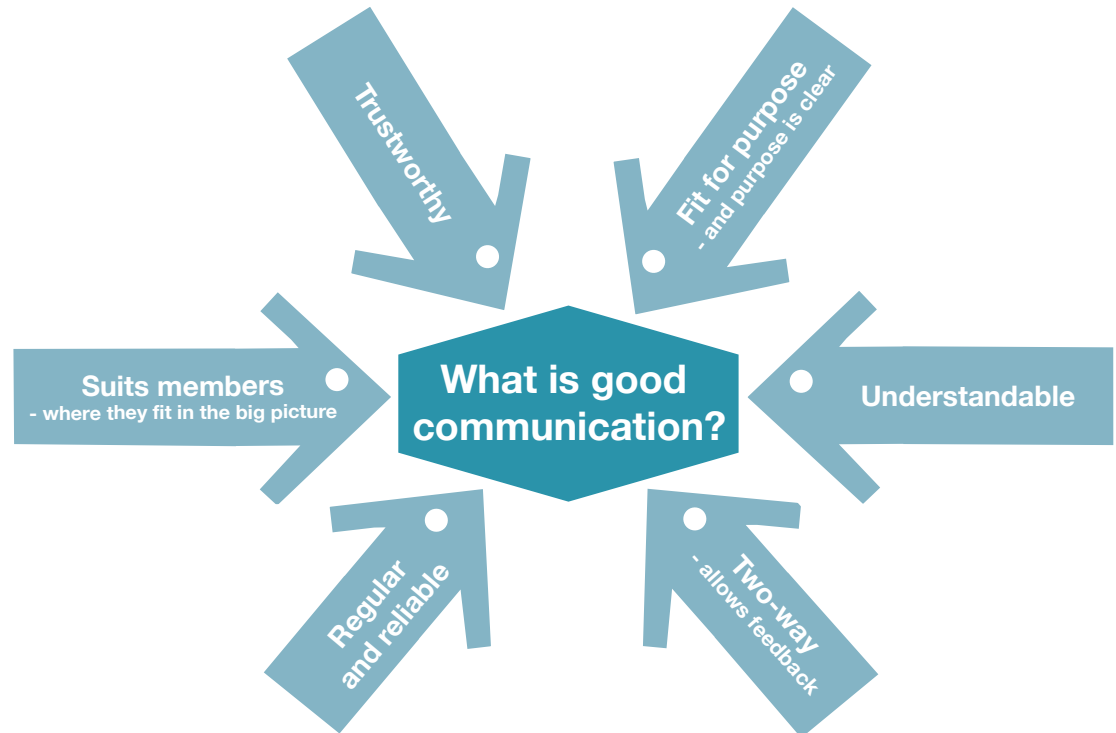


The Right Line

**So you want to be a highly valued and relevant organisation?
You need to communicate and engage effectively!**

THE RIGHT LINE brings the findings of the *Two-Way Communication* project together with current communication

practice into a handy industry guide with ideas and actions for effective communication.



What does it take?

- › Strategic commitment from leaders
- › Broad base of communication skills
- › Proper infrastructure of communication channels
- › Agreed communication policies and procedures which meet organisational objectives
- › Alignment with Values, Charter and needs of the organisation in its operating environment

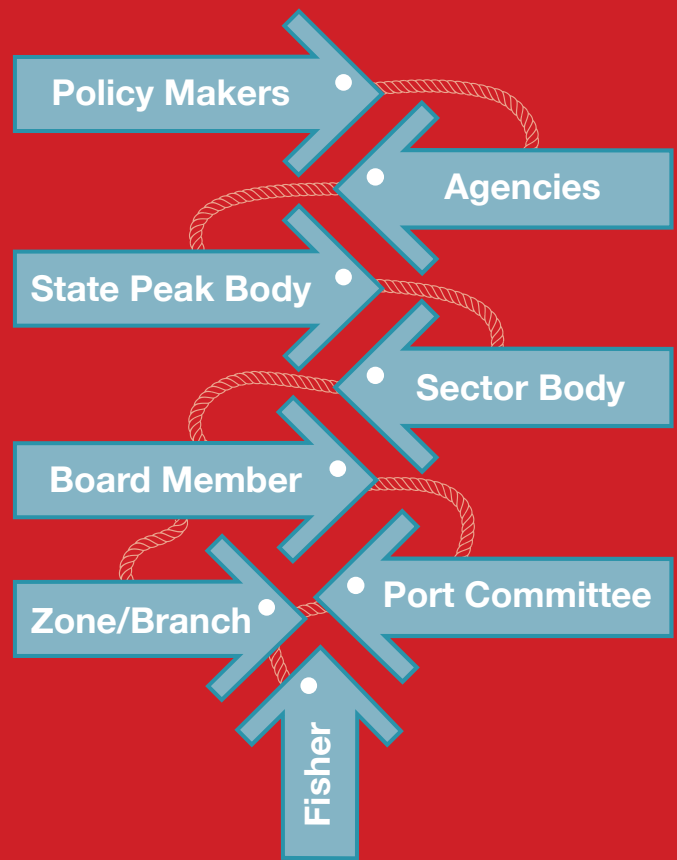
What are the barriers to effective communication?

