

# **ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS (AIMP)**

## **SESSION: AIMP COVID-19 SEMINAR**

### **TOPIC: COMMUNICATION IN A NEW NORMAL**

**BY**

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#### **1.0 Introduction**

Communication simply means of sending or receiving information. Communication examines communication between people. Human interaction is regarded as the basis on which interpersonal relationships, groups and teams, organizations, communities and cultures are constructed.

Communication is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another.” In simple words it is a process of transmitting and sharing ideas, opinions, facts, values etc. from one person to another or one organization to another. As long as the world has not found a cure or a vaccine for Covid-19, we may have to adjust to a “new normal”, meaning a new way of living and going about our lives, work and interactions with other people. Our routines are changing as our lives are upheaved by the changes brought by COVID-19. We are entering a 'new normal'.

Normal simply means conforming to a standard; usual, typical, or expected. New Normal is a term used to reflect a change in society, particularly in relation to business and economics that refers to significant change in financial and business conditions. It has been used following the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, challenges posed by the coronavirus crisis will require companies to plan bold new strategies for internal communication.

#### **2.0 Navigating the New Normal**

The recovery strategy is two-fold. Firstly, it calls for strong leadership and credible communication, both internal and external. Communication that bonds with different stakeholders and is alert to what is essential to clients in given socioeconomic climate is the need of the pandemic period. The second part includes narrating the brands’ story with transparency and sensitivity to the current scenario.

The one thing brands and leaders do need to keep in mind is that there is no substitute for authenticity. Those who make decisions that are honest and purpose-driven, will reap lasting goodwill and brand love. This is even more crucial as brands and leaders are being put under the microscope by the media and the public, who will not hesitate to call out those they feel are not handling the situation sensitively enough or are exploiting it for profit.

## Create Your Own: The Communications Plan for the 'New Normal'





<p><b>Key Stakeholders</b> </p> <p>List of key stakeholders who need to be involved. How do their needs differ? Who can provide input? Should there be a "fast response team"?</p> <p><i>Example: Establish higher frequency of sync meetings between Communications, HR, Corporate Health Management, Workers Council, and Management to enable quick decision making and fast learning cycles.</i></p>	<p><b>Key Activities</b> </p> <p>What activities and campaigns can be used to deliver the message? Which non-critical activities should be stopped?</p> <p><i>Example: Weekly status briefing, ask the CEO, Thank you channel, on-site Q&amp;A, virtual town halls, fast feedback and response channel for health and safety issues, community building activities</i></p> <p><b>Communications Team</b> </p> <p>What are the communications team's key resources? How could they be extended by external help and local part-time content owners?</p> <p><i>Example: Strengthen local content owner communities</i></p>	<p><b>Communication Goals</b> </p> <p>What are the main goals of internal communication activities? What do we want employees to do/say/feel differently?</p> <p><i>Example:</i></p> <p><i>Clarify the current situation and the planned way forward</i></p> <p><i>Employees feel safe in their work environment</i></p> <p><i>There is up-to-date and clear guidance about changing responsibilities, activities, and policies</i></p> <p><i>High trust in leadership</i></p> <p><i>Strong sense of community and shared purpose, despite widespread work from home</i></p> <p><i>Stop any kind of fake news</i></p>	<p><b>Key Messages + Stories</b> </p> <p>What are the main messages for all employees? What are specific messages for individual segments and personas?</p> <p><i>Example: How do we as an organization overcome this crisis and what are the top priorities right now?</i></p> <p><b>Communication Channels</b> </p> <p>What channels will be used to communicate with which target personas? How could channels be improved to support communication goals?</p> <p><i>Example: Intranet, employee app, digital signage, etc.</i></p>	<p><b>Target Personas</b> </p> <p>Who are you communicating with? How do their needs differ? Which moments matter for them?</p> <p><i>Example: Factory workers need full understanding about health and safety measures, need easy way to ask questions and make suggestions to improve procedures at their workplace. An important moment will be the first return to their workplace after the lockdowns.</i></p> <p><i>Other segments: home office workers, field service staff, high risk area staff (i.e. healthcare workers), leadership, etc.</i></p>
<p><b>Communications Budget</b> </p> <p>What is your communications cost structure? What changes to the budget are needed and why?</p> <p><i>Example: Save budget on non-critical activities, faster retirement of inefficient and slow communications channels, faster launch of new digital channels.</i></p>		<p><b>Track Results and Measure</b> </p> <p>How do you define success? What are output and outcome metrics?</p> <p><i>Example: Output (regular CEO status updates), outcome (pulse survey shows strong trust in leadership, low number of health and safety concerns).</i></p>		

Figure: Sample Template for Communication Strategy in a New Normal - StaffBase

### Figure Overview:

The right side of the template refers to the target group: what they need to know and how to reach them. The left side refers to the stakeholders responsible for the design of your communication efforts. Both join together in the middle and represent actual goals for internal communicators, while the two bottom rectangles concern number-driven factors: on the left side are the costs and on the right side are the measurable results.

