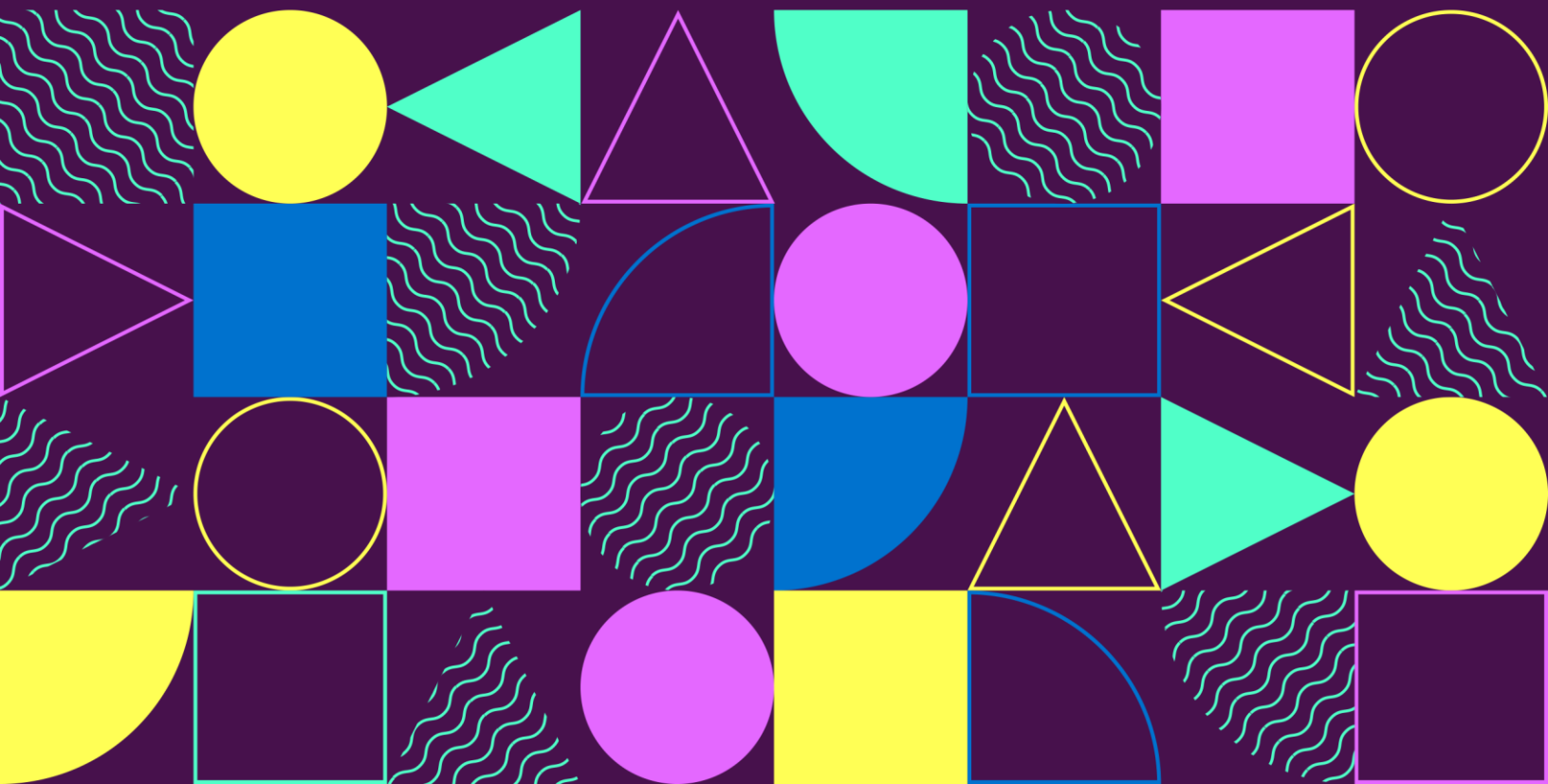




GUIDE

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Communications Guide

Give Your DEI Strategy a Voice



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Communications Guide

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DEI Communication: The Comprehensive Guide

Communications can be a powerful tool in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within organizations and businesses as they have the capacity to educate, engage, and inspire audiences, driving meaningful change within organizations. The DEI Communications Handbook helps to uncover the essential elements of DEI storytelling, providing a strategic approach to crafting narratives that resonate and promote DEI principles. This handbook is intended for use by DEI leaders, managers, and/or communications teams striving to enhance their DEI objectives.