The *Two-Way Communication* research shows that organisations are keen for two-way communication and engagement with their members and stakeholders, yet they face a number of constraints.

- › Funding and resources – many organisations believe they do not have the resources for effective communication – they are too busy running the organisation to worry about how well they communicate with members
- › Skilled communicators - staff who are competent to establish and maintain communication channels and mechanisms may be lacking or staff experience burnout and poor strategic direction from leaders
- › The organisation itself and how it functions - the hierarchies within organisations and sectors can be a barrier to good communication - messages may be filtered and clouded as they pass down and around the communication pathways illustrated right ⇨

What are the opportunities to improve effective communication?

- › Have a defined Value Proposition
- › Use tried and true face-to-face communication and networks
- › Adopt new technologies – use the power of your website and social media and teach members to use them
- › Find new partnerships – be cost effective through shared services in design, writing and distribution



Defining your Value Proposition and why it is important

Your Value Proposition is the promise you make to members about the value they will receive from you. It illustrates to your members and stakeholders the benefit that will come from being a member and receiving your service.

A Value Proposition for every organisation is important as it underpins your service delivery and communication plan and assists you to maintain your relevance to the industry and your members.



COMMUNICATION

How do you plan for effective communication?

Charter

- outlines your key purpose and governance arrangements and your role and responsibilities within the industry

- › Knowing your organisation's operating environment and your Charter, and aligning your communication with organisational values is vital for effective communication.
- › Undertaking an environmental scan to objectively review the current and anticipated environmental factors that impact your organisation, which helps you to understand the broader context in which you are operating.
- › Taking time to think through the implications of the environmental scan and planning a course of action.
- › Looking at the internal environment, including your organisation's internal capacities and resources, and projecting how these may need to change in the future to meet your Charter and your goals.

Environmental factors -

include political and economic aspects as well as industry trends and demographics

Two-Way Communication research found that members expect organisations to provide leadership, networking and profile raising as well as resources, advocacy, visibility and industry cohesion.

Values - deeply held concepts

or beliefs which people use to guide their behaviour. Organisational values are the set of shared values and norms that influence how governing bodies and managers behave and make decisions, and how people/ organisations communicate and interact with members and other stakeholders.

Two-Way Communication research found that members value trustworthiness, transparency, mutual respect, timeliness and access to decision makers from their industry organisations, as well as cohesion, availability and acknowledgement of feedback and contributions.

All communication and engagement must reflect and respect your agreed organisational values.

Engaging members and including their ideas in your communication planning activities will improve communication outcomes.

A Communication Audit is a great place to start to understand your current communications position and to connect with your members and stakeholders. It provides a baseline to set your communication objectives and operational plan. You can use surveys, information from website statistics, mail tracking and communication expenditure.

The audit helps you understand:

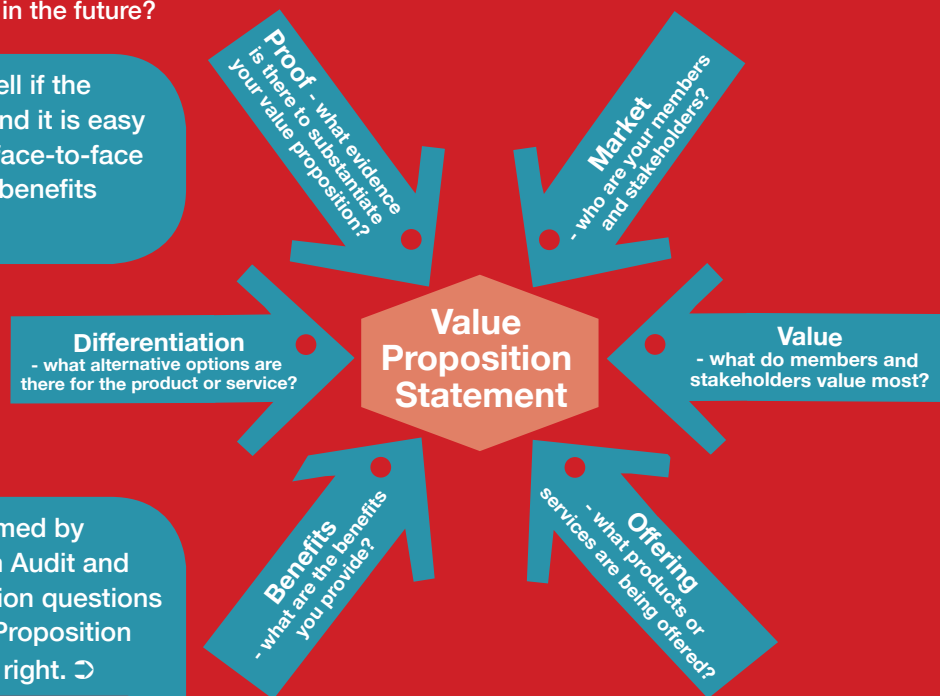
- › Who is communicating with whom and about what?
- › Who you should be communicating with, that is, who are your members and stakeholders?
- › How is the communication happening – modes and channels?
- › What is your message and is it getting through to members and stakeholders?
- › What do members value in your organisation and what do they want from you now and in the future?

