



Communications guidance

for our volunteering community





Effective communications

These days there are so many different opportunities to communicate, including face-to-face meetings, letters, booklets, emails, video calls and social media.

To make the most of these opportunities, set time aside to think about your key messages and the best way to convey them.

Choosing the right tone of voice is also important – it will help you to connect with your audience.





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Top tips for communication

Here is some useful advice for you to follow when communicating:

- Help your audience to prioritise emails by including specific details in the subject heading.
- Include relevant images and diagrams in circular emails (such as newsletters) to break up the text – this is particularly useful if you communicate regularly with large numbers of recipients and tend to include lots of information.
- Plan your communications campaigns to avoid sending too many emails over a short period of time. Ask yourself if publishing your update can wait for a few days and be joined with other content?
- Consider using videos or other forms of communication.
- Personalise communications, perhaps by tailoring messages according to the audience's interests.



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Using the right tone of voice

We believe we will inspire, inform and influence by adopting a tone of voice that is:

- Straightforward and precise
- Refreshing and insightful
- Personable and relevant.

It is vital that you choose the right tone of voice when you communicate with your audience.

Remember that in some countries a more formal approach may be the cultural norm and your audience may prefer to be addressed by their title (such as Mr, Ms, Dr or Professor).

You will need to establish the appropriate level of formality for your audience.

For more information, please refer to our [tone of voice guidelines](#) on the IET website.



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Adapt your writing style to your audience

Most people are leading very busy lives, so the clearer you make your communications, the better. Here are some handy tips...

Use Standard English

Avoid slang, idioms, metaphors and proverbs. This is particularly important if you are communicating with an international audience because certain words and phrases could be misinterpreted or considered offensive.

Write with a clear purpose

Ideally you should outline this in the heading and/or the first sentence.

Be concise wherever possible

Use clear, simple, short sentences.

Choose short, everyday words to aid understanding (for example, write **use** rather than **utilise**).

Be accurate

Make sure your spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate, for a professional result.

Spell it out

If you use an acronym, spell it out in full when you first use it (you can always add a footnote or weblink, to aid understanding).

For more information, please refer to our [writing guidance](#).

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Identifying your audience

To help you to identify your audience, you can plot them on two axes of influence and interest to allow you to prioritise how you can effectively use your communication media and platforms.

The axes shown on the chart here are known as the Mendelow's Matrix.¹ It can help you with designing and prioritising messages, channels, and owners.



1. Mendelow, A.L. 1981. *Environmental Scanning - The Impact of the Stakeholder Concept*, ICIS 1981 Proceedings, 20.

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Examples of considerations in the planning of communications might include...



Inform

Audiences who have low influence and low interest.

They are likely to respond to summary messages on generalist channels, with options to follow-up if required.

For example:

Use opt-ins to blog posts for local or technical network activity highlights, with signposts to staff and volunteers if they want to explore further.



Consult

Audiences with low influence, yet high interest.

They are likely to appreciate access to credible, in-depth, and analytical information resources, with both breadth and depth, and detailed background.

For example:

Use searchable web pages, databases, and white papers, with analysis by subject matter experts, and invitations for input.

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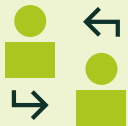
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Along with...



Involve

Audiences with high influence, yet low interest.

They warrant a focused approach, deserving bespoke communication which is managed by exception rather than routine.

For example:

Use notifications of specific diary events, advance notices of forthcoming policies, and prior indications of strategic implications.



Engage

Audiences with high interest and high influence.

They are likely to deserve multiple channel approaches which are two-way, enduring, personally tailored, and ranging in formality, with carefully designed 'push' access to routine and ad-hoc engagements.

For example:

Invite them to attend face-to-face meetings, networking and social events, and offer bespoke access to relatively senior representatives of the IET's staff and volunteers.

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Communication methods and channels

Having identified your audiences, you can tabularise these audiences to identify the key communication messages for each audience group, and determine the appropriate communication channels, methods and techniques to use for each.

Here are some examples...



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Example 1

Audience	Potential IET volunteers		
What they need to know	Roles available, time commitment, person specification, appointment method, role training.		
Key communications messages	Let the IET's Volunteer Support Unit help you to identify a role that suits your availability and motivations to volunteer. Contact us on volunteer@theiet.org		
Communication channels	IET website: Benefits of volunteering Which role is right for you Volunteering brochure Role descriptions Recruitment campaigns Volunteer roles map	Channels: Member News online	Social media: Twitter: IET Main LinkedIn: IET Main Facebook: IET Main

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Example 2

Audience	Looking for a keynote speaker with robotics expertise for a local network event.		
What they need to know	When, where, topic area, time commitment.		
Key communications messages	<p>We're planning an exciting event in the field of manufacturing robotics and are looking for a keynote speaker with experience in this area. The event is being held in IET London: Savoy Place on the evening of XX.</p> <p>Interested? We'd love to hear from you, please email XXXX</p>		
Communication channels	Email: Email to members with robotics marked as a marketing interest.	Channels: IET EngX	Social media: <u>Twitter: IET Main</u> <u>LinkedIn: IET Main</u> <u>Facebook: IET Main</u>

If you would like to review our *Eight-step Volunteer Communications Plan* to gain a deeper understanding of communication within our volunteering community, or seek further advice to support your communications campaign, please email your staff contact or the Volunteer Support Unit on volunteer@theiet.org.

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