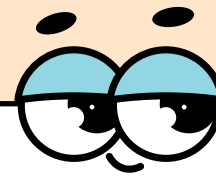




# **NORTHERN COMMS COLLECTIVE**

**COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT**  
**CREATING A COMMS PLAN**

**CO-CREATED BY COMMS PROFESSIONALS,  
FOR COMMS PROFESSIONALS**



# WHAT'S INSIDE:

**1. Comms Plan Template** (core + optional sections)

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**2. Practical Prompts & Guidance**

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**3. Extra Nuggets** - What makes a plan a winner

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**4. Channel Matrix**

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This Northern Comms Collective toolkit exists because of the generosity of our members.

The Northern Comms Collective is a group of brilliant people who turn up and generously share what they know. The ideas, frameworks and hard-won wisdom in these pages came from rooms full of comms professionals who gave their time, talent, lived experience and best thinking.

This first section is all about the comms plan - practical, tried-and-tested, and built from

real experience. Not theory. Not a textbook. The actual stuff that works.

It's free because we collectively want to see our profession soar and be recognised as the vital part of any organisation that it truly is. And, this is a living toolkit, so we'll keep refining and updating it with our members contributions.

With thanks to everyone who showed up.

**The Northern Comms Collective**



**NORTHERN  
COMMS COLLECTIVE**

**SECTION 1:****COMMS PLAN TEMPLATE**

**Pro tip:** Keep this as one living document, stored somewhere your team can access it. Version control matters — always date your drafts.

**PART A: CORE SECTIONS**

These sections should appear in every comms plan, regardless of organisation size or complexity.

**1. Title & Overview**

|                           |                                                                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Plan title</b>         | What are we calling this? Be specific — avoid “Comms Plan 2026”                |
| <b>Plan owner</b>         | Name the person who owns this document and is ultimately accountable           |
| <b>Approver(s)</b>        | Who needs to sign this off before activity begins?                             |
| <b>Version &amp; date</b> | e.g. v1.0 — 15 May 2026                                                        |
| <b>Type of plan</b>       | Strategic / operational / campaign / change / event                            |
| <b>Brief summary</b>      | Two or three sentences: what is this plan for and what does success look like? |

## 2. Context, Purpose & Strategic Fit

|                                           |                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The problem or opportunity</b>         | What situation or challenge is this plan responding to? Include any data or evidence. |
| <b>Why does this matter?</b>              | Link to organisational strategy, values or vision. Why would your leader care?        |
| <b>Key comms objectives</b>               | What does comms need to achieve? Use SMART language where helpful.                    |
| <b>Out of scope</b>                       | What this plan is NOT covering — avoid scope creep later.                             |
| <b>Regulatory or legal considerations</b> | Any compliance, legal, or regulatory constraints to be aware of?                      |

## 3. Audience & Stakeholders For each audience, think: What do we want them to Know? Feel? Do? (Know / Feel / Do = KFD)

|                                      |                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Primary audience(s)</b>           | Who are the main people this plan needs to reach?                                 |
| <b>Secondary audience(s)</b>         | Who else needs to be kept informed?                                               |
| <b>Audience personas / segments</b>  | Audience personas / segments                                                      |
| <b>Key stakeholders</b>              | Who has influence, sign-off, or a vested interest? Include internal and external. |
| <b>Spokespeople / voices</b>         | Who will carry these messages? Leaders, peers, champions?                         |
| <b>What motivates each audience?</b> | WIIFM — What's In It For Me? What makes them listen, act, or advocate?            |

## 4. Key Messages & Narrative

|                                       |                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Base narrative / golden thread</b> | The overarching story. What is the single compelling idea at the heart of this? |
| <b>Primary message</b>                | The one thing you want everyone to take away                                    |
| <b>Supporting messages</b>            | Secondary messages for different audiences or phases                            |
| <b>Tone of voice</b>                  | How should this feel? Formal / conversational / reassuring / energising?        |
| <b>What this is NOT saying</b>        | Prevent confusion — note messages to actively avoid                             |

## 5. Activity Plan & Timeline

Use the table below for your tactical activity. Add rows as needed. Consider phasing your plan - launch, embed, reinforce, review.

