Communications

Enterprise Engagement
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"The art of communication is the language of leadership."
— **James Humes (**Author and former presidential speechwriter).

Setting the Stage

Engagement, almost by definition, requires communication. There are many tools to assist you in achieving engagement but none so important and – in today's world – so complicated as communications.

Enterprise engagement takes the importance and need of communications several degrees further both in scope and quality. At its heart, engagement is about relationships and connections. Leaders know that communications—conversations, feedback, recognition—is the fuel for relationship-building and trust.

For better or for worse, communication options have changed as well. We have tremendous choice today in the medium for our messages. And as Marshall Mcluhan said famously, "the medium is the message." Enormous choice—email, phone, tweets, text, video, and traditional, TV, radio, "snail mail," face-to-face and so on—make our choices more difficult but equally meaningful. Many of us can remember that it wasn't too long ago when there were only one or two channels for communication.

For employee communication, interoffice memos and letters came in brown envelopes with string that wound around the two cardboard buttons. For consumers – it was direct mail or more probably roadside signs and maybe for larger brands – TV and radio advertising. For your channel partners and vendors communications might have included a catalog or quarterly print newsletter.

It was simpler. It was easier. It was limited.

From an "engagement" point of view there was little you could do to differentiate yourself from your competitors when it came to communications. Most communications were print-focused, one-way and expensive.

And in many cases – you still weren't really sure "communication" was taking place.

However, that is changing drastically. The past 10 years have seen a huge change in the number of communication channels, the way those channels work and the change in the "power" in the communication equation.

Caution is the watchword, however. How you communicate can be as powerful as what you say.

Today's Communication Challenges

We could write a book on each of the new challenges you will face trying to communicate and engage with today's audiences. Just a few of the more important challenges you will face with modern communication planning and execution include:

1. Finding Your Audience…

It used to be that you could mail your employees, your channel partners and your vendors in their offices, and your customers at their homes. Not so any more. With telecommuting and/or "work at home" employees expected to grow 69% between now and 2016, employees and potential customers will be a more mobile and difficult target.[1]

In addition, many jobs don't fit a "desk" job – field sales personnel, retail sales people, restaurant employees, etc. These employees aren't always able to connect to what we now think of as "traditional" communications—email or other communication portals. While these jobs have always been a challenge when it came to communications, the need for instantaneous and ongoing communication is more critical than it has been in the past. The rise of mobile devices has come simultaneously and is enabling the mobile worker.

Where it was once sufficient to connect with employees in the field on a weekly call or meeting, the pace of business and change has made it essential that we connect with them daily – if not hourly.

2. Communication Overload

We probably don't need to inundate you with statistics to prove the number of communications messages has increased – you experience it every day with your own email, social network updates, constant calls, texts and pings. However, if you're not convinced:

> *There are worldwide 2,900,000,000 email accounts that are responsible on any given day for sending out 188,000,000,000 messages (zeros were left in for emphasis). There are also 750,000,000 Facebook accounts that send out 60,000,000 status updates a day and Twitter's 300,000,000 accounts that sent out 140,000,000 tweets each day. Therefore, there have to be millions of consumers that have information overload.*[2]

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[1] WorldatWork estimates that 16 million employees work at home at least one day a month, a number that increased almost 62% between 2005 and 2010.

[2] http://associatesinternational.com/digital-overload-causing-growth-in-direct-mail/

A study done in 2010 by Lexis/Nexis reported that ***91 percent of workers (including your customers) in the U.S. report they discard work information without fully reading it.***[3] No wonder, the average America sends and receives an average of 155 email messages alone per day[4], and is exposed to as many as 5000 advertisements (in all forms).[5]

That is your challenge with any engagement activity you want to conduct. And don't forget – your employees, your vendors, your channel partners are all feeling this pinch. Everyone is affected and it affects ALL your communication challenges – not just one audience.

3. Demographic Changes

Many argue that demographic changes are driving the challenges with communicating with today's audiences. While there is no doubt, that like their grandparents – the Boomers – Gen Y is a force to be reckoned with as they make their mark on the workforce, become more of the buying population and becoming influential within the companies you seek to sell to and buy from.

However, the real communication challenge is not demographic. See Figure 1 below[6].