Identifying Goals

Before embarking on the communications journey, companies and organizations should be sure to identify the specific goals they wish to achieve. Objectives may include raising awareness about DEI issues, fostering empathy, promoting organizational change, or highlighting successes and best practices. By clearly defining these goals, practitioners can craft narratives that are purposeful and aligned with the broader DEI strategy of the organization.

Understanding the Audience

When crafting DEI communications, the language shifts significantly depending on whether the audience is internal or external. For internal communications, the tone is more direct and transparent, focusing on engaging employees in the ongoing process of creating a more inclusive and equitable workplace. Here, the language often includes calls to action, like participating in training or providing feedback, and emphasizes shared responsibility for building a positive organizational culture. It's not just about highlighting an organization's DEI initiatives but about motivating individuals to take part in the collective effort, while also acknowledging areas that need improvement. On the other hand, external communications typically adopt a more formal, polished tone, aimed at reinforcing the organization's public commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The language may be more aspirational and brand-driven, designed to project leadership. While internal messages may dig into specific data or policies to demonstrate progress, external messages are often broader, highlighting the company's role in a larger social movement or corporate responsibility agenda. External audiences may respond better to stories or corporate partnerships that showcase the company's impact, whereas internal stakeholders are more focused on concrete actions, feedback loops, and the real-time evolution of the workplace environment. Ultimately, the core values of diversity, equity, and inclusion remain the same, but the language adapts to foster a sense of ownership and accountability internally, while presenting a polished and aspirational vision externally.

53%

of employees don't feel like their company communicates in a way that makes them want to be an advocate for the organization.

70%

of employees feel overwhelmed because of broken communication methods and fragmented information.

78%

of employees said improving communication and engagement should be a higher priority.

Sources: [Global Newswire](#)

Internal Stakeholder

- ▶ Frontline Workers
- ▶ Entry and Junior-Level Talent
- ▶ Mid-Level Managers
- ▶ Executive Leaders and Board Members
- ▶ DEI Councils



External Stakeholder

- ▶ Consumers, Customers, Patients, Clients
- ▶ Suppliers
- ▶ Investors
- ▶ Government Agency
- ▶ Community

Telling the DEI Story

Include Diverse Perspectives

Incorporating a range of voices and experiences is essential in DEI storytelling. By including diverse perspectives, you not only provide a better scope of DEI issues but also acknowledge and value the unique contributions of individuals within the community or organization. This approach helps to create a more inclusive narrative that resonates with a broader audience and emphasizes the importance of representation. For example, the Red Cross's DEI strategy includes fostering ongoing dialogue to enhance cultural competence among employees, showcasing the value of continuous learning and inclusivity.

Prioritize Authenticity and Accuracy

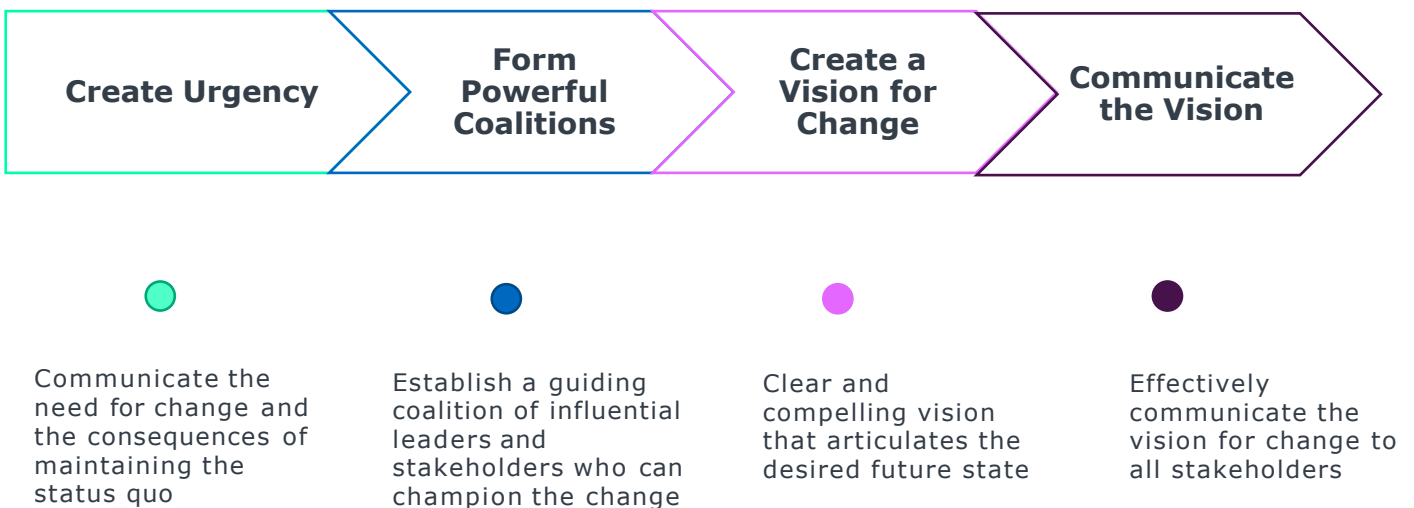
Authenticity and accuracy are critical in DEI storytelling. Avoid stereotypes or generalizations and strive to represent experiences faithfully. Authentic storytelling builds trust and credibility, allowing your audience to connect more deeply with the narratives shared. Ensure that the stories you tell are grounded in real experiences and reflect the complexities of DEI issues without oversimplification.

