

Strategic snippet #5



How to communicate strategy effectively

davidlancefield.com

Most people can't recall the strategy of the organisation they work for. Even the executives and managers responsible for strategy struggle.

It's not surprising. Many organisations don't have a strategy. The few that do, find it hard.

Clear communication helps people decide where to focus their attention, energy, resources, and capabilities.

**WHICH FIVE WAYS
WILL HELP YOU WIN BY**

**communicating
your strategy
effectively?**

Communicate comprehensively

Communications sometimes focus on one aspect of strategy to the detriment of others. Instead:

- Visualise your ambition.
- Describe the contribution you want to make.
- Challenge the status quo.
- Instill belief in the organisation.
- Focus attention on what matters.
- Outline what will change.
- Set out the metrics.
- Explain the thinking, logic, and evidence that supports the choices.
- Describe the process.

Make it personal

Communications often paint a corporate picture of the world that doesn't actually convey what's expected of the audience — or how it benefits them.

Take four actions to avoid this scenario:

- Show that you're implementing the strategy yourself through the choices you make.
- Describe the new activities, capabilities, and behaviours that enable the strategy.
- Tackle nostalgia, fears, or frictions that might hold people back.
- Help people upskill.





Match the message to the moment

Communicating strategy often involves long, bombastic slide presentations or brief, bland statements online. By themselves, these rarely create the excitement, engagement, advocacy or recall required to effect change.

Design your communication as a series of engaging and dynamic exercises using three steps:

- Map out the critical or *imprintable* moments.
- Decide which messages you want to emphasise.
- Select the tool or asset that best works for the people, moment, and message.

Empower through transparency

The responsibility for communicating strategy is often restricted to a select few. Help people make their own choices by:

- Sharing as much of the strategy as possible.
- Describing how important decisions enable the strategy.
- Communicating progress honestly.
- Holding back detail wisely.
- Creating open channels.



Repeat, listen, and refresh

Strategy needs to evolve in a world that is more volatile and uncertain than before.

This requires you to:

- Map out clear sequences of communications with different stakeholder groups in different moments.
- Ask questions to encourage participation and overcome obstacles.
- Monitor weak signals of change within and outside the organisation that should change the content and nature of communication.
- Surface and highlight success stories to reinforce the messages, maintain interest, and build commitment.



READY FOR MORE?



This is based on an article called ‘How to communicate strategy effectively’ in the *Harvard Business Review*.

For more resources go to davidlancefield.com:

- Listen to, and watch, the *Lancefield on the Line* podcast.
- Take the *Extraordinary Essentials* test to identify your strengths and development points.
- Read my articles in *HBR* and *Strategy+Business*.

If you’re a CEO or founder looking for help as you tackle a complex strategic challenge or pursue a transformational opportunity do get in touch on david@davidlancefield.com

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