NCC members told us they have different preferences for the order of these columns / headings... Some like to have Status first to see where they are with a quick glance, others like to

see Date/Phase first as that works best for them. Whichever way you choose to use this template, these are the headings that the NCC members have highlighted as being key in any comms plan. Whether you use this template as is, or set up the comms plan in a spreadsheet, feel free to make it your own.

| Date / Phase | Action / Activity | Key Message(s) | Audience | Channel(s) | Format / Materials | Owner | Status | Budget |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|------------|--------------------|-------|--------|--------|
|              |                   |                |          |            |                    |       |        |        |
|              |                   |                |          |            |                    |       |        |        |
|              |                   |                |          |            |                    |       |        |        |
|              |                   |                |          |            |                    |       |        |        |
|              |                   |                |          |            |                    |       |        |        |

## 6. Ownership, Governance & Sign-off

|                            |                                                                         |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>RACI summary</b>        | Responsible / Accountable / Consulted / Informed — for the plan overall |
| <b>Sign-off process</b>    | Who approves what, and at what stage? When is the final thumbs-up?      |
| <b>Review cycle</b>        | How often will this plan be reviewed and updated?                       |
| <b>Air traffic control</b> | How does this plan relate to or compete with other comms activity?      |

## 7. Budget & Resources

|                               |                                                                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Total budget</b>           | What is the budget envelope for this plan?                         |
| <b>Who holds it?</b>          | Is the budget held by comms or another team?                       |
| <b>Capacity</b>               | What resource (time, people) does this plan need? Is it realistic? |
| <b>Digital tools required</b> | Any platforms, software or subscriptions needed?                   |
| <b>Contingency</b>            | Is there a reserve or Plan B if budget is cut?                     |

## 8. Measurement & Evaluation

Measurement doesn't have to be perfect. Mix qualitative (sentiment, feedback, stories) with quantitative (reach, clicks, survey scores). Link it to business outcomes wherever you can.

|                              |                                                                       |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Definition of success</b> | What does good look like? What changes as a result of this plan?      |
| <b>Quantitative measures</b> | e.g. open rates, attendance, survey scores, reach                     |
| <b>Qualitative measures</b>  | e.g. sentiment, feedback themes, employee voice, stories              |
| <b>Baseline</b>              | What is the starting point? Do you have data before the plan begins?  |
| <b>Feedback loop</b>         | How will you let people know they've been heard? Ongoing touchpoints? |
| <b>Reporting</b>             | Who gets the results, and how often?                                  |

## 9. Risks, Dependencies & Contingency

| Risk / Dependency | Impact | Likelihood | Audience | Channel(s) |
|-------------------|--------|------------|----------|------------|
|                   |        |            |          |            |
|                   |        |            |          |            |
|                   |        |            |          |            |

## PART B: OPTIONAL SECTIONS

Use these sections when they add value. Not every plan needs all of them — add what's useful for your context.

|                                                       |                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Stakeholder Map</b>                                | A visual or table showing all stakeholders, their level of interest/influence, and how they should be engaged.              |
| <b>Audience Personas</b>                              | Detailed profiles of different audience segments — what they know, feel, care about, and what channels they use.            |
| <b>Channel Matrix</b>                                 | See Section 4 of this toolkit for a full template. Map channels to audiences and message types.                             |
| <b>Base Narrative / Message Bank</b>                  | A library of approved messages, FAQs, Q&As, or talking points for spokespeople to draw on.                                  |
| <b>Desired Outcomes by Audience</b>                   | A deeper breakdown of Know / Feel / Do by audience segment.                                                                 |
| <b>Comms Calendar / Campaign Timeline</b>             | A visual view of activity mapped across weeks or months — useful for complex or phased plans.                               |
| <b>COM-B Model</b>                                    | For behaviour change comms: map Capability, Opportunity and Motivation factors for your audience.                           |
| <b>OASIS Model</b>                                    | Objectives / Audience / Strategy / Implementation / Scoring — a useful planning framework if you want additional structure. |
| <b>Incentives &amp; Engagement Plan</b>               | How will you go beyond broadcasting? Gifts, prizes, recognition, gamification, events?                                      |
| <b>Inclusivity &amp; Accessibility Considerations</b> | How does this plan reach people who may not engage through standard channels? Consider language, format, access.            |
| <b>External / Wider World Context</b>                 | Big events, news cycles, or external factors that could affect your plan timing or messaging.                               |
| <b>Follow-Up &amp; Sustaining Plan</b>                | What happens after the launch? How do you embed and reinforce? Who does what, how, and when?                                |
| <b>Plan B / Contingency Comms</b>                     | If the main plan fails or the context changes, what is the backup?                                                          |

