

M & A Integration Advisor

Strategy Partners

Honest Communication

Effective communication in an integration requires the following:

1. Communication must be a top priority with a communication task force resource dedicated to this function. The task force can help design messages, set-up channels of delivery, create & conduct communication events. Senior management must make it clear that they have a strong commitment to communicating throughout the integration implementation.
2. Communication messages must always include a reference to the strategic objectives of the integration. A well-designed communication breaks down barriers to change and secures people's buy-in. Employees will accept changes most readily when they see how the proposed changes fit with

“Give stakeholders effective communication and their willingness to change will follow!”

the organization's values and strategic focus.

3. Communications must be honest and open. It is better not to try to minimize potential problems. Often times it may not be possible to provide definite answers because details may not have been decided. Regular communication should still be forthcoming, talking about the fair processes being used to come up with the answers and the expected time frame.
4. Communications must be proactive and not just reactive. When communications are well planned, issues anticipated and delivered early with ample lead-time, then there will not be a need to become defensive when responding in a reactive manner.

“The integration must have a way to gather feedback from employees during the design, testing, and implementation phases.”

A Successful Integration Plan Requires (in ranked order):

- Retention of Key Talent
- Honest Communication
- Integration of Cultures
- Management of Resistance

Upcoming In Future Issues:

- Integration begins with Due Diligence
- Retaining Key People
- Structure and Staffing Decisions
- Integration Monitoring Systems

About Strategy Partners

Strategy Partners is a merger and acquisition consulting firm specializing in integration planning and implementation. Successful integration planning needs to begin as early as the due diligence phase. Working with your management team, we develop detailed implementation action plans. Our involvement during the implementation phase depends on the client's needs. We

can conduct follow-up meetings (usually monthly) with the implementation team to check progress and make mid-course corrections. We can also serve as the "integration manager" executing a majority of the implementation action items. For more information, please contact us at 612-860-6984 or don@strategypartners.biz





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**Merger & Acquisition Integration
Planning and Implementation**

Honest Communication (continued)

5. Communication messages must be consistent and should be repeated in differing media. Alternate media can include newsletters, videos, Intranet sites, 800 call-in lines, memos, and regular face-to-face employee meetings. Multiple and consistent communications help employees absorb the content of the messages during a stressful time.
6. Communication must be two-way. The integration must have a way to gather feedback from employees during the design, testing, and implementation phases. During rollout of the integration, employees will have questions, concerns, and valuable suggestions, and they must feel that they are being heard.

A 4-stage Action Cycle

Think of your integration communication as a 4-stage cycle. Stage 1-Building awareness (what is happening). In this stage the merger or acquisition is announced and the details are explained. It is important to link the integration details to the company's strategic plan and to reaffirm the company's values. Make sure to give specific information about the integration process and announce senior management's roles. Stage 2-Where

we are going. In this stage provide the big picture and reaffirm the strategy. Identify the key issues that employees have and demonstrate senior management's commitment to resolving the issues. Stage 3-What it means to me. In this stage provide specific information on the changes being made and how they will affect each employee. Also show commitment to the employees by providing training in new roles, skills and methods. Stage 4-Follow up. In this stage, continue to listen to and act on employees' suggestions and feedback. Fine-tune changes to ensure success of the integration plan.

In conclusion, to help ensure success of integration it is important to get stakeholder buy-in. Give stakeholders effective communication and their willingness to change will follow!