share updated messaging documents and FAQ (email)			
Furloughed employees		Update email			Update email			Update email

Add rows for additional employee segments as needed

Templates

**Internal
messaging
map**

**Internal
communication
plan**

**Senior
leadership
conversation
guide**

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	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Employee Segment #1												
Employee Segment #2												

Add rows for additional employee segments as needed

Senior leadership conversation guide

A regular cadence of reliable, consistent messaging from your CEO or senior executives is critical to building and maintaining trust during these uncertain times. These guidelines highlight important elements of an internal CEO update, which should be communicated in the most personal way possible, such as a video conference that allows for a two-way dialogue. We recommend a weekly update, but some companies may require more frequent communication if business impacts are changing rapidly.

- 1 **Check in:** Ask how everyone is doing. If appropriate for your company culture, share personal anecdotes to connect over common feelings and experiences.
- 2 **Current updates:** Reference page 2 of the worksheet to identify the most important key issues to communicate. Use your messaging map to lead with empathy, while sharing clear and succinct information about how your company is currently handling key issues. Maintain a tone that is authentic, caring, intentional, and hopeful.
- 3 **Long-term planning updates:** Share any relevant updates or projections regarding the long-term impact of COVID-19 on your business. However, do not overpromise and frame your statements and commitments in a way that allows for change and unpredictability.
- 4 **Health and safety:** Share the latest updates from reputable health organizations, such as Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Offer tips and examples for how employees can apply the latest recommendations. If appropriate for your company, share local and regional news from a reputable source.
- 5 **Offer support:** Let employees know about all the resources available to them to receive support. This can include things like access to tools that makes remote work easier, mental health resources, and public health guidelines. Clearly state the best way to get in touch should they need anything or have any questions.
- 6 **Answer questions:** Open the floor to questions. If someone asks a question you are currently unable to answer, let them know that you will get back to them as soon as this information becomes available.
- 7 **End on a high note:** Thank employees for their hard work, positivity, and flexibility during these strange times. Weave in your purpose or values and reassure employees that you will get through this together.