

HEliX

HIGHER EDUCATION: LEADING INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Consultancy support from The Knowledge Partnership

HEliX is the evaluation and benchmarking system for good practice in internal communications for the higher education sector. Funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), HEliX is led by the University of Leicester with the universities of Bristol, Edge Hill and Oxford Brookes forming the project group. The Knowledge Partnership is the specialist higher education consultancy that supported the project and helped develop the tool. We have both in-house and consultancy expertise in managing communications, and have reviewed many universities' internal and external communications functions.

To find out more about the methodology and the tools, see the full website at <http://www.theknowledgepartnership.com/helixproject/abouthelix.cfm>

HEliX can be used by any institution as an internally conducted review. However, some institutions prefer help with this exercise to save time, to ensure the results are, and are perceived to be, independent/objective or simply to supplement internal staff time devoted to the project.

Here are some different support options that The Knowledge Partnership can offer.

Supported Health Check

Option 1: Executive Away Day

Method

The Knowledge Partnership helps facilitate Health Check on an Away Day for the senior executive team to *collectively* review the institution's internal communications. We would introduce how Health Check works, and the 35 indicators of good practice. We would then work through Health Check in group and break-out sessions to score the institution against the indicators. We would discuss the findings and then lead the group to weight the findings to determine strengths and weaknesses, best practice, and urgent action areas. We would come to summative conclusion for each section and capture qualitative information to incorporate into a report for the institution.

Deliverable

Facilitated day for senior executive team

Printed report highlighting strengths and weaknesses (10-12 pages, executive summary style, and key action points with qualitative commentary to support each section)

Designed for

Senior executive team or communications-specific team

Cost

£2,500 +VAT and expenses

Option 2: Collective Health Check

Method

A small sample of senior staff is provided with the Health Check spreadsheet and instructions to complete individually. The sample would typically be the senior executive team members plus HR director and Communications director if not members of this team (i.e. circa 10-12 people). Completed spreadsheets are saved and e-mailed to The Knowledge Partnership who aggregate results and produce a report highlighting strengths and weaknesses, areas for action and so forth. Alternatively this approach could be used for the communications or HE teams.

Deliverable

Printed 10-12 page executive summary style report highlighting strengths and weaknesses, and key action points with qualitative commentary to support each section. Benchmarking will be available against other institutions as the database develops.

Designed for

Senior executive team or could be applied to HR teams or Communications teams

Cost

£1,500 +VAT (small additional charge if the client wanted to run this with the communications or HR team and the executive team as the report would comment on differences between the two or three sets of results to provide a richer analysis).

The HEliX 4-Strand Staff Survey

Method

The 4-Strand Staff Survey would capture practice and opinions relating to the HEliX framework using 4 survey tools for senior executives, senior managers, supervisors and staff. The whole process would be administered by The Knowledge Partnership but would require a project manager/co-ordinator to be appointed by the client. Stage 1 would be to decide whether the survey would be administered to a sample of staff or all staff (there would be no additional cost if you went for a census rather than a sample but you may not wish to burden all staff or you may want to have a sample so that a HEliX survey does not clash with an existing staff satisfaction survey).

Having agreed the sampling and how you want to categorise staff for future analysis, The Knowledge Partnership would create an agreed communication for circulation internally to those who would be invited to participate; this must include either a memo or e-mail from the Vice-Chancellor/Principal. Participants are then provided with a link to the online instruments to complete online. This might take approximately 45 minutes but respondents can save their responses and return to the survey so we advise you allow them 2-3 elapsed weeks to complete it. We recognise that some staff will not have easy access to the Internet but these staff must not be excluded. There will also be staff with disabilities who may find an online survey difficult to respond to. We would discuss with the client how these staff can be included e.g. using paper-based survey instruments. The price for the 4-Strand Staff Survey includes The Knowledge Partnership handling the data processing required to input these paper based responses.

The Knowledge Partnership then undertakes the complete analysis of the survey responses including qualitative open-ended responses.