Figure 1: Changes in Age Distribution 2000-2012 (US)
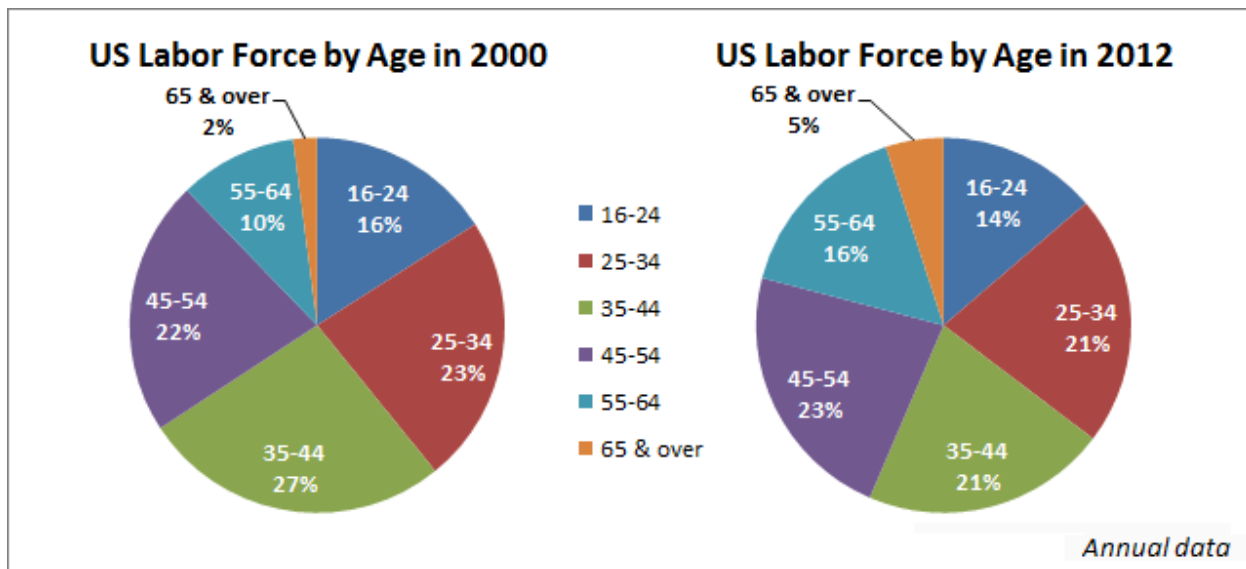
The interesting story told by the graphs is that the actual percentage of the workforce in the "millennial" category is decreasing as older workers stay engaged in the workforce.

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[3] http://www.multivu.com/players/English/46619-LexisNexis-International-Workplace-Productivity-Survey/flexSwf/impAsset/document/34ef84f1-beaa-4a48-98c5-0ea93ceae0cb.pdf
[4] http://www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Email-Statistics-Report-2011-2015-Executive-Summary.pdf
[5] http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-3445_162-2015684.html
[6] http://www.advisorperspectives.com/dshort/commentaries/Demographic-Trends-in-Employment-Participation.php

This means as communicators, we need to be smart about which tools, which messages and which audience we communicate with and not just assume that "everyone" is on Facebook. In fact, recent data show a **DECREASE** in Facebook usage over the last year![7]

The message is that we need to be sure we know and understand "our" own particular channel demographics – not just demographics in general. Your audience may not match up to the "trends" many marketers are fond of pushing. Do your due diligence and make sure you have good data on your own audience.

The real communication challenge is the fact that we have so many new channels available to us.

4. Channel Choices

As we indicated in the introduction, the world of communication has changed dramatically over the past 10 years or so. No longer is there a dominant "channel" of communication. While print communication used to be our "only" channel, today's marketer is faced with a huge variety of options.

Print

Print communications have taken a back seat lately as electronic, mobile and social communications steal the headlines. However, printed communication may still be strong channel depending on your audience demographics and their typical communication habits. If you have a strong print communications history with your audience, and they are conditioned to look for and engage with traditional print communication do not abandon it for the newest social network. Remember, communication is all about engaging your audience where they are and when they are. And printed communication still has a place in our electronic world.

