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Candid Comms

Transcript.

Season Six. Episode Two.



Transcript. Season Six Episode Two. March 2024

You're listening to the Candid Comms podcast with Rachel Miller. Tune in for practical advice and inspirational ideas to help you focus on all things internal communication related.

Hello and welcome to the show. Today's episode is focused on transformation. We are going to be looking at how to transform your organisational communication, and you will leave with one thing to know, one thing to do, and one thing Are you ready? Let's get started. Let's first turn our attention to busting a little bit of jargon before we move on.

What does transformation mean? I looked in the Oxford dictionary and transform is defined as make a marked change in form, nature or appearance of something. So to transform something means to make a real difference, to make a real change. So something we need to know is What does transforming your organisational communication mean for your organisation?

If we're coming out with statements like we want to change our internal communication or transform it or revitalise it. Let's get really clear, Comms Friends. Let's really look at what does transforming our internal communication mean? And I think to do that and to do it in a really meaningful way. We need to be able to articulate that.

So what does transforming organisational communication look like for your organisation? That's what we need to know. I think the best way to approach this is to have a very candid conversation with ourselves and the people around us to really look at, well, how are we now? What's the status quo like?

Today, if we're coming out with statements, like we want to transform our organisation, which as we've just heard is to significantly change form or change shape, then actually what's wrong with today, look at the way that you're working as an organisation. Look at the way that you're communicating.

What's led you to feel the need to transform the way that communication happens. And there's a number of questions there that you could ask It could be That it feels like communication isn't happening in the right way inside the organisation. It might be, it feels like we have communities of people who feel disconnected, whether they're our frontline workers, our shift workers, our leaders, our employees.

There's a feeling that there's some barriers and blockers in place inside the organisation that has led us to say, We need to transform our organisation. I often hear radically. We need to radically transform. What would that look like? What would that feel like?

Something I want you to focus on, something we need to know is If we're thinking about transforming organisational communication for your company, for your colleagues, for your leaders, for your peers, what does that word transform mean in your context?

I encourage you to think about that and maybe to write that down. It gets us into the right mindset when we're really looking at, actually, if we're trying to make things better inside our
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organisation, what is it that's making them different? Not feel so great today. Is it that we don't think our channels are working hard enough for us?

Is it that we don't think our leaders are showing up in the right way? Maybe they're not on message. Maybe they look disinterested. Maybe it's really hard to pull a an all employee meeting or town hall together because it feels like everything is very slow or no one is prioritising the way that communication happens inside our organisation.

So actually the comms team end up pulling together that agenda. Does that resonate with you? If so, please know that you're not alone. I regularly have mentoring conversations and as do my team, Team Teal, here at All Things IC, where we work with in house internal communicators around the globe, day in, day out.

And one of the many frustrations that are shared with us, and these are always confidential, we have very confidential discussions, Well, we help you as a thinking partner to help you work on not just in your role, but we very often Here have conversations and hear comments like our leaders don't seem to be interested.

They're not showing up in the right way responsibility for the town hall ends up on the shoulders of the comms team because We think that it's important. We recognise how important it is for there to be a credible, accurate, reliable source of truth, opportunities for two way [00:05:00] discussions and engagement from our leaders to employees and vice versa.

But it can feel like you're the only voice and that solo, independent operator. If you are a team of one, then that's exactly what you will be. It will feel like you are a solo, independent person inside your organisation who is trying. to change the way that communication happens. Please know that you're not alone.

If you feel like that, I feel for you. I have been in that exact position when I was in house and my goodness, it is lonely, but your work matters. All of that effort and energy that you put into trying to transform your organisational communication is worth it. Why? Because when we get communication right, it can transform the lives of the people that we work with.

For our people, our employees, to feel motivated, inspired, to turn up that their views matter, their voices matter inside the organisation. The purpose of internal communication isn't telling people what to do. It's to create a shared understanding and a shared meaning. Only then can our people align themselves with our organisation's goals and priorities.

And that shared understanding and meaning shows up in lots of different ways inside organisations. It needs somebody to be concentrating on it. The industry body, the institute of internal communication, when they describe effective internal comms, they describe it as giving employees a powerful and articulate voice, and the internal communication is critical in building deeper and longer lasting connections between employees and the organisation they work for.

It says how we communicate at work has the power to transform lives. There's that word. By helping people feel informed, connected and purposeful. That they matter at work, making for

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better organisations and a better society overall. And note there's a distinct lack of channels being mentioned in that description.