### 3.0 Key Considerations for Effective Communication over Video or Telephone

- **Preparing:** An advantage of telecommunication is that loved ones can be included from a distance. If using video, one should ensure clients can use the equipment.
- **Building Rapport and Trust:** Serious communication requires rapid establishment of rapport and trust, which can be challenging over video or telephone. Even for urgent conversations, a few minutes spent chatting about clients' interests or background can quickly build rapport. To further build trust, one should acknowledge that telecommunication is not optimal.
- **Having the Conversation:** Is the communication task information sharing, providing emotional support, identifying goals and values, or decision making? Regular checks for understanding and use of summarizing statements.
- **Responding to Emotion:** New or heightened emotions, including sadness, fear, worry, and even moral distress and trauma.

#### 4.0 Key Considerations for Businesses

- **Clear, consistent messaging:** With more people than ever turning to online channels as a news source, and brands within all industries currently publishing their response to the coronavirus situation, it's essential that the message you are communicating right now is clear and consistent across every channel utilised.
- **Keep communicating:** Whilst you're not expected to be an authority on the global situation, you should prioritise communication as a key business goal in order to maintain the trust and relationships you've built over time. It's important to remain present throughout this period, whether it's business as usual on your end or not.
- **Adapt to provide alternative services:** For the many businesses that pride themselves on customer centricity, now is your time to shine. Consider how you can be more flexible with some of the alternative methods of providing the same quality services to your customers.

#### 5.0 Personnel Communication Model

- **Content Development:** Good to develop good content individually but content is best developed by a team.
- **Keep it simple:** bearing in mind that if your plans are too complicated, they will be impossible to understand.
- **Stay pragmatic:** ready to adapt your ideas as realistic and practical during implementation.
- **Print Ideas:** in large print and hang it on the wall for easy viewing

#### 6.0 Team Communication Model

- Keep Your Employees Engaged; Share News and Updates
- Discover a better way of communicating
- Your entire team in the loop with Feed
- Create a group for every conversation
- Integrate with the services you already use
- Important files all in one place: use of cloud, google drive etc.
- Secure Mobile Working - Anywhere, Anytime: work safely from anywhere, anytime. i.e. TeamViewer app gives you secure remote access to networks, devices and files.
- Maintain Your Productivity: enable Remote Working
- Remote Collaboration: collaborate in Real Time

## 7.0 Connecting through content

- Educate
- Inform
- Advice
- Be useful, relevant and meaningful
- Provide something sought for

## 8.0 Clues for Enterprise Communications

What are we learning from this current communicable crisis?

- **Jobs can be done remotely:** jobs which hitherto assumed cannot be done remotely but must still be done
- **Serve customers in new, more flexible ways:** it's already clear that many customers can receive service without the need to visit a physical location. They can pay a bill, shop for clothing, see a doctor, or fill a prescription remotely, online, or via an app, for example.
- **Shape operational workflows and supply chain management:** increased their use of email and, possibly, workflow messaging tools such as WhatsApp or simple SMS texting.
- **Use of unified communications and collaboration:** Managers and executives had to conduct business from a social distance using software-based communications with significant video content via computers, tablets, and smartphones.
- **Advanced Planning of Communications tools:** proper checklists in order to protect company and customer information. What technology will work for them and how do we adjust
- **Consumer technologies are increasingly important:** the "work from home" situation, many workers and customers have used the tools they normally have at home to engage: cellular phones, home computers or tablets.
- **Automation:** with social distancing, it may not even have been possible to come into the data centres, labs etc. to interact with communication technology systems manually.

## 9.0 Communication Tools

They offer advanced virtual and audio capabilities. With these tools, you can seriously limit friction that comes with remote work, such as messaging fatigue, communication lag, and virtual clutter.

### 9.1 Zoom

Zoom is a web video conferencing platform that a lot of teams use to hold meetings. It's one of the better substitutes for face-to-face interactions, and it's free to get started. You can also record and store meetings.

#### Features:

- Video conferencing + in-conference chat
- Screen-sharing
- Call recording

**Best For:** Zoom is ideal for distributed and in-house teams that require larger conferences, webinars, or meetings.

**Pros:** With Zoom, you can create custom meeting links, host webinars, and hold larger conferences.

**Cons:** Users say that there are notable glitches in recording and playback, as well as occasional low video and audio quality.

**Cost:** N5,900 - N7,800 monthly

### 9.2 Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams, which is similar to Slack, is a collaborative communication tool where you can chat, create channels, and run your day-to-day correspondence.

#### Features:

- Integrations with other Microsoft tools
- Chat and messaging
- Audio calling
- Meeting scheduling (links to Outlook)

**Best For:** Microsoft Teams works well for companies and startups that primarily use Microsoft products and need one central messaging app.