Electronic

Electronic communications covers a broad swath of options for the marketer. Electronic communication includes but is not limited to:

▸ Internet

▸ Mobile phone

▸ Social Networks

▸ Tablets

▸ Digital Signage

▸ Web-based TV and Radio

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[7] http://www.businessinsider.com/you-have-to-believe-this-chart-makes-mark-zuckerberg-slightly-anxious-2013-5

In other words – "electronic" isn't just the web. Electronic communication is more a category than a specific product or service. Think of electronic communications as a format that has two distinct elements...
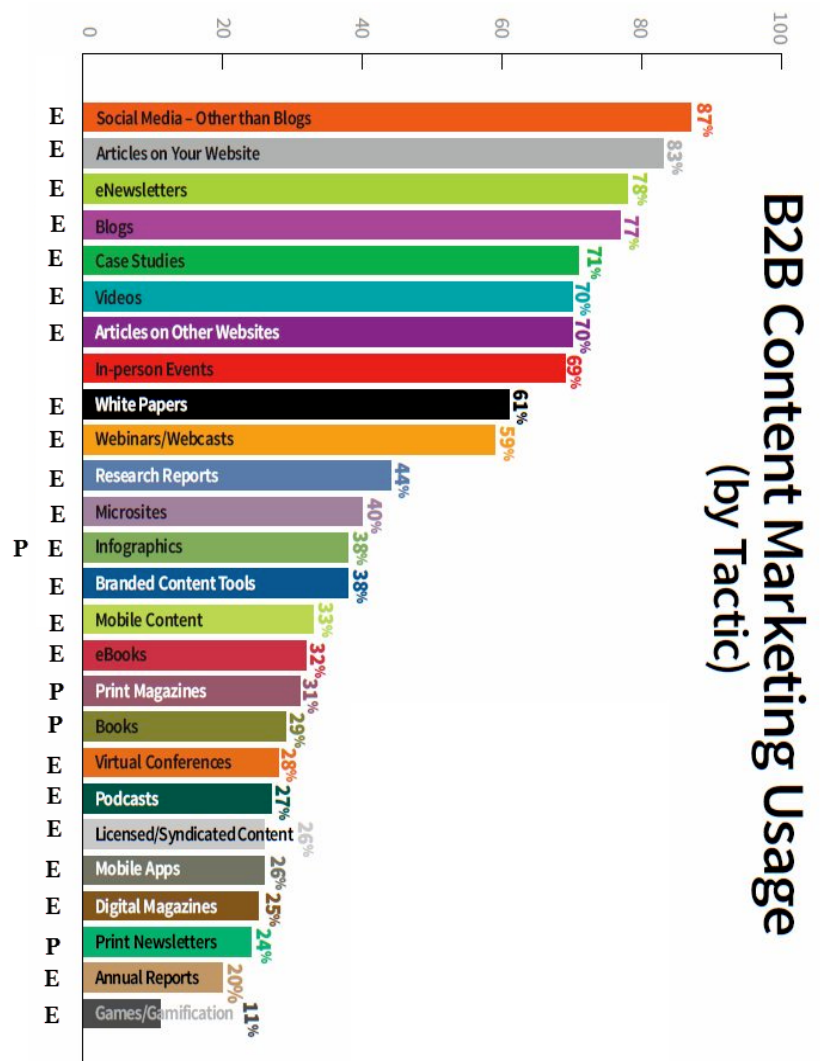
1. The message disappears when you hit an "on/off" button

2. You have the potential for real time audience interaction while your message is in front of your audience.

Take a look at the chart which shows the percentage of organizations surveyed who use the various marketing channels in the chart. We have appended the original chart with the letters "E" and "P" for electronic and print. As you will note... the vast majority are electronically based. While this chart was designed for communication in a B2B world all of the options are viable for almost any audience. The main take away is that electronic communication is the key element in any communications discussion.

Think Asset Then Distribution

The real value of electronic communication is the ability for the communication "asset" to be used in variety of ways. A podcast can be shared via social media, embedded on your blog, uploaded to another company's website and shared on

P= Print
E - Electronic

		Tactic	%
	E	Social Media – Other than Blogs	87%
	E	Articles on Your Website	83%
	E	eNewsletters	78%
	E	Blogs	77%
	E	Case Studies	71%
	E	Videos	70%
	E	Articles on Other Websites	70%
		In-person Events	69%
	E	White Papers	61%
	E	Webinars/Webcasts	59%
	E	Research Reports	44%
	E	Microsites	40%
P	E	Infographics	38%
	E	Branded Content Tools	38%
	E	Mobile Content	33%
	E	eBooks	32%
	P	Print Magazines	31%
	P	Books	29%
	E	Virtual Conferences	28%
	E	Podcasts	27%
	E	Licensed/Syndicated Content	26%
	E	Mobile Apps	26%
	E	Digital Magazines	25%
	P	Print Newsletters	24%
	E	Annual Reports	20%
	E	Games/Gamification	11%

B2B Content Marketing Usage (by Tactic)

Original graph from 2013 B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks - North America CMI/Marketing Profs

Facebook. Each of those options target a potentially different audience – using the investment made in one marketing asset.

