

Best Practices for Lean Communications Functions

To maximize their resources, lean internal communications departments should:

1. **Focus on adding value to the overall business.** Support enterprise-wide initiatives, including company strategy and goals, or at least initiatives that benefit multiple business units or critical employee audiences.
2. **Take calculated risks.** Also support initiatives and activities that have a high value to the company and/or a high risk if there were problems, such as acquisitions.
3. **Get sponsors.** Partner with other functions on company-wide projects and initiatives in which they are involved, and have them contribute to your project/initiative budget.
4. **Consider your executives as a communication channel.** Involve your senior leaders in delivering messages informally and informally; their visible leadership will communicate messages more effectively than other communications.
5. **Reach out.** Build a wide network of employees in other departments and outside headquarters to alert internal communications to issues or needs that may need reinforcing with communication or may need addressing, if they are just emerging.
6. **Streamline and eliminate non-value add work.** Focus on streamlining the following:
 - Meetings (Meetings should be no longer than 90 minutes. The purpose should be to gather to discuss issues or solve problems, not review materials that could be done offline. Always have a prepared agenda with pre-reading.)
 - Approval processes (Create a process that balances speed with risk mitigation.)
 - Length of documents (Keep them short; “If it takes a staple, it’s too much information” according to one lean organization.)
 - Other processes; use templates and other items so you’re not reinventing the wheel.
7. **Leverage.** Borrow content from other departments, especially marketing and training.
8. **Measure progress.** Conduct targeted research and apply findings.
9. **Spread the skills, not just the words.** Build communication competencies and capabilities outside the communication function.
10. **Share.** Provide tools, templates and check-ins to other departments that they can use for their departmental employee communication.