



Internal Communication: a critical function for Political Parties



Mary O'Hagan
NDI Slovakia

Five Basic Questions

- Why?
- Who?
 - Who needs it and who sends it?
- When?
- What?
 - (and what else?)
- How?



Why ?

- Internal Communication is required for...
 - external communication
 - campaign direction and support
 - party cohesion
 - interactive policy development
 - countering disengagement at all levels



Scenario 1: The National Democratic Party of Ruritania

- This is the largest party in a governing coalition somewhere in Europe
- The Party Leader has decided to reform the healthcare system
- This will mean short term costs and long term gain
- There is opposition to the plan within the party and the country



What happens if these people operate in an information vacuum?

- Party Leadership & Ministers
- Campaign/Party HQ
- MPs
- Press Officers
- MPs staff
- Elected members in Regional and Local Government and their staff
- Party Activists



Who?

- Making good use of central resources – staff and technical
- Solving control and accountability problems
 - Who clears material?
 - Leadership? Ministers? Parliamentary Party? Party HQ? Senior staff?
 - Who decides access?
- Ensuring communication is 2 way
- Watch out for expectation gaps
- Ensure you can deliver whatever you promise before you promise it



When?

- Regular Communications
 - Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly
- Other Communications
 - Special Events
 - Election Campaigns
- Avoiding Overload
- Survey users on frequency



What?

■ External Communication

- Forward events information
 - External and internal events
 - Research materials
 - Photo opportunity formats
 - Leadership visits
- Embargoed media materials
- Questions & Answers and Lines to Take
- Themes and messages

■ Supporting campaigning

- Local statistics/experience
- Monitoring opponents
- Survey and petition materials
- Local articles and press releases



What Else?

■ Supporting cohesion

- Enables party at all levels to speak and listen in a timely way
- Horizontal and vertical links between elected institutions at different levels EU, National, Regional, Local
- Formation of new networks
 - Issues, function, location

■ Interactive Policy Development

- Consultation documents and survey responses

■ Balance content with capacity of clients to read and use your materials



How?

- In Person
- Paper products: post/fax
 - Less amount, smaller networks, lower frequency, more time & cost
- Published products
 - Soundbite books
 - Policy prompts
 - Points on opponents
- E-mail
- Conferencing/Intranets
- Adapt technologies to users' needs





Internal Communication as a means of Evaluating Progress within Parties

- Is Internal Communication seen as important?
- Who is communicating?
 - Party HQ
 - Parliamentary Caucuses
 - Individual legislators
 - Sub networks?
- Who are they communicating with?
 - How far down the pyramid?
- How are people communicating?
- How often?
- What information are they sending?
 - Are they evaluating their own communications?

Evaluation 2

- Is communication interactive?
- What is the balance of top-down and bottom-up messages?
- Have accountability issues been resolved?
- Are human resources being used well?
- Is technology being used intelligently?
- Is the information appropriate & timely?
- Is there a programme for future development?
 - Electoral cycle issues
- Is the process of communication development consultative or directional?