Mobile

One thing to get particularly familiar with is the advent of mobile access to information. The number and people who use mobile equipment to access information either from the web or some other internet connected location is exploding. The time to think about mobile is now.

And mobile isn't just "phones." Mobile includes tablets, laptops, phablets (large phones/small tablets) and a variety of electronic equipment that allow untethered access to the internet. Below are some statistics to show that the move toward a more mobile world has become a reality.[8]

Over 20% of website visits are made on mobile devices. And that isn't counting app usage and other internet enabled information.

	Website Visits by Device	Q1 2012	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q1 2013
OVERALL	Traditional	88.62%	85.27%	82.61%	80.74%	78.99%
	Tablet	5.95%	7.09%	8.48%	8.93%	10.58%
	Smartphone	5.42%	7.64%	8.91%	10.34%	10.44%
TABLET	iPad	91.68%	90.82%	90.17%	89.49%	89.28%
	Kindle Fire	3.58%	4.06%	4.08%	3.41%	2.51%
	Android	4.75%	5.12%	5.75%	7.10%	8.20%
SMARTPHONE	iPhone	58.20%	61.48%	59.78%	59.75%	63.20%
	Android	40.16%	36.93%	38.51%	38.81%	35.52%
	Windows	0.90%	0.92%	0.92%	0.94%	1.04%
	Other	0.74%	0.66%	0.80%	0.50%	0.25%

What this means to you as a communicator is that you need to consider the constraints and the processes you ask your audience to participate in on the web. Fat fingers and small check boxes don't work well together. Keep in mind the various ways people will access your information and provide them with an experience that is designed for the device.

Long-winded documents don't fit a mobile application any more.

The audience dictates how your communication asset will be consumed – be prepared to deliver that asset in multiple formats.

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[8] http://www.smartinsights.com/mobile-marketing/mobile-marketing-analytics/mobile-marketing-statistics/

Integrated Multi-Channel Communications

Before we discuss the various channels available it is important to understand two things…

1. Today's communication environment is … **INTERACTIVE**

    Read that again and again. Almost **EVERY** communication channel in today's work allows for some form of interactivity. Don't ignore that powerful option with your communication planning. Regardless of channel used – and there are plenty – consider how you will use it to "interact" with your audience. Ask questions, pose challenges – encourage feedback.

2. Today's communication environment is about **INTEGRATION**

    No one single channel of communication is as effective as a portfolio of communication options. Regardless of audience, having multiple connection points across a wide variety of communication tools increases your chances that you will create engagement. While reviewing the following options always keep the idea of "integration" and leveraging multiple mediums to really drive your message home with your audience and meet them where they work and play.

Channels to Consider

The number and type of communication channels has exploded. There is no way we can provide you with an exhaustive list of options. The image below shows just how crowded the communication space is[9].

Social Media Landscape 2013

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[9] http://www.fredcavazza.net/2013/04/17/social-media-landscape-2013/
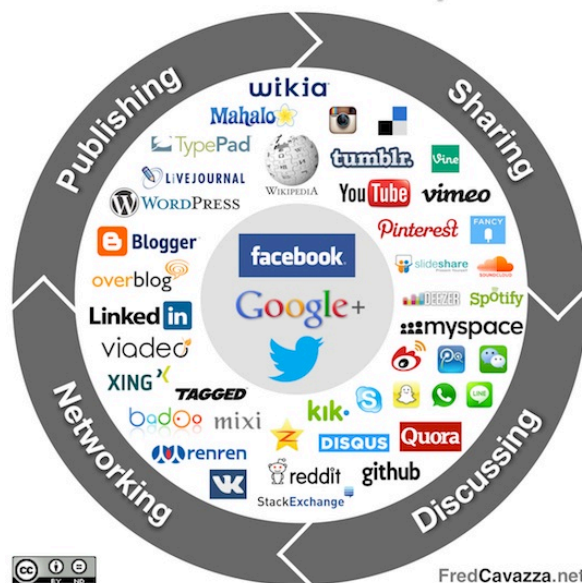
However, in most situations you will only need a handful of channels. Your job is to create a communications plan that uses the most common channels for your particular audience, not try to use ALL the channels available.