## SECTION 2: PRACTICAL PROMPTS & GUIDANCE

These prompts are drawn directly from what experienced comms professionals said works in practice. Use them to pressure-test your plan, prompt better conversations with stakeholders, and catch the things that often get missed.

### Before you start

- Is this a strategic plan, an operational plan, or a campaign plan? Be clear — it changes what you need.
- Have you got a clear purpose? Can you articulate why this comms work matters in one sentence?
- Who else is doing comms right now? Have you done your air traffic control check?
- Is there a regulatory or legal deadline shaping your timeline?
- Do you actually have the budget and capacity to deliver this plan? Be honest.
- Have you involved the IC team from the start — not as an afterthought?

### Getting your stakeholders right

- Have you talked to your stakeholders — not just briefed them? Do you know what outcome they want?
- Do you understand the sign-off process? Who has the final thumbs-up, and when does that happen?
- What do different audiences already know, think, and feel about this topic? Don't assume.
- Who are the influencers — formal and informal? Who do people actually listen to?
- Have you made your key stakeholders uncomfortable yet? The awkward questions surface the real issues.
- How will you get people on board with the idea — especially those with political reservations?
- Is this plan clear on who OWNS it? One owner. Not a committee.

## Sharpening your messages

- What is the one thing you want people to take away? If you can't say it, your audience won't either.
- For each audience: What do you want them to Know? Feel? Do? Work through KFD for every segment.
- Is there a golden thread — a single narrative that ties all your messages together?
- Does your tone of voice match your audience? (Human connection and emotion matter more than polish.)
- Have you written down what you are NOT saying? Avoid messages that could mislead or contradict.
- Does your content match the channel? Wider context — does this clash or align with external comms?
- What is the writing age of your content? Is it accessible to everyone who needs to read it?

## Planning your activity

- Have you phased your plan?  
Launch → Embed → Reinforce → Review. Activity at each stage may look different.
- One document. One location. Shared. With version control. This is non-negotiable.
- Have you overlaid other initiatives and milestones on your timeline? What clashes? What reinforces?
- Are there “smile moments” — some fun, magic or recognition — built into the plan?
- What's the back-up plan if Plan A doesn't work? Plan for the unplanned.
- Have you mapped your capacity realistically? Comms plans fail because of under-resourcing, not bad ideas.
- Have you considered inclusivity? Does this plan reach frontline staff, part-timers, those without digital access?
- Have you built in pace, tempo and rhythm? Regular touchpoints build trust.

## Choosing channels

- Are these the right tools for this audience? Not all audiences have access to the same channels.
- Does your channel choice consider how people actually consume comms — not how you'd like them to?
- Are you going beyond broadcasting? How are you engaging audiences, not just pushing messages out?
- Have you considered accessibility? Format, language, reading level, and screen-reader compatibility.
- What is the frequency? Too much = noise. Too little = forgotten. What's right for this audience?
- Do you have RACI clarity for each channel — who owns it, who creates content, who approves?