Deliverable

Printed report as a sound basis for development of an internal communications and staff engagement strategy. The report will highlight strengths and weaknesses, identifying key priorities and surfaces good practice for celebration and development. The report maps responses against each of the 35 indicators of good practice for each of the four staff groups, thus highlighting the extent to which staff agree/disagree on how well developed good practice is and what the priorities for action should be.

Designed for

Vice-Chancellors, Directors of HR and Communication as an inclusive approach to evaluating current practice.

Cost

£6,000 +VAT

Discounts are available for those clients who have used either of the Health Check options above.

Optional services – presentations of findings to the senior executive including discussion of how to take forward the action points. £1,000+VAT and expenses (a full day of senior consultancy would be applied to create a presentation and to spend adequate time on campus).

Full Internal Communications Review using HEliX

This would be the most in-depth option for universities wanting a major review of internal communications within their institute. We would conduct a set of focus groups and senior staff issues to surface issues, as well as run the HEliX Health Check and the 4-Strand Survey. This takes around 3 months of elapsed time, and costs vary depending on the size of the institution.

Deliverable

An in-depth report designed to provide a sound basis for development of an internal communications and staff engagement strategy. The report will highlight strengths and weaknesses, identifying key priorities and surfaces good practice for celebration and development. The report maps responses against each of the 35 indicators of good practice for each of the four staff groups, thus highlighting the extent to which staff agree/disagree on how well developed good practice is and what the priorities for action should be.

- Key themes emerging from interviews and focus groups
- Recommendations for change
- Workshop to present findings to senior management and staff

Designed for:

Whole university and senior management

Cost range:

Between £15,000 and £25,000

Developing Best Practice and Internal Communications Strategy

Our experience tells us that simply undertaking a review/audit of current practice, whilst an invaluable diagnostic process, can create expectations and a desire to improve. Our clients typically request support to translate an evaluation into a realistic and achievable strategy and practical plans so that these expectations can be met.

Method

Following on from a 4-Strand Staff Survey, The Knowledge Partnership works with the client to more deeply evaluate current practice in those areas identified as being future priorities. Using knowledge and information gathered from interviews with selected managers and evaluating policy and practice documentation/examples, our consultants work with the client's key directors to create a strategy and to put in place plans to develop best practice using our knowledge of good examples from across higher education and other relevant sectors. Typically we recommend engaging staff in designing new approaches where the audit indicated the need for development – e.g. a new induction, email policy, etc

Deliverable

An Internal Communications Strategy that supports leadership ambitions

Designed for

Directors of HR/Communication or PVCs with responsibility for staffing issues in institutions that have already used HEliX tools assess their current practices.

Cost:

Bespoke service/mutually agreed costs

HEliX Communications training for Leaders

Method

The training modules are led by Louise Simpson of The Knowledge Partnership, who has trained and advised three Vice-Chancellors, and Professor Anne Gregory, Pro-Vice Chancellor of Leeds Metropolitan University, Director of the Centre for Public Relations, and Past President of the CIPR.

This new training package is designed especially for senior managers and leaders in HE to create the foundations of an embedded and strategic approach to staff engagement and effective internal communications. The course follows the HEliX indicators and includes elements such as: communicating vision and strategy, embedding values and ambitions, evaluating communications skills and practice in managers, improving face to face engagement, information sharing, communicating bad news, briefing staff, crisis communications, creating an effective team briefing, change management, enabling creativity, breaking through silos.

Deliverable

Full day training modules for existing or new managers

- Strategic help to understand and create a strong internal communications environment
- Advice on style, presentation and amplification
- Health Check score cards
- Advice on specific individual communications needs

Designed for

Vice-Chancellorship, senior management teams and heads of departments

Cost

£2,000+VAT and expenses per day (maximum of 8 participants on each day's training)

To discuss our services contact Louise Simpson (Director of TKP Communications Practice) louise.simpson@theknowledgepartnership.com

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