Internet based surveys work well if the survey is short - they are quick and it is easy to collate the results, however, face-to-face engagement provides many benefits and ensures feedback.

Your Value Proposition is informed by the results of your Communication Audit and your responses to the value proposition questions allow you to create your Value Proposition Statement, illustrated to the right. ⇨

Develop your Communication Plan

- › Agree on primary objectives and standards of success for your Communication Plan – and ensure they are written down
- › Establish the baseline data of your current practice – use your Communication Audit results and analysis of website statistics, mail tracking and expenditure
- › Consult - build trust and promote constructive feedback by using open questions and active listening
- › Ensure a good response rate by fully engaging participants
- › Regularly monitor, evaluate and review against your agreed standards and incorporate communication planning into your planning cycle



Some practical ways to improve communication:

- › Website - keep it functional, easy to navigate and up to date
- › Social media - for now and for the future
- › Regular electronic newsletters and news digests
- › Road shows - for information and engagement
- › Annual Report - for information, compliance and marketing the organisation
- › Quarterly address/video/YouTube - try something different!
- › Build and maintain relationships with the media
- › Vivid examples - use persuasive messages and stories which tap into members' intrinsic values

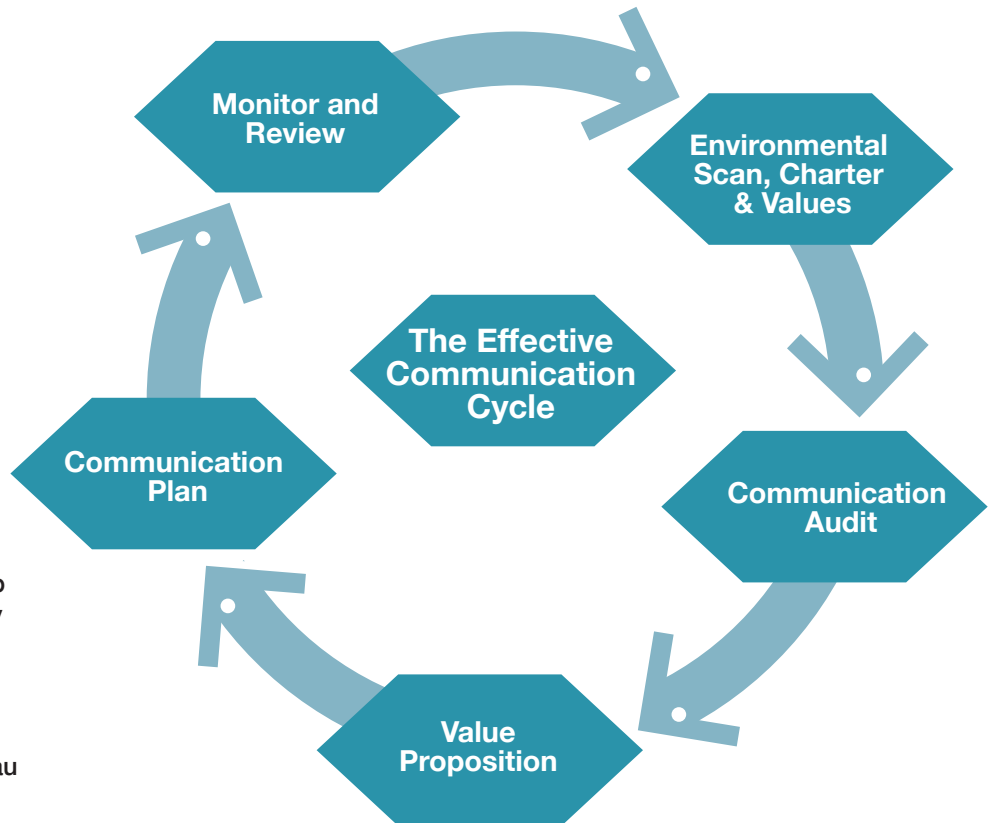
Two-Way Communication found that these ideas make it easier for members to contribute

- › Redesign newsletters and annual reports and organise them around what members value e.g. topics such as resource access and management and research and stories about members' achievements and innovation.
- › Supply a template for members to simplify contributions and encourage participation.

Two-Way Communication research found a clear connection between organisational leadership and effective communication and identified ways to develop organisational communication capacity such as:

- › Review your governance processes and organisational values
- › Provide communication training for members and staff
- › Establish links to other industry projects
- › Build new partnerships for collaboration, cost effectiveness and connecting to a wider audience
- › Build a central repository of communication resources for the industry

Finding **THE RIGHT LINE** to effective communication requires a continuous planning effort through The Effective Communication Cycle as illustrated on the next page. Monitor and review the success of your communication plan regularly to ensure your communication goals are met.



For further information on FRDC Project 2011/400 - *Two-Way Communication* (Empowering Industry: Improving two-way membership communication in peak industry bodies of the fishing and seafood industry) contact Jill Briggs – Managing Director, Rural Training Initiatives P/L jill@ruraltraininginitiatives.com.au



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