## Measurement & demonstrating value

- What does success actually look like? Define it before you start — not after.
- Have you got a baseline? You can't show progress without a starting point.
- Are you measuring sentiment, not just reach? Qualitative data is just as valid as quantitative.
- What's your ROI story? How does this comms work link to a business outcome?
- Have you built in a feedback loop? How will you let people know they've been heard?
- Measurement doesn't have to be perfect. Something is better than nothing. Start simple.

## Linking to strategy

- “Why would my leader care?” — if you can't answer this, rework your objectives.
- How does this plan align with organisational strategy, values, or purpose?
- Is there a strategic vs tactical distinction in your plan? Strategy sets direction — tactics deliver.
- Have you connected your comms outcomes to business outcomes — not just comms activity?



## SECTION 3: THE EXTRA NUGGETS

These are the things that take a solid comms plan and make it genuinely brilliant. They're the bits that come from experience —

the stuff you don't learn in a textbook.  
Dip into what's relevant for your context.

### Know / Feel / Do (KFD)

Before you write a single word of content, ask: what do we want people to Know? How do we want them to Feel? What do we need them to Do? Answer this for every audience segment. Everything else flows from here.

### The Golden Thread / Base Narrative

Great plans have one overarching story — a base narrative that everything else hangs off. Build a message bank from this so spokespeople, managers and champions are all telling the same story in their own words.

### RACI — Sign-off and Ownership

Responsible. Accountable. Consulted. Informed. Map this out at the start and revisit it before you go live. Clear ownership prevents the “who approved this?” conversation at 4pm on a Friday.

### COM-B for Behaviour Change

If your plan needs people to change behaviour, the COM-B model is gold. Map Capability (do they know how?), Opportunity (do they have the chance?) and Motivation (do they want to?) — then design your comms to address the gaps.

## OASIS Framework

A brilliant planning structure: Objectives → Audience → Strategy → Implementation → Scoring. Particularly useful for campaign planning or when you need to present the plan to a senior audience.

## Temperature Checks / Pulse

Don't wait until the end to find out how it's going. Build in regular pulse checks — quick surveys, manager feedback, listening posts. Act on what you hear, and tell people you have.

## Colour Coding & Visual Cues

A RAG (Red/Amber/Green) status system on your plan keeps stakeholders informed at a glance. Colour coding by audience, channel or phase also makes complex plans much easier to navigate.

## Smile Moments & Magic

Build moments of joy, surprise or recognition into your plan. Comms that only delivers information gets ignored. Comms that makes people feel something gets remembered.

## Rules — What It Isn't

Write down what this plan will NOT do. It sounds simple but it's incredibly powerful. Scope creep and stakeholder expectations drift kill good plans. "We won't be doing X" is just as important as "we will be doing Y".

## Air Traffic Control

Before you launch, check what else is in the air. Competing messages from other teams, timing clashes with big external events, or fatigue from a previous campaign can all undermine even the best plan.

## The Feedback Loop

Comms is not a one-way broadcast. Build in genuine mechanisms for people to respond, question, and contribute — and then visibly close the loop. Letting people know they've been heard is as important as the original message.

## Categorisation / Meta-tags

If you're producing high volumes of content, tag your messages (by audience, theme, channel, phase). This helps with air traffic control, reporting, and making sure no single audience is being overloaded.

## “Why Would My Leader Care?”

Before presenting the plan upwards, answer this question honestly. If the link to business outcomes isn't clear, you're going to struggle for sign-off, budget and credibility. Make the ROI case explicitly.

## The Wider World

What big external events, news cycles, or cultural moments might affect your plan? A product launch that lands the same week as a major news story, or a message that accidentally clashes with a national controversy, can derail everything.

## Make Key Stakeholders Uncomfortable

Ask the awkward questions early: What if the plan fails? Who's likely to resist this? What are we not saying that people will notice? What happens if the story leaks? The discomfort of asking saves you from crisis later.

## Impact & Influence

Think about the difference between impact (the change you create) and influence (the credibility and relationships you build along the way). Great comms professionals are working on both simultaneously.

## Linking to External

Internal and external comms rarely live in separate boxes for your audiences. What are you saying externally? What will employees read on social media or in the press? Your internal plan needs to account for this.

