

ACCREDIBLE CREDENTIAL FRAMEWORK

DEVELOP CHANGE COMMUNICATIONS

ACTIVITY 07

DESCRIPTION: INFORMING STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT THE CHANGES AND HOW TO PREPARE FOR THEM. THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF THIS ACTIVITY IS THE ISSUING ORGANIZATION.

INPUTS: CHANGE PLAN

OUTPUTS: COMMUNICATION PLAN

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Within an organization issuing credentials, there are a number of stakeholder groups. For a credential program to be successful, it's important that those groups are engaged and communicated with in a targeted, outcomes-based and systematic manner.

Scope:

There are two prime audiences when dealing with communicating change in a credential environment:

- **Issuers:** The people involved in the development, issuing, operations and management of credentials.
- **Learners:** The people who earn and share credentials. *Depending on the nature of the credential program, they can either be external or internal to the issuing organization.*

This activity is focused on the stakeholders from the issuing organization. See the Marketing and Communications activities in the Credential layer for the similar activities for Learners.

Stakeholder Groups to Consider:

Within issuing organizations, there are a number of stakeholder groups to consider:

- **Program Sponsor:** It's accepted practice for a credential program to have a sponsor—usually at the Executive level—who's responsible for the governance and operation of credentials within the organization.
- **Program Lead / Staff:** The Sponsor is supported by a Program Lead who has the day-to-day responsibility for managing the credential program on behalf of the Sponsor. Depending on the size and complexity of the program, they may be supported by a team where needed.
- **Credential Owners:** Individual Credential Schemes are owned by someone senior (an Executive or an expert) from that area of the business.
- **Credential Staff:** Similar to the program sponsor, Credential Owners are supported by staff who are responsible for the day-to-day operation of “their” credentials.
- **Credential Consumers:** Within the organization, there are often areas that “consume” credentials, e.g. process owners. Because credentials are binary, they are sometimes used in processes such as career progression, hot skills recognition, and professional certification.
- **Other Interested Parties:** This includes Legal, Finance, HR, and other support functions.

More details of the organizational and governance implications of the program can be found in the relevant activities.

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Approach:

There are a number of accepted methods to design a communications plan. This activity is based upon AIDA. Here's the description of the steps we suggest you use:

- **Awareness:** The stakeholder becomes aware of the Credential Program
- **Interest:** The stakeholder becomes interested in learning about the Credential Program
- **Desire:** The stakeholder sees the benefits of the Credential Program
- **Action:** The stakeholder is "called to action"
- **Retention:** The stakeholder is invested in using the Credential Program

To find out more about this approach and other similar ones, there are an abundance of resources available online.

Practical Application of AIDA

Similar to many other changes, the introduction of credentials into an organization impacts the organization in terms of people, processes, and technology. The impact of these changes need to be communicated to various stakeholders.

One practical way of planning this communication is to consider the stakeholder groups by communication step. This is illustrated in the table below.

Table A: Typical Credential Program Communications (Click to view larger version)