The major channels that most of us will need to consider at a minimum include:

Your Web-Site

From a communication standpoint consider a website "home base" where ALL relevant information lives. Regardless of the channel used, every engagement initiative needs a home base where your audience can access anything they need. Your website is the one constant for all audience members. While the *way* in which information is received and or broadcast can vary (and it should) you must create and maintain a home base.

Make sure you design the website with logical and clear navigation, easy to find customer service/help information, links to other communication channels such as Facebook pages, twitter accounts, etc. (see below for more on those options) and links to additional information that may help.

Email

Email is and will continue to be a cost-effective and popular communication option. Email allows for more lengthy discussions, can connect to other assets via links and has the ability to be tracked and measured.

Indeed, according to data from email marketing provider Informz, an increase in the click-through rate of email from 19.5 percent to 21.1 percent from 2011 to 2012 has occurred. Email is still a valuable tool.

Text

Although, losing some energy lately, text messaging to phones can be an effective communication option. Simple to use, immediate and inexpensive text or SMS may be an option if you have access to your audience phone numbers and permission to text them (remember, some people still have to pay for each text message). This is a particularly audience-sensitive option and should only be used if other options don't provide the reach or immediacy your engagement initiative may require.

Social Networks

The following is a very brief overview on **the various social media options available for marketing** to your audience. Each social media option will require different techniques, so developing a unique communication plan tailored for each platform is required. Don't just duplicate what you say on one program on all the others. Each platform is focused on different outcomes.

Facebook

Depending on your audience and your program, Facebook may provide a simple and easy "home base" for your communication needs. Facebook has the ability to create "groups" with limited sharing to members as well as the ability to create brand pages where you can create events, provide links to relevant content and engage in two-way communication with people who are connected to your brand.

Facebook is ideal when your audience already is engaging on the platform, when two-way interaction is valuable, and when your potential audience is difficult to identify.

Google+

Google+ is a relatively new Facebook competitor with strong membership growth numbers. Google+ provides a very robust set of engagement options within its platform, such as the ability to upload and share photos, videos, links and "blog" type posts. Google+ also features "circles", which is an easy and intuitive way to segment followers into smaller groups, enabling you to share information with some followers while barring others. For example, you might try creating a "super-fan" circle, and share special discounts and exclusive offers only with that group. Google + also provides the ability for you to "host" video conversations through their "Hangout" function. These videos can be recorded and saved to Google+ via Youtube (another Google product.)

Google+ is not as wide spread as Facebook, so engagement within the network may be limited. However, from a broader marketing discussion – Google+ content will increase your brand's "SEO" making it easier to find by Google search.

Twitter

Twitter is the social media marketing tool that lets you broadcast your updates across the web. Follow tweeters in your industry or related fields, and you should gain a steady stream of followers in return.

Mix up your official-related tweets about specials, discounts, and news updates with some fun and quirky tweets interspersed. Using Twitter as a social media marketing tool revolves around dialog and communication, so be sure to interact as much as possible.

Twitter can be used as a "broadcast" medium pushing updates but can also be used as an "interactive" media allowing a brand to hold "tweet chats" and interact with fans in real time.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is considered a "professional social media marketing site" with a more formal tone and demeanor. LinkedIn includes a "Groups" service that allows you to create and invite participants to a segmented group of individuals. This is an effective way to engage in professional dialog with people in similar industries, and it provides a place to share content

with like-minded individuals. These groups can be built for consumers, employees or even a vendor community. LinkedIn can also be used as a broadcast medium by simply adding content to a LinkedIn group or using a group for two-way communication through polls or questions.

Location-Based Social Media Tools

Social media platforms like Yelp, FourSquare, and Level Up are effective for brick and mortar businesses looking to implement marketing social media. Register on these sites to claim your location spot, and then consider extra incentives such as check-in rewards or special discounts. Remember, these visitors will have their phones in hand so they will have access to providing reviews, which could hurt or significantly aid your users.

Print

As mentioned before , do not dismiss physical mail, either through a forma direct mail initiative or as simple as a way to distribute ongoing updates. In addition to mail, print can include environmental options such as posters and other signage.

3-Dimensional

Logo identified merchandise continues to be a valuable communication tool for creating awareness and adding a sense of permanence and utility to your message.