## Colleague Insight & Voice

Use colleague feedback, voice data, and sentiment tracking as inputs to your planning — not just as outputs. Co-creating messages with the people you're communicating to makes them infinitely more credible.

## Build In Pace, Tempo & Rhythm

Communications that drips at a steady, consistent pace builds familiarity and trust. Sporadic bursts followed by silence do the opposite. Think about the rhythm — weekly, fortnightly, monthly — and build it into your plan.

## Plan B

What if the plan fails, the context changes, or a crisis hits mid-campaign? Having a documented contingency scenario isn't pessimism — it's professionalism. Capture it, even briefly.

## SECTION 4: CHANNEL MATRIX

Use this matrix to map channels to audiences, messages and measurement. The list below covers channels identified by the NCC community - mark the ones relevant to your organisation and add your own.

**Key questions for every channel:** Is this the right tool for this audience? Do they actually have access to it? Push or pull? One-way or two-way? What's the right frequency? Who owns it?

| Channel                  | Internal / External / Both | Best used for                                                                                                        | What good measurement looks like                                       | Suggested frequency                                                                  | Considerations & watch-outs                                                                                           | Examples / tools                                                |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Internal channels</b> |                            |                                                                                                                      |                                                                        |                                                                                      |                                                                                                                       |                                                                 |
| Intranet                 | Internal                   | Reference content, policies, news, resources people search for. Good for "pull" comms — content people come to find. | Page views, unique visitors, search terms, dwell time, content ratings | Updated continuously; promoted via other channels                                    | Not everyone checks it proactively. Needs other channels to drive traffic. Content must be searchable and up to date. | SharePoint, Viva Connections, Staffbase                         |
| Email (all-staff)        | Internal                   | Important announcements, policy changes, time-sensitive information requiring evidence of receipt.                   | Open rate, click-through rate, unsubscribes                            | No more than 1–2 per week to avoid fatigue; reserve for genuinely important messages | Inbox overload is real. Use for need-to-know, not nice-to-know. Subject lines are everything.                         | Outlook, Mailchimp (internal), Campaign Monitor                 |
| Email (targeted)         | Internal                   | Audience-specific messages where segmentation is important. More relevant = more effective.                          | Open rate, CTR, segmented response rates                               | As needed — based on relevance to segment                                            | Requires clean data and good segmentation. Worth the extra effort.                                                    | Outlook distribution lists, HubSpot, Salesforce Marketing Cloud |

| Channel                             | Internal / External / Both | Best used for                                                                                                  | What good measurement looks like                                      | Suggested frequency                                                 | Considerations & watch-outs                                                                            | Examples / tools                                                  |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Newsletter                          | Internal                   | Regular digest of news, stories and updates. Builds rhythm and consistency. Great for culture and recognition. | Open rate, CTR, subscriber growth/ churn, feedback ratings            | Weekly, fortnightly or monthly — pick a cadence and stick to it     | Needs to feel worth reading. Mix hard news with human stories. Don't let it become a dumping ground.   | Staffbase, Poppulo, Canva + email                                 |
| Intranet News / Blog                | Internal                   | Longer-form stories, thought leadership, updates that need more context than a headline.                       | Page views, comments, shares, time on page                            | As stories arise — not forced                                       | Needs editorial discipline. Quality over quantity. Give people a reason to read.                       | SharePoint news, Staffbase, Workvivo                              |
| Internal Social / Enterprise Social | Both                       | Conversation, community, peer recognition, informal updates, two-way dialogue. Great for culture.              | Active users, reactions, comments, shares, sentiment                  | Daily or near-daily activity encouraged, but organic                | Can feel hollow if leaders don't participate. Moderation needed. Not everyone uses it.                 | Viva Engage (Yammer), Workplace from Meta, Workvivo, Slack        |
| Teams / Chat Platforms              | Internal                   | Real-time communication, team updates, quick questions. Good for operational comms and small group messaging.  | Message delivery, channel membership, engagement in specific channels | As needed — real-time; avoid using for broadcasting to large groups | Not suitable for important all-staff messages — content gets lost. Notifications fatigue.              | Microsoft Teams, Slack, Google Chat                               |
| Manager / Line Manager Cascade      | Internal                   | Getting messages to frontline staff via their direct manager. The most trusted channel for many employees.     | Manager confidence scores, message recall, pulse survey results       | Aligned with comms calendar — usually weekly team meetings          | Managers need to feel informed and equipped, not just briefed. Talking points and Q&A help enormously. | Manager toolkits, talking points, Viva Engage manager communities |
| Team / Department Meetings          | Internal                   | Regular operational touchpoints. Good for contextualising organisational messages to team level.               | Attendance rates, questions raised, action follow-through             | Weekly / fortnightly / monthly depending on team                    | Comms professionals often can't control these — equip managers to carry the message well.              | In-person or Teams/Zoom                                           |