**Pros:** Users love that Microsoft Teams integrates with MS 360, making it easy to keep everything connected.

**Cons:** However, Microsoft Teams is difficult to use alongside any tool that isn't by Microsoft, such as Google Docs.

**Cost:** Free to sign-up

### 9.3 Google Hangouts

Google Hangouts is a popular platform for communication. It's easy to start using, especially if you're already using Gmail and other Google Apps.

**Features:**

- Messaging and video calls
- Google application integrations

**Best For:** Google Hangouts is a good instant messaging tool for all team sizes, in-house or remote.

**Pros:** Since Hangouts integrates with most Google apps, you can access it right in your Gmail inbox. Many users have it for professional and personal use, installing it as a plug-in on desktop and downloading the app to their phone.

**Cons:** Hangouts is too similar to instant messaging or texting and is only designed for casual conversations.

**Cost:** Free to sign-up

### 9.4 Slack

Slack, one of the best communication tools out there, is known for its intuitive User Experience (UX). Many teams use it as a virtual High Quality (HQ), and where they primarily share files and integrate tools.

**Features:**

- One-line messaging
- Ability to use integrations and plug-ins
- File-sharing
- Create separate channels

**Best For:** Slack is a great tool for all team sizes, whether they are working in-house or remote.

**Pros:** Slack has a sleek, modern interface that users love. It's easy to install and get started with. You can add apps and integrations such as Zoom, Github, and Google Drive. Teams can also create channels for everything from marketing communication to somewhere to share memes.

**Cons:** Slack is designed for one-line-at-a time communications, so users get overloaded with messages, experience notification fatigue, and important context is lost.

**Cost:** Free to sign-up

## 9.5 GoToMeeting

GoToMeeting is a web conferencing tool specifically built for business. Users can collaborate effectively with clear audio, visual, and on-screen drawing tools, then later, use automatic transcripts for meeting notes.

### Features:

- Video conferencing with 25 high-definition video feeds per session
- Chat
- Toll-free calling
- Personal meeting rooms

**Best For:** GoToMeeting works for all team sizes, in-house or remote.

**Pros:** GoToMeeting is designed for companies, so it's great for meetings. One of their newest features, Smart Meeting Assistant, also transcribes calls automatically.

**Cons:** Users report sporadic issues with audio and inconsistencies between using GoToMeeting on Macs versus PCs that can add complications for users.

**Cost:** N5,500 - custom pricing

## 9.6 Basecamp 3

Basecamp (version three), is a massively popular project management tool. It's great for large teams with a lot of ongoing projects and tasks.

### Features:

- Task management
- Chat and messaging
- File sharing
- Document management
- Milestone tracking

**Best For:** Basecamp 3 is a good fit for medium to large teams working in-house or remotely.

**Pros:** If you need to improve your team's ability to organize projects and provide updates on deliverables, Basecamp is great for managing milestones and tracking timelines.

**Cons:** Users report challenges with transferring and maintaining documents.

**Cost:** N38,400/month

## 9.7 UberConference

UberConference is a free, minimal video conferencing tool for teams that need a no-frills, easy to use platform.

### Features:

- Conference calling
- Screen-sharing

- Record and playback
- Mobile access
- No pins required to join calls

**Best For:** UberConference is good for both mid-size to large in-house and remote teams.

**Pros:** The UberConference platform is intuitive to use. You can easily log on and start a meeting right away.

**Cons:** A lot of users report that there can be connectivity issues, such as screen-sharing not working properly. You also must use Chrome to screen-share.

**Cost:** N5,900/month

### 9.8 FreeConference

Similar to UberConference, FreeConference is a pretty straight-forward web conferencing tool. You can get a link and join a meeting immediately, which makes it an ideal tool for people looking for something simple.

**Features:**

- Conference and video calls
- No hidden charges

**Best For:** FreeConference is a useful resource for small teams and freelancers.

**Pros:** For users that want a no fuss web conferencing tool, FreeConference is a good fit. You can log in and launch a meeting for free.

**Cons:** If your team needs something more robust, FreeConference will be too limited with features.

**Cost:** Free

### 9.9 Join.me

Join.me is another straight-forward web conferencing tool with minimal features. You don't need to download any software — log in from your web browser and get started.

**Features:**

- Easy conference and video calling
- Screen-sharing
- Customizable URL and background

**Best For:** For small to mid-sized teams, Join.me is a decent option.

**Pros:** Join.me is simple to use and has an intuitive interface, so no training or onboarding is needed.

**Cons:** Users report that there are issues with video and audio, and the tool is difficult to integrate with Google Calendar.

**Cost:** N4,700/month for Lite



## **10.0 Adopting the Best Communication Tools for 2020 and the Future**

The communication tools highlighted above are fine for remote teams that want to stay connected, although none are a substitute for the kind of fluid conversations that happen in an office. Imagine if you could virtually tap someone on the shoulder or approach a co-worker from anywhere in the world. It would make remote work so much more collaborative.

Thankfully, as remote work evolves — even more technology will emerge that makes your team feel like they're in the same room.

Ask yourself these key questions

What should you create?

How can you create it?

What channels to distribute it?

How to measure it?

Thank You