Face 2 Face

With the advent of multiple electronic communication options, either through the web or via email, the focus on face to face meetings has declined. However, there is no better way to build connection and engage in deeper two-way conversation than with a face to face meeting.

Meetings are a communication tool. Don't ignore them. It can be as simple as a team meeting or as formal as channel incentive travel award or conference. No communications medium builds relationships and trust as effectively as face-to-face.

Internal (Yammer/Chatter)

Simple and quick text messaging is still a valuable communication option. Like twitter, but confined within the walls of an organization, are tools like Yammer and Chatter (a salesforce.com option), which allow employees to quickly communicate across an organization. Think of these tools like "mini email" with limited shelf life and quick actionable content. Deploy these tools as a way to quickly tell your staff about website updates and/or link them to new information that can help drive engagement.

Company intranets

For employee programs, don't forget an obvious choice for communication – your company intranet. Many companies have a "portal" product where various programs and initiatives associated with engagement can be advertised and promoted.

This applies to vendors and channel members. Many companies have similar portals for ecommerce. Don't neglect an existing channel for providing updates and information to your audiences.

Strategy

Your communications strategy at a minimum must include a discussion concerning:

Audience

Who is it you want to connect with? Is it a single group of homogenous members or do you need to target different groups? Do any of your audiences overlap with respect to their communication? Millennials are very different than Boomers, yet they use similar communication channels. Do you need different messaging for each group even if you use the same channel? Does a Facebook post appeal to your Gen Y's but not your Boomers even if both are on your page?

Consume vs. Interact

Identify the type of information and communications you will be sending out. Some information is purely about information and consumption. Dates, times, processes – these are all information-based communication assets. They can be best served via email, a blog post, a document uploaded to the website, a tweet with a link to the information.

Not all communication should be broadcasted– make room in your strategy for interactivity and engagement. Ask questions, run polls, allow your audience the opportunity to provide feedback and then communicate how you used the feedback.

At the very least try to make 30% of your communication "interactive" in order to demonstrate that you truly want engagement with your audience.

Objectives

Almost concurrently to determining what kind of communication you'll be developing, ask yourself what your objectives are. No plan, no strategy is going to be successful if you first don't ask yourself – *"What do I want to happen if I do this?"*

That simple question will guide the type of communication, the channel, how interactive it is, how often, etc.

You can have multiple objectives. Examples include:

- Increase awareness of "x" program as measured by a poll or questionnaire;

- Increase number of "likes" on our Facebook fan page;

- Grow our opt-in mailing list;

- Increase size of our social network footprint as measured by followers, re-tweets, etc.

Each corporate objective should have corresponding communications objectives. A single goal could have multiple communication objectives. In today's world with so many cost-effective options available, it's only practical to use as many as make sense.

Tactical Plan

Your tactical plan is the nuts and bolts plan that informs your day-to-day activity as it relates to achieving your communication objectives. It should be specific. It should spell out the number, type and responsibility for each area of communication. In some companies they call it a communication calendar – detailing the dates and times for "releasing" communications.

While that type of calendar is important, it is only half the equation. Today's communication plan needs to include a "monitoring" function where someone is responsible for reviewing the "chatter" on the various social media outlets. Communication is no longer a "controlled" experience. Your audience has as much power, and in many instances, more power than you do when communicating with your audience. Through their individual social networks, good news and bad can "go viral" quickly if not addressed immediately. Therefore, monitoring mentions of your brand, company, and products is critical in creating a true "engagement" process in your communications plan. This part of the communications activity is much more ad hoc and free form. It's not driven by a schedule, rather by what your audience wants and needs. If you see a post on twitter saying good things about your brand, thank the poster in that medium. If you see negative things, find a way to solve the problem. Do not ignore posts, social networks embolden everyone and your lack of attention will be noted in multiple tweets and Facebook posts.

Summary – It's an Ecosystem

In the "good ole days" communication was simple. Limited choices for how the message would be delivered. Limited choices on what the message would include and limited choices on how the message would be formatted.

The problem, as George Bernard Shaw so perceptively pointed out is you never knew whether your message was getting to the right people and if they were listening.

Not today.

Today communication is less of a "channel" than it is an ecosystem.

> *"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."*
>
> *George Bernard Shaw*

To envision what we mean, the chart below shows how a single piece of information, be that a program update, a company release – really any "information asset" can be repurposed and connected throughout the "ecosystem."