| Channel                          | Internal / External / Both | Best used for                                                                                                              | What good measurement looks like                                                  | Suggested frequency                                          | Considerations & watch-outs                                                                                  | Examples / tools                                     |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Town Halls & All-Staff Events    | Internal                   | Big moments for culture, leadership visibility, Q&A, and major announcements. High trust when done well.                   | Attendance (live + watch-back), questions submitted, post-event survey, sentiment | Quarterly is typical; major change moments may require more  | Production quality matters. Q&A must be genuine — no planted questions. Action on what's raised.             | In-person, live stream, hybrid, Teams Live Events    |
| In-Person Sessions / Workshops   | Internal                   | Two-way engagement, consultation, co-creation, complex change comms where dialogue is essential.                           | Attendance, output quality, follow-up actions completed, participant feedback     | As needed for major change or engagement moments             | Resource-intensive. Frontline staff may find attendance difficult. Worth it for complex or sensitive topics. | Facilitated workshops, roadshows, listening sessions |
| Virtual Drop-ins / Surgeries     | Internal                   | Open Q&A sessions with leaders or subject matter experts. Builds trust and psychological safety.                           | Attendance, questions asked, follow-up rate                                       | Monthly or quarterly; more frequently during change          | Needs genuine openness — not a PR exercise. Publicise well in advance.                                       | Teams, Zoom, Viva Engage Live                        |
| Digital Signage & Posters        | Internal                   | Ambient comms for physical spaces. Good for reinforcement, reminders and visual campaigns — especially for non-desk staff. | Hard to measure directly; use alongside pulse surveys or awareness questions      | Rotate every 2–4 weeks; timely updates for campaigns         | Often underused or outdated. Needs someone to own it. Great for reaching frontline / non-digital audiences.  | ScreenCloud, Appspace, Canva + local screens         |
| Screensavers / Desktop Wallpaper | Internal                   | Subtle ambient channel — visible to all PC users. Good for campaign reinforcement and key dates.                           | Awareness survey questions; hard to measure directly                              | Campaign-based — change with the message, not too frequently | Low-effort, low-disruption. Needs IT involvement. Not seen by non-desk staff.                                | Via IT / Group Policy or digital workplace platforms |
| Payslips / Pay Portal            | Internal                   | Very high reach — everyone checks their pay. Used for important or financial information.                                  | N/A — assume near 100% reach; check downstream awareness                          | Occasional — reserve for genuinely important messages        | Highly trusted but limited space. Finance team involvement needed. Don't overuse.                            | Via payroll system — Sage, ADP, etc.                 |