And for good reason. I've written that in my book, an internal communication strategy. I've looked at the work of the Institute of Internal Communication and I highlighted that definition that I've just read to you is from the book itself where I believe if you're looking at the role of internal communication, what an incredible privilege that is.

How we communicate at work has the power to transform lives by helping people feel informed, connected, and purposeful, that they matter at work. Wow. I mean, I don't know many jobs that would really be described in that same way. And I take that as a privilege, I view that as a privilege, and I take it very seriously.

And I know that many internal communicators do too. That's another lens to look through. If you find it hard to write down what transformational communication would mean for your organisation, maybe take it to the people level. What would it mean to transform the world of work for your people? Do they feel informed, connected, and purposeful, and that they matter at work?

Now this isn't just the responsibility of internal communication and internal communicators, but my goodness me, we have a really important role to play here. If we're looking at the way that an organisation communicates, how leaders show up, how employees feel involved, then we can create the mechanisms and encourage the amplification of voices across an organisation to help our people notice the difference and notice the change.

So that's what I want you to know. What does transform mean from an internal communication perspective and from an employee perspective? What would it mean to transform the world of work? There's a technique that I use that I'm going to share with you. If all of that feels really hard to answer, Flip it.

Turn it around. If it's easier to answer, well, what does a bad experience look like? What does it mean if we don't change what we're doing? Write that instead. So rather than thinking aspirationally, if we transform our communication XYZ will happen, flip it around and say, if we stay the same. If nothing changes, if nobody is focused on changing, or enhancing, or improving, or transforming our internal communication, then what?

What would happen? It might feel like information doesn't flow, there isn't a source of truth, our people feel frustrated, they're wasting time, money, and effort. The list is endless, Comms Friends. You'll know this for your organisation. You know better than I do. What is happening inside your organisation?

It helps you to build the case for transformation. It doesn't just happen. It's a longer scale, long term project. If you like, or mindset is probably a more accurate way of describing it. If you want to transform your organisation, get clear as to why. What is it? What's the outcome or the so what? So what do you hope to happen as a result of investing time, money and effort in transforming your organisational communication?

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The second focus for us today and something I want you to do is to be clear when thinking about transformation as to how it shows up inside. Your organisation, both from a roles and responsibilities perspectives, but also what are the work streams that are happening inside your organisation? Let me give you an example.

Very often, we talk about change as transformational change. And remember, that's the changing from one state to another, a significant change in form or structure. Change very often falls into that. We might be changing our brand. We might be changing the way that things happen inside the organisation from a systems, processes perspective.

Or maybe we're closing sites or opening sites. Or introducing new brands. Again, a really long list there of all the different types of change that could be happening inside an organisation. And that word transform is appropriate to think about. So when you're trying to think about planning change, for example, how are you changing form?

What are you going from and to? In the same way, I've just encouraged you to think about your current status quo when it comes to your internal communication and what you would transform. from and to think about that from a change perspective. I think the phrase, I'll be really candid with you, this is the Candid Comms podcast so I can be candid with you, I think the word transformation is overused inside organisations where actually Sometimes changes that is happening is iterative.

It's an evolution. It's an evolving of something. It's not necessarily changing from one form to another. The best example I can think to share with you from a transformational perspective is if you think about butterflies, for example, they start off as caterpillars, then they go into that cocoon state, and then they transform into a butterfly.

They look. entirely different. It's noticeable, it's visible, you can't deny the fact that transformation has happened because nothing has stayed the same. It looks and feels entirely different when you experience seeing a butterfly to seeing a caterpillar. That's transformation. Very often we enhance, we tweak.

We refine, we slightly augment something inside our organisation and we call it transformational change. Is it? If we're being really honest, comms friends, and really candid, is it transformational change or is it just change? Is it that we're Evolving, iterating, enhancing, improving. It's not transformation.

So be mindful of that. Watch for that inside your organisation. Where is the word transform used and is it being used correctly? Because I find if you overuse it and you've used it for absolutely everything, all these very small incremental projects and pieces of work, when you are actually. Working on transformation.

When you are actually trying to change something, whole scale, huge scale, it loses the meaning because we've overused it. So be mindful of that. There are a whole number of other different phrases that you could use and you'll know what's right for your culture, for the way that you do things, how you describe change.