Stakeholder	Description	Awareness: The stakeholder becomes aware of the Credential Programme	Interest: The stakeholder becomes interested in learning about the Credential Programme	Desire: The stakeholder sees the benefits of the Credential Programme	Action: The stakeholder is "called to action"	Retention: The stakeholder is invested in using the Credential Programme
Programme Sponsor	A Credential Programme to have a sponsor (usually at the Executive level) who is responsible for the governance and operation of credentials within the organisation.	Introduction to Credentials / Credential Fundamentals Education / Programme Announcement	Programme Scoping Working Sessions / Programme Updates	Programme Kickoff Workshop / Programme Update	Programme Charter & Plan / Programme Board	Credential Programme Governance
Programme Lead / Staff	The Sponsor is supported by a programme lead who has the day to day responsibility for managing the credential programme on behalf of the sponsor. Depending on the size and complexity of the programme, they may be supported by a team where needed	Introduction to Credentials / Credential Fundamentals Education	Programme Scoping Working Sessions / Programme Updates	Programme Kickoff Workshop / Programme Update	Programme Charter & Plan / Programme Board / Credential Working Group / Design Credential Framework Workshop / Design a Credential Schema	Credential Programme Governance
Marketing	The Marketing Function within an organisation is often a key stakeholder in credential programmes given their potential impact on the brand / customer engagement etc.	Introduction to Credentials / Credential Fundamentals Education	Programme Scoping Working Sessions / Programme Updates	Programme Kickoff Workshop / Programme Update	Programme Charter & Plan / Programme Board / Design Credential Framework Workshop	Credential Programme Governance
Information Technology	The Credential Platform is often integrated with other key operational systems such as the HRMS, LMS etc. And the involvement of the IT function is key to success.	Introduction to Credentials / Credential Fundamentals Education	Programme Scoping Working Sessions / Programme Updates	Programme Kickoff Workshop / Programme Update	Programme Charter & Plan / Programme Board	
Legal / HR	Legal are often involved to ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to meet the issuers legal obligations. If Credentials are being used as part of an internal programme then HR need to be involved to address employee engagement issues	Programme Announcement / Briefing	Introduction to Credentials Education / Programme Updates	Programme Kickoff Workshop / Programme Update	Programme Charter & Plan / Programme Board	
Finance	Similar to any other initiative involving investment, the finance Team are important stakeholders in developing and gaining support for the business case and the subsequent monitoring and reporting of results	Programme Announcement / Briefing	Introduction to Credentials Education / Programme Updates	Programme Kickoff Workshop / Programme Update	Programme Charter & Plan / Programme Board	
Credential Owners	Individual Credential Schemes are owned by someone senior (executive / expert) from that area of the "business"	Programme Announcement / Fact Find	Introduction to Credentials Education / Programme Updates	Programme Kickoff Workshop / Programme Update	Programme Charter & Plan / Programme Board	Credential Programme Governance
Credential Staff	Similar to the programme sponsor, credential owners are supported by staff who are responsible for the day to day operation of "their" credentials	Programme Announcement / Fact Find	Introduction to Credentials / Credential Fundamentals Education / Programme Updates	Programme Update	Programme Charter & Plan / Design Credential Framework Workshop / Design a Credential Schema /	
Credential Consumers	Within the organisation there are often areas that "consume" credentials, e.g. process owners. Because credentials are binary, they are sometimes used in processes such as career progression, hot skills recognition, professional certification etc.	Programme Announcement / Fact Find	Introduction to Credentials Education / Programme Updates	Programme Update	Programme Charter & Plan / Programme Board	

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Explanatory Notes

1. When considering program communications, it's wise to keep in mind the maxim: "One "size" does definitely not fit all!" People are different and their communication preferences vary. It's therefore prudent to use different forms and mediums for communicating with stakeholders.
2. Each phase doesn't have to be delivered in the same way for each stakeholder group. For example, the awareness stage for one group might be a formal announcement, while it may be a face-to-face meeting for another.
3. You need to keep in mind who you are communicating what to. The key is knowing your audience, ensuring the content is relevant, delivering those communications in an appropriate way.
4. In the illustration above, you can see that there's a combination of formal and informal channels, such as education, interactive workshops, interviews, boards, working groups, and periodic announcements (could be newsletters, blogs, vlogs).

Sequencing Messaging

Think about sequencing. Timing sometimes needs to be staggered (as below) to deliver the appropriate message at the right time for that group of stakeholders.

Table B - Example of Stakeholder Communication Timing

Stakeholder	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Group A	Awareness	Interest	Desire	Action	Action
Group B	Awareness	Interest	Desire	Action	Action
Group C		Awareness	Interest	Desire	Action
Group D			Awareness	Interest	Desire
Group E		Awareness	Interest	Desire	Action
Etc					

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Communication Plan

A communication plan for a credential program could be complex and lengthy, but it doesn't have to be. A brief communication plan will go a long way—try taking Table A and Table B for inspiration and using them to produce a brief communication plan that summarizes what you are going to communicate to each stakeholder group and the timing of those actions.



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