It’s good to talk…

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Learning Outcomes

• Sharing of approaches to internal communications in Aberdeen and Wellcome Genome Campus

• Discover the positive and negative experiences of other institutions, around methods of communicating internally with staff and students

• Take home new ideas that can be applied in your own institution, facilitating improvement to your research support service
Why do we want to Communicate?

From our own viewpoint (as Public Engagement teams):

• Look for speakers/participants in events
• Share opportunities to apply for PE funding
• Advertise our events to staff/students
• Advertise our training to potential attendees
• Work better as a team
• Share information with our directorate/wider colleagues
• Contribute to institutional strategy
Why do we want to Communicate?

From a general viewpoint, for research support:

- Share new opportunities for research funding
- Advertise research information sessions/events
- Publicise training to potential attendees
- Be interconnected across internal teams
- Share information with our directorate/wider colleagues
- Ensure activity in external networks ‘breaks in’ to the internal community
However...
Conundrums
From 2015 ‘Factors Affecting’ Research Funders Survey

• **47%** of respondents felt **no training** had been offered (45% at UoA)

WE REGULARLY OFFER TRAINING TO ALL STAFF!
Also from ‘Factors Affecting’ Research Funders Survey

- 38% of respondents felt they would get more involved in PE if someone invited them to take part (UoA was 24%)

WE CONSTANTLY INVITE PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE – WHY DON’T THEY KNOW?
Conundrum 3

From 2017 ‘Internal Comms’ GRL Survey

- Email said by staff to be the best way to communicate institutional news and affairs

PERCEIVED THEME IS OVERLOAD OF INTERNAL ALL-STAFF EMAILS!
From 2016 UoA ‘Internal Comms’ Survey

- Weekly StaffNet eZine agreed as interesting and informative communication tool

SURVEY DIDN’T ASK IF STAFF ALWAYS READ IT, OR IF THEY READ IT ALL
Ways of Communicating with staff

- Email
- Website (external)
- Intranet (staff only)
- Text – WhatsApp groups
- Social media – e.g. facebook / twitter
- Team huddle – daily / weekly
- Committees – passing down of information
- Screens / IT on campus
- Conversation – one to one / groups / open meetings
- Awareness: e.g. institutional prizes
Your Internal Comms...

www.kahoot.it
State of play in Aberdeen

Internal Communications Staff survey, Nov 2016:
• 640 staff members responded
• Majority agreed they received the right level of communication
• Preferred methods: Email (94%), face to face (56%), open meetings (38%)
• Who did they want to hear more from? Senior managers & Directors
• Main method of communication is StaffNet news ezine: majority of respondents agreed it was useful & informative
• HOWEVER, the questions did not ask if they always read the ezine, or if they felt they ever missed information about events/opportunities

Outcome: Employee Engagement Strategy Group, led by Vice Principal
We consulted with prof services teams who communicate with researchers

- Email by far most frequently used method of communication
- Comms team/Research Office prefer regular e-zine with lots of information
- PE team; better results through shorter, specific emails or Facebook
- WhatsApp and Face-to-face very effective within small teams
- Health and Safety email small groups for further dissemination, with varying success. Also introducing standard safety notices, same place in every building, with same category of info.

“We are like 60 little businesses all doing their own thing” – is that so bad?
State of play at WGC

• ‘All-staff’ emails regularly used – often 10 – 20 per day, coming from a range of teams with access

• Additionally, there are multiple institutes and multiple email routes – e.g. a PhD list, a Post-Doc list etc - makes it difficult to adopt a cohesive comms approach

• Plan to rebuild the ‘Intranet’ (but being mindful not to divide internal and external audiences – which creates a barrier between the campus community and external partners)

• Screens around campus carry news and events

• Noticeboards in and around social areas and loos
Favourite channels (according to WGC staff)

- Face to face with senior leadership: 153
- Line manager/team meeting: 217
- Helix: 306
- All staff email: 290
- Newsletter print: 81
- eMag: 142
- Social media: 16
- TV screens: 75
- Video update: 17
How could internal comms be improved?

- More timely communications
- Two-way comms are lacking
- Lack of strategic vision and direction
- Email overload – less is more
- Timing of face to face comms
- Improve the intranet and remove intranet moderation
Key areas for addressing

- Provide greater clarity and improve communications around vision, strategy and structure
- Improve face to face opportunities to provide feedback to senior leaders
- Improved support for line managers to cascade information and share feedback
- Review senior leader comms and all-staff emails
- Review intranet
"Which features and functionality you would like a new intranet to provide."

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The Intranet is Dead, Long live the Intranet!
Potential to silo and divide
If relied on entirely, assumes regular followers
“How would you prefer to receive all-staff emails (Hinx) which are not time sensitive?”

- Weekly update: 41%
- I’m happy with the way I currently receive them: 34%
- Daily update: 15%
- Spread out across the week: 6%
- Other (please specify): 5%
Issues

• Culture – do staff feel they are involved? Listened to?
• Feedback/evaluation – just a box ticking exercise?
• Reinforcement of messages – more than one communication
• Face to face – body language and engagement
• The personal touch – direct communication vs blanket email
• Timing of communications: Staffnet ezine late Fri pm, very bad!
• Closed communications: staff can be unaware of what else is going on
• But! Emails requiring spontaneous responses can work well!
Images we might need
Discussion

• What’s your best new idea for research communication?
• Is research news valued as much as student or administrative bulletins at your institution?
• Are research funding bulletins worth the effort?
• Is social media the future of research communications?
Thank you

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