The most successful organizations will take full advantage of the ability to take a small piece of information, make it accessible and interactive within their target audience, and drive higher levels of brand/company engagement.

There are multiple ways to send your message. Multiple was to format it. Multiple ways to track who got it and to know what they did with the information.

Communication is two-way, engaged and interactive. Taking the time to outline your communication needs, understand the various options available and how you might connect one, two or three different mediums together to create greater understanding and engagement with your message and your brand is the new challenge.

It is faster… it is more complicated and it is more important than ever to look at your communication strategy as a key linchpin in your engagement thinking rather than an afterthought.
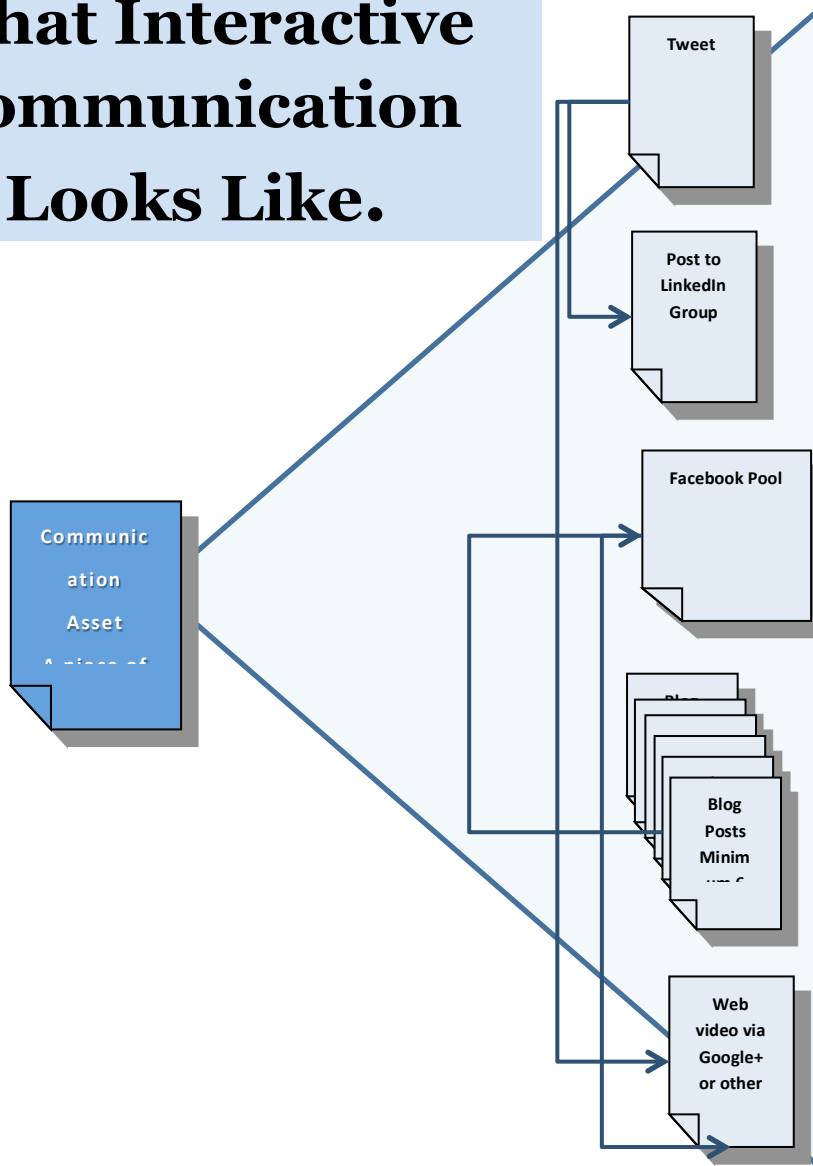
Remember - How you communicate will determine "if" you communicate.

What Interactive Communication Looks Like.

Tweet

- One time
- Multiple Times
- Links back to "home base" ie: website

Post to LinkedIn Group

- Ask question in Linkedln

Communication Asset
A piece of

Facebook Pool

- Take a poll on Facebook
- Publish Results
- Write blog post on results (host on website)

Blog Posts Minimum f

- Ongoing updates and commentary on main "home base" website
- Link to Facebook
- Tweet
- Add randomly to LinkedIn

Web video via Google+ or other

- Youtube video
- Embed in blog post
- Link to video from twitter
- Link to video in Facebook