| Channel                           | Internal / External / Both | Best used for                                                                                                   | What good measurement looks like                                    | Suggested frequency                                              | Considerations & watch-outs                                                                                        | Examples / tools                                     |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Text / SMS                        | Internal                   | Urgent operational messages, especially for frontline or non-desk staff without regular email access.           | Delivery rate, response rate (if two-way)                           | As needed — urgent only; high intrusion so don't overuse         | High open rate (98%+). Requires data compliance (GDPR). Keep messages short and clear.                             | WhatsApp Business, Textlocal, Staffbase              |
| Colleague Champions / Ambassadors | Internal                   | Peer-to-peer communication — the most credible channel for culture and behaviour change.                        | Champion engagement rates, peer awareness scores, stories collected | Ongoing — support and equip champions regularly                  | Needs investment in the champion network — training, updates, recognition. Don't let it become unpaid extra work.  | Champion networks, buddy systems, local advocates    |
| Playbooks & Infographics          | Internal                   | Reference guides, one-pagers and visual explainers for complex information. Reduces reliance on long documents. | Downloads, views, usage by target audience                          | Produced as needed; reviewed annually                            | Easy to produce, easy to ignore. Promoted via other channels. Make them genuinely useful — not just pretty.        | Canva, Adobe, PowerPoint                             |
| Print / Physical Collateral       | Internal                   | Brochures, flyers, posters, postcards — valuable for non-desk / non-digital audiences.                          | Distribution numbers; use alongside awareness surveys               | Campaign-based                                                   | Expensive to change. Plan content carefully. Great for high-impact moments and non-digital audiences.              | External print suppliers + Canva/InDesign for design |
| Gamification                      | Internal                   | Quizzes, challenges, leaderboards — great for engagement campaigns, learning and behaviour change.              | Participation rate, completion rate, pre/post knowledge scores      | Campaign-based — sustained gamification needs careful management | Novelty wears off. Works best when tied to genuine reward or recognition. Don't use for serious/sensitive topics.  | Kahoot, Mentimeter, platform-native features         |
| Video (Internal)                  | Internal                   | Leader messages, explainer videos, employee stories, campaign content. High engagement when authentic.          | Views, completion rate, shares, comments                            | Campaign-based; regular leader video (e.g. monthly) works well   | Authenticity beats production quality. A genuine, slightly rough leader video outperforms a slick but distant one. | Loom, Teams, Viva Engage, Canva video, Poppulo       |

| Channel                                                        | Internal / External / Both | Best used for                                                                                                                          | What good measurement looks like                                                | Suggested frequency                                                                                      | Considerations & watch-outs                                                                                                                                   | Examples / tools                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Podcasts (Internal)                                            | Internal                   | Long-form conversations, leadership insight, employee stories — consumed on the go. Builds connection.                                 | Downloads / listens, subscriber numbers, listener feedback                      | Regular cadence works best — fortnightly or monthly                                                      | Higher production effort. Needs an audience willing to listen. Brilliant if your culture supports it.                                                         | Anchor, Buzzsprout, internal podcast hosting        |
| Merchandise / Promotional Items                                | Internal                   | Campaign reinforcement, recognition, culture moments — physical items people keep and use.                                             | Distribution numbers; brand recall via survey                                   | Campaign-based                                                                                           | Works best as a campaign reinforcement, not a standalone channel. Sustainability considerations.                                                              | Promotional suppliers, internal stores              |
| Stickers & Postcards                                           | Internal                   | Low-cost, high-visibility tactile items — fun, memorable, works especially well with younger audiences.                                | Distribution; anecdotal / qualitative feedback                                  | Campaign-based                                                                                           | Underrated. Can create genuine joy. Low cost, high memorability.                                                                                              | Print-on-demand suppliers, Canva templates          |
| <b>External &amp; Cross-cutting Channels</b>                   |                            |                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                 |                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                               |                                                     |
| LinkedIn                                                       | Both                       | Thought leadership, employer brand, campaign amplification, B2B engagement, executive profiling.                                       | Impressions, engagement rate, follower growth, profile visits, lead gen (paid)  | Organic: 3–5 posts per week per page; personal posting varies                                            | Algorithm favours personal profiles over company pages. Employee advocacy amplifies reach massively. Not suitable for all audiences — know your demographics. | LinkedIn native, Hootsuite, Sprout Social           |
| External Social Media (Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) | External                   | Audience-dependent. Instagram for visual/younger audiences; Facebook for community; X for real-time/news; TikTok for short-form video. | Reach, impressions, engagement, follower growth, sentiment, share of voice      | Platform-dependent: X daily, Instagram 3–5x/week, Facebook varies, TikTok daily or near-daily for growth | Platform choice must follow your audience — not your preference. Each platform has its own tone and format expectations.                                      | Native platforms + Hootsuite, Buffer, Sprout Social |
| Website / Blog                                                 | External                   | SEO-driven content, thought leadership, campaign landing pages, press releases, FAQs.                                                  | Sessions, unique users, bounce rate, time on page, conversions, search rankings | News/blog: at least 2x per month for SEO; campaigns as needed                                            | Must be kept up to date. SEO requires consistency. Needs clear calls to action.                                                                               | WordPress, Umbraco, HubSpot, Squarespace            |

