

August 2009

## PHASE ONE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS DETAILED SUMMARY

The following document synthesizes the various recommendations developed by the Reinventing Internal Communications (RIC) work teams and steering committee. Common themes emerged through the work of these groups, suggesting a general agreement regarding the importance of these recommendations for an internal communications infrastructure at the University of Minnesota. This document serves as a record of that work and a guideline for implementation. See the [RIC final report](#) for an overview.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. PEOPLE

- Create a network of internal communicators to broaden participation in creating change. The network would share best practices and lessons learned, and coordinate strategies. Among other issues, the network would work to:
  - Improve use of mass e-mail. Promote use of e-mail as primary internal communications tool and develop best practices for effective use
  - Offer tools to help people be more fiscally responsible with print pieces
  - Identify a communications professional in units where employees do not have routine access to computers who can assist with communication strategies specific to that audience
  - Identify and articulate the roles and responsibilities for implementing internal communication strategies among University Relations and collegiate and administrative units
  - Create an ongoing internal communications infrastructure work team to work cross-functionally on implementation strategies and tactics
- Create an implementation team to develop phase one and phase two of the internal audience segments model
  - Short-term goal: Establish step-by-step procedures and policies for communicating with internal audience segments
  - Long-term goal: Develop a Web-based interface using the internal audience segments model that would allow users to choose among options for internal communications and receive guidelines and tools as appropriate
- Develop internal communications best practices, guidelines, procedures, rationale, resources, and structures for:
  - Face-to-face communications
  - E-mail list maintenance and access
  - Internal newsletters
  - *Brief*
  - Blogs
  - Lyris
  - Intranets, *myU*, and other internal Web sites

- Use of vendors and external resources

## 2. TECHNOLOGY

- Develop an internal communications toolkit to include:
  - *Key data owners list*. Identify key data owners throughout the University. These are individuals who have data maintenance and mining responsibilities and expertise.
  - *Internal Web site definitions*. Develop a set of clear definitions that address scope and mission differentiation for various internal communications Web sites: myU; the faculty/staff homepage; One Stop for faculty/staff; OHR self-service; faculty and academic affairs pages (under the senior vice president for academic affairs and provost); collegiate and departmental pages and intranets; and any and all social networking sites.
  - *Acronym list*. Develop a Wiki (a list that can be updated by anyone) of acronyms.
  - *Organizational charts*. Develop organizational charts that drill down to staff level and include contact information.
    - Short-term goal: Charts can be static but, when possible, should be linked to departmental Web sites.
    - Long-term goal: Charts should be dynamic and based off of queries to central data sources.
  - *List of standing meetings and groups*. Develop a list of current standing meetings, dates/times, protocols, and key contacts.
- Prioritize and continue to research the applicability and costs of the following long-term technologies and tools:
  - Single employee Web interface/portal/intranet
  - Single social networking site
  - Specific communications tool for promoting classes, programs, training, and other programs across colleges and units
  - Internal communications shared vocabulary and taxonomy
  - Internal communications inventory and project clearinghouse
  - Internal communications customer tracking system: Develop CRM (customer relations management) or CRM-like functionality for internal communications to track individual contacts, employee preferences, etc.
  - Comprehensive, clear, and accurate employee classification system

## 3. MEASUREMENT AND BEST PRACTICES

- Adopt the following emerging best practices and identify others:
  - Provide clear and honest communication. “Successful internal communication” is not always communication that everyone agrees with. It is, however, transparent, timely, accurate, and honest. *How* a message is communicated has the potential to be more important than what is communicated.
  - Engage in internal communications strategies that are audience-focused, appropriately transparent, and coordinated with other internal messages, and that provide opportunities for multi-way communications (including face-to-face).
  - Timeliness is essential. The U community should learn about important news first from its leadership, not from the media or other external sources. Share as much information as is known as soon as it is known.

- Communicate with staff and faculty regularly, even daily. Update content accordingly. People won't feel inundated if they trust and rely on the information, and if they are the correct audience for it.
  - Engage faculty. Faculty can serve as messengers of key information for their colleges and departments.
  - Provide many ways to access information, including e-mail, news feeds, blogs, videos, podcasts, faculty/staff Web pages, etc.
  - Utilize social networking tools to increase internal audience awareness. Provide high-level information on these sites with links to content on the U's Web site.
  - Develop blogs using informal, "real" (i.e., not administrative) rhetoric. Target faculty and staff and cover a wide range of topics and conversations about items of interest.
- Establish benchmarks to measure the progress and success of strategic internal communications utilizing these best practices and others. Since strategic internal communications is a relatively new practice in higher education and at the University, establishing benchmarks for best practices will be essential to progress and success.
  - Establish an implementation team to further identify best practices and benchmarks for measuring progress in internal communications in areas such as technology, faculty culture, frequency, content of internal communications, etc.
  - Identify resources to invest in surveys and focus groups to measure need, change, and improved outcomes. Need baseline information.