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Some organisations categorise change. They look at different types of change. It might be business as usual, it might be transformational. But that helps them plan, particularly from a comms perspective. Be aware of that for your own organisation. Spot when transformation is used and call it out. If you hear it being used and you think actually that's not a transformation, that's not a caterpillar, it's a butterfly type, that's just a little incremental change.

Say it, call it out. Part of our role as internal communicators is being that bridge, that conduit between all layers and levels of an organisation and communities and employee groups inside an organisation. If you're listening to leaders, perhaps planning organisational change, and they're calling it transformation, and you know that it's not.

Be the voice of your people. Be the voice of your colleagues, your employees, in those spaces where decisions are being made and the discussions are happening. Say that. Call it out. Is this transformation? Or is this just building on what we've already done? We're two years into a four year roadmap. This isn't a brand new massive change that we're doing.

This is an iterative process where we're following the roadmap, for example. When we overuse it, it loses the impact and it puts our colleagues into a state of everything is changing all the time. I'm sure that I will talk more about change in future episodes, and I'll include some links in the show notes of blog posts and previous episodes that I've published.

I'll write them at www.com/podcast in the show notes for this episode if you want to read more about change. And Dan in my team is hosting 90 minute. Masterclasses. We're hosting them via teams. So if you want to learn about change, have a look at the what's on page of the All Things IC website or sign up to the water cooler, our email newsletter.

Go to allthingsic.com forward slash newsletter and pop your email in there to be kept updated of all of the different training courses that we've got going on. We're going to take a short break and when we come back, I will leave you with something to think about. See you in a moment. The Candid Comms podcast is brought to you by All Things IC.

My brilliant team and I offer consultancy, training and mentoring to support in house internal communicators so you can thrive in your role. I established the [00:16:00] business back in 2013 and over the years we have helped thousands of internal communicators increase your skills. Knowledge and confidence. See www.allthingsic.com. You'll discover the latest offers and you can explore on demand, in person and virtual courses. You'll find 1, 800 blog posts on all things internal comms related, and it's the way to order a signed copy of my book, Internal Communication Strategy. See allthingsic.Com

Welcome back in the final part of today's episode. We're going to be Concentrating on something. I want you to think about if we're trying to transform our internal communication I have a brilliant Basics checklist. And I've developed this when I'm working with organisations and looking at how they're communicating.

I found that I kept looking for the same things over and over again. So a number of years ago, I pulled everything together as a checklist. And on that brilliant basics, I'm looking for things like an

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overview of business objectives, your internal communication strategy, that you've got an internal communication plan template in place.

That you have an editorial calendar for the business. So that's people in the organisation can see what's happening when. And that you've also got one for the comms team. That helps you see what's happening when. And there's slightly different lenses to look through there. So the one for the business may have less detail than the one that the comms team have, for example, because you'd probably got stakeholders, business owners on your version of an editorial calendar.

And you've probably also aligned it with your channels, for example, so you know what's going to hit when. Also on a brilliant basics checklist are things like a tone of voice guide, so maybe a glossary inside your [00:18:00] organisation. What are those words and phrases that you use? Constantly and that you expect your people to know what they mean and then the tone of voice guide might be reflective of your brand Internally and externally particularly if you've done some work on your employee value proposition EVP or employer brand I'm gonna bust jargon as we go if you've listened to this podcast, you'll know that I try and describe everything as we go So your tone of voice guide might be how you refer to each other.

And that could be all sorts of things, from an inclusion guide, to making sure that you are using colleagues, maybe rather than staff or partners, things like that. So being really mindful. How do we show up? How do we communicate? What's the tone that we use? Also pop your brilliance basics. And this is a fairly long list and I make no apologies for this.

This is what I look for. Particularly, if people tell me we want to transform our organisational communication, I [00:19:00] want to see how you're currently communicating. I want to see, these are some of the indicators that I use to chart transformational internal communication. I look for evidence of how an internal comms team is thinking beyond what I would expect them to be doing and how they are working alongside the business to do that.

Think strategically about what's needed. So it is those building blocks. It is having objective strategy, plan templates, editorial calendars, tone of voice guide, but it's also things like a stakeholder map that you've got. Mission purpose, vision statements, and that's both for the business and the internal communication team.

If you just have statements that are how the business thinks and what's important. That's great, but it's half the story. If you're trying to transform internal communication, I want to know what good looks like for you. What does transformation mean for you? Also on that list [00:20:00] are things like comms principles, and they are positioning statements for a team.