By strategically incorporating storytelling into DEI efforts and objectives, organizations can effectively communicate the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion: create and maintain a more inclusive culture, and drive meaningful change throughout the organization. Authentic and thoughtfully crafted narratives align with the organization's DEI mission, resonate with diverse audiences, and emphasize that authenticity can inspire action, validate the impact of DEI initiatives, and ultimately contribute to a more equitable and inclusive environment.

Create Emotional Connections

Emotional connections are powerful in DEI storytelling. Use techniques such as seminars, hosted events, and personal anecdotes with vivid details and relatable experiences to engage audiences on a deeper level. This approach fosters empathy and understanding, making the stories more memorable and impactful. For instance, **Under Armor's "38 at the Garden"** event facilitated authentic conversations about Asian-American stereotypes, creating a space for genuine dialogue and connection.

John Kotter – Leading Change Model



Ways to Champion Inclusive Communication

Communicate Clear Messaging

While it is important for stories to be engaging, they must also convey clear messages about DEI principles and goals. Ensure that the narrative aligns with the broader DEI strategy and reinforces key messages. Utilize plain language and accessibility features such as screen readers, closed captions, and language translation to make stories accessible to all, including neurodiverse individuals. Clear messaging helps audiences grasp the core values of DEI efforts and their significance.

Highlight Impact

To inspire and validate DEI efforts, focus on the impact of these initiatives. Share stories that illustrate positive outcomes and the tangible difference DEI work has made on individuals and communities. Highlighting successes and the real-world benefits of DEI can motivate others to support and engage with these initiatives, reinforcing the importance of ongoing DEI efforts.

Choose the Right Platform and Format

Selecting the appropriate platform and format for your storytelling is crucial. Consider the preferences of your audience and the goals of your storytelling effort when choosing between written articles, videos, social media posts, podcasts, or live events. Internal platforms such as team meetings and dashboards, as well as external platforms such as LinkedIn, Instagram, and conferences, can be effective channels for sharing DEI stories.

Consider These Communication Channels:

1

Social Media

Internal: Viva Engage
External: Instagram, X, etc.

2

Face-to-Face

Internal: Team Meetings
External: Conferences

3

Internet

Internal: Intranet
External: Website

4

Reporting

Internal: Scorecards
External: Dashboards

5

Organizational Tools

Slack, Teams, etc.
Email and Department Newsletters

6

Industry-Specific

Retail Example: Point of Sale

Improving Existing Communication Efforts

Gather Feedback and Iterate

Feedback is vital in refining DEI storytelling efforts. Collect input from your audience to gauge the impact of your stories and identify areas for improvement. Continuously refine your approach based on what resonates most with your audience and the evolving DEI landscape. For example, **Under Armor's** post-event survey for "38 in the Garden" revealed that 77% of attendees were likely to participate in similar events, highlighting the value of feedback in enhancing future storytelling initiatives.

Integrate Storytelling with DEI Strategy

For storytelling to be truly effective, it must be integrated into the broader DEI strategy and initiatives. Use stories as part of training programs, communications, and policy development to reinforce DEI principles and drive systemic change. By embedding storytelling within the organizational framework, you can ensure that DEI narratives are consistently aligned with and supportive of overarching goals.

Measure Impact

Assess the effectiveness of DEI storytelling, measure engagement, audience responses, and any changes in attitudes or behaviors. Measurement tools such as DEI reports, dashboards, and scorecards can help track progress and provide valuable insights such as these. For instance, **The American Red Cross** introduced the Workforce Diversity Dashboard 2.0 to measure workforce diversity data (Race/Ethnicity percentages compared to EEO-1 and Census data changes), mission data, and ongoing dialogue and engagement data. Additionally, **KPMG Company** measures their data using employee engagement surveys, award recognition and benchmarking, and scorecards. Regular assessment and data-driven adjustments can significantly enhance the impact of storytelling efforts.

Avoid These Common Pitfalls