| Channel                         | Internal / External / Both | Best used for                                                                                           | What good measurement looks like                                        | Suggested frequency                                                          | Considerations & watch-outs                                                                                                            | Examples / tools                                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Press / Media Relations         | External                   | Earned media coverage — news, features, expert commentary. High credibility but low control.            | Coverage volume, reach, sentiment, share of voice, AVE (use cautiously) | Reactive: as news arises.<br>Proactive: tied to campaigns and news angles    | Build journalist relationships before you need them. Be responsive. Bad news travels faster than good.                                 | Cision, Meltwater, Roxhill; direct journalist relationships       |
| Radio & Podcasts (External)     | External                   | Broadcast reach, especially for public sector / consumer comms. Podcasts for niche audiences.           | Audience reach figures, listener data (podcasts), coverage quality      | As opportunities arise (radio); podcast guest appearances are campaign-based | Radio still reaches audiences that don't engage digitally. Podcasts have highly engaged, loyal audiences. Both need good spokespeople. | BBC Local Radio, commercial stations, Apple Podcasts, Spotify     |
| Events & Conferences (External) | External                   | Networking, brand positioning, thought leadership, direct audience engagement.                          | Attendance, leads generated, post-event survey, media coverage          | As relevant to strategy — typically 2–4 major events per year                | Resource-intensive. Set clear objectives. Follow up promptly. Content from events has long shelf life.                                 | Eventbrite, in-person and hybrid formats                          |
| Thought Leadership / Articles   | Both                       | Building credibility and expertise — externally via trade press, internally via intranet or newsletter. | Readership, shares, citations, inbound enquiries, speaking invitations  | Monthly or as topics arise                                                   | Quality over quantity. One well-placed article is worth more than ten ignored ones. Requires genuine insight.                          | Trade publications, LinkedIn articles, Medium, internal platforms |
| Email (External)                | External                   | Newsletters, campaigns, stakeholder updates to external audiences (opted in).                           | Open rate, CTR, unsubscribes, conversions                               | Campaign-based; regular newsletters monthly or quarterly                     | GDPR compliance essential. Opt-in lists only. Segmentation and personalisation massively improve performance.                          | Mailchimp, Campaign Monitor, HubSpot                              |

## Channel Selection Checklist

Before choosing your channels, work through these questions:

|  | Question                                                                  | Your notes |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
|  | Do your audiences actually have access to this channel?                   |            |
|  | Is this push or pull?<br>One-way or two-way?                              |            |
|  | Does the format match the message<br>(e.g. urgent = SMS, not newsletter)? |            |
|  | Have you considered accessibility<br>(language, format, reading age)?     |            |
|  | Is the frequency right — enough to cut through without causing fatigue?   |            |
|  | Who owns this channel?<br>Is there a clear RACI?                          |            |
|  | Are these the right tools, or just the ones you're most comfortable with? |            |
|  | How does this channel choice connect to your measurement plan?            |            |
|  | Have you got reach to non-desk, frontline, or hybrid workers?             |            |



# NORTHERN COMMS COLLECTIVE

**COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT**  
**CREATING A COMMS PLAN**

CO-CREATED BY COMMS PROFESSIONALS,  
FOR COMMS PROFESSIONALS