I love this as an exercise. I love working through this with in house internal communicators. A comms principle for me is how you hold yourselves. It's a checklist. If you like, it's a check and balance of regardless of what we're doing, regardless of the mechanism, the channel that we're using, what is it that we hold as important for the way that communication happens inside our organisation?

Let me share an example with you. The Met Office, which is the. The weather systems, the meteorological office here in the UK have an incredible internal comms team. I've had the
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pleasure of working with them for many years and Cat Slatcher, who heads up their internal communication, has written an expert view for my book, Internal Communication Strategy.

I've not been able to share this before, but I'm really excited to be able to give you a little glimpse into some of the work that she's been doing at the Met Office with her brilliant team. They have internal communication principles and they develop them to help everyone communicate well with each other.

They describe them as their mindset or ethos and they design them as part of the mindset section of the Miller Framework, which I talked about in episode one of this season. I'll include a link in the show notes www.allthingsic.com/podcast in the show notes for this episode. So you can listen back to episode one.

If you've not heard that yet in my book, cat has detailed what those internal communication principles are. And they say at the Met office, we communicate clearly, keeping things simple and understandable. Remember this is a check and balance how they hold themselves to account. We recognise and celebrate individuality.

We make our communication accessible, inclusive and engaging. We are focused on who we want to communicate with. And notice that's with, not at or to. And I've talked about this many times on Candid Comms. Well, the mindset always for me, for good, effective internal communication, is who we're communicating with, not who we're communicating to or at.

Remember, it's always two way. So we're focused on who we want to communicate with. We choose the right channels and timing. We think with empathy and care about each other. We are open. Honest and keep it real. We consider content conversations and consequences, and we are flexible and adaptable. I wonder what you thought when you're listening through to that list.

That's nine there. There's nine internal communication principles. So the team are focused on transforming the way the organisation communicates. So these principles are how they hold themselves. Cat has detailed a lot more about the work that they're doing. Also comms as a service inside the organisation, which I really like and how they help the organisation by having a team work form, like an intake form, for example, that helps them as a team prioritise.

Say yes to the right things, say no to the wrong things. You can find all of that brilliant insight from Cat inside my book, Internal Communication Strategy, which is available now via your favourite bookstore and it's published. I wonder whether principles could be useful for you inside your organisation.

If you've not thought about them before, I wonder whether that's something that you could consider. Let's return back to our brilliant basics checklist. Other items I look for on that brilliant basics checklist is a monthly measurement report. I've talked about measurement a lot on Candid Comms. It's so important.

I have a whole episode on how to create a monthly measurement report. I'll link to it in the show notes and you'll be able to find it via your favourite podcast player or listen via the All Things IC

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website. I've also got communication guidance for leaders and people managers. I wonder whether you have that inside your organisation.

I look for that. If people tell me we've really been focusing on how our leaders communicate and how our people managers communicate, I say, brilliant, show me. Do you have guidance for when people become people leaders inside your organisation or when managers join your organisation or leaders join your organisation?

Do you? Have conversations with them. Do you have guidance in place? Do you have a one page guide? This is what's expected of you as a leader, and this is what you can expect from us as an organisation. Doesn't need to be wordy comms friends at all. It can literally be that very transactional. This is what we expect from you.

And this is things like, you will meet with your team, you will have one to ones, you will have team meetings, you will try and meet them face to face. I mean, it's not earth shattering, and it feels like common sense [00:25:00] for us as internal communicators, but don't ever make the assumption that it's obvious to other people.

I can't tell you how many conversations I've had, and focus groups that we've held, and listening discussions with people where I get told that. Well, no one's told me that's my job as a manager. No one told me that I had to meet with my team. And no one told me I had to cascade this information. So we mustn't assume that leaders know how to do this.

So what I look for in a brilliant basics checklist is I look to make sure that there's communication guidance for leaders and people managers. Have we made it really clear? This is what you are expected to do. And here's how we as the professional expert communicators inside your organisation can support you.

Talking points, briefing guides, peer discussions, whatever it may be. I also look for what makes a great story a one page guide. Now this It's probably, there's often lots of these missing when I'm looking at an organisation, particularly if we're getting ready to audit or to conduct a review where I'll be asking for things like this.

This alone is probably one of the, the single biggest things that is missing inside an organisation and I think it's probably one of the easiest things to write. So let me ask you this, how many conversations have you had? Or your team have had with people inside your organisation to help them understand what makes a great story.

I imagine that it's numerous. All of these discussions and conversations where you're talking through. We need to think about a great headline and a great call to action. We need to think about having a great. Picture where we're naming our colleagues and we're referring to them in this way. We're making sure we get everyone's job titles and location.

We're being really clear how this links to our overall business objectives or our strategic pillars. You know the conversation, I don't need to give you all the chapter and verse, I know that you are having this conversation. Imagine if you had a one page guide where you have all that information laid out already.

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How much time would it spend? And here's the thing, if it feels like, I hear you Rachel, but I haven't got time to put together a one page guide for everything. I hear you. However, how much time would it save if you were able to spend 20 minutes. That's all I reckon it would take. 20 minutes or half an hour maybe.

Get a cup of tea, sit down, have a brew and do this and do that one page guide. Test it with people inside the organisation or with each other. If you have a team where you're looking at it and going, actually, does this work hard enough for us? Does it say all the things that we constantly have to repeat when we're describing.

What it is to write a story for our organisation and what makes a good story. How much time would that save? Trust me, your future [00:28:00] selves will thank you if you have that in place inside your organisation. Other things on my brilliant basics checklist include channel templates. So I'm looking for email headers.

I'm looking here for footers inside an organisation where I'm trying to see that you've got those nuts and bolts in place. You have a good, Robust set of templates where it's very obvious where the communication has come from. Everything is working super hard for you. And notice that I say that phrase.

Everything is working hard for you. Not that you are working harder, but that you've set yourselves up for success. That, for me, is what good, effective internal communication looks like. Where it's evident that I can see all the time that you've spent working on, not just in, the role that you're doing as an internal communicator reduces.

All of that duplicated effort where you're having to repeat the same things over and over again. [00:29:00] Other things could be internal documents templates. So that might be presentations. It could even include signage inside offices or factories, internal branding guide. So what does that look like internally?

How are you being consistent? If you're trying to improve. Or even transform your internal communication, then what's the guide, what's the, what is the flexibility within boundaries? Where are those boundaries? What does that guide look like? How are you helping your people understand the boundaries that are in place?

This is how we communicate, this is the tone that we use, this is the style, the colours, the fonts. whatever it might be. And then the final thing, that brilliant basics checklist, and I've actually got another extended checklist, which I won't share with you today. It is an online hub with resources to help others communicate.

I've started looking for this and you might think, Rachel, that's [00:30:00] not basic. That's a really big investment of time, money and effort. Yeah, it is. But actually, if you have an online hub, and this doesn't need to be fancy Comms Friend, this could be a section on your intranet or a group as part of your, if you're using.

Microsoft 365, you've got a community set up, or you're using something within Viva Engage, for example, where there is a hub, which is a go to place for people to help them communicate. And maybe that's your shift supervisors, or maybe it's your people managers, or maybe it's people who are New into the organisation, where is the go to place as a source of truth to help others communicate where they can find lots of the things that I've just mentioned, a guide to writing stories, our internal branding guide, our tone of voice, etc.

When we don't have that and you don't have a mechanism, particularly if you don't have a mechanism for peers [00:31:00] to collaborate and swap notes with each other, we are wasting a lot of time, money and effort inside our organisations. So, what I want you to think about as we come to the end of this episode on transformational communication, is thinking beyond the basics.

It's looking at actually, if we had all of those things in place, my goodness, that would transform our organisation. Brilliant. Focus on that. Look at what would make a real tangible difference. And I use the phrase working on, not working in. Consider that as we close this episode. What is it that you're spending a lot of time working in your role doing?

Explaining what a great story looks like. Explaining how our channels work. But actually, if you invested some time working on those things, like putting some of those things I mentioned in a brilliant basics checklist together, it would save you time and it would move you [00:32:00] closer to those things that we've considered through this episode, knowing what transformation means, knowing what impact,

understanding what the barriers and blockers are, or the current status quo at the moment. And then how do we set ourselves up for success? How do we look at the mechanisms, the methods that we've got inside our organisation to transform our internal communication in the same way that the team at the Met Office have been doing and in the same way that lots of other clients and Comms friends have been doing by really focusing on, not just in, their role.

As ever, I love hearing from you. Do let me know what you're going to do differently as a result of listening. This episode of Candid Comms, you can find me online. I'm Rachel Miller on LinkedIn. I'm @RachelAllThingsIC on Instagram, or why not send me a message via the website. hello@allthingsic.com. And remember, what happens inside is reflected outside.

See you again soon.

Ends