

CIPR Certificate in Internal Communication

Module one

This module provides a basic introduction to organisational culture and management theories. Internal communication is a function that takes place within organisations, so this is where the theoretical focus starts. Culture impacts on how internal communication is practised and internal communication can, and does, impact on culture. All organisations, whether in the private or public sector, feel as if they are operating in times of increased turbulence. The forces of globalisation, driven by the internet and lowering of trade barriers, means that private sector businesses require new ways of thinking and operating to capitalise on the opportunities. In the public sector, governments expect ever increasing levels of service provision. Management theories, such as systems theory and chaos and complexity theory, provide a way of understanding how to manage organisations. These provide internal communicators with the knowledge to contextualise communication, but more importantly enable internal communicators to employ communication techniques that support the transformations that organisations undertake.

Module two

In this second module basic background for understanding communication in its broadest sense is given. Much of the theory covered here comes from psychology and studies in mass communication. Theories include attribution theory, social exchange theory, cognitive dissonance theory, group decision making, social learning theory and uses and gratifications theory. They all seek to explain how people communicate and interpret information. This is fundamental for people working in internal communication, as it is often easy to forget how a briefing or a video might be received, and answer the “what is in it for me” question of the employee. As George Bernard Shaw observed, “the greatest problem with communication is the illusion is has been accomplished”. Understanding of communication theory is then extended into developing effective internal communication strategies. This connection makes the difference between “doing” internal communication and practising strategic, effective, internal communication.

Module three

This module explores how internal communication is planned and managed. This includes basic planning models and incorporates the importance of research. The focus is on agile planning as

the internal environment of many organisations moves so fast that drawn out planning processes are out of date by the time they are completed. This module also includes an overview of the different activities that are used for internal communication, and discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the most used tactics.

Module four

Module four looks at tone of voice. Internal communication and corporate communications clearly go hand in glove. Not only does the internal tone of voice need to match external communication, it should also reflect the desired culture of the organisation. Avoiding jargon and “corporate-speak” is where the module starts, and it then progresses to include written, spoken and visual communication and developing a “tone of voice” that runs through all communication. The role of corporate style guides and branding is included in this discussion. This is not to say that a way of communicating is *forced* upon people, it is more a recognition that communicating in plain English and using recognised symbolism is beneficial for everyone in the organisation.

Module five

This module covers current thinking in using social media for internal communication. This is a “hot topic” and can variously be seen as revolutionary or simply another layer of communication tactics, with further views in between. Linkages are made to the way that new media is changing many organisations and how a social media mindset in communication can be used to benefit the organisation *and* its employees.

Module six

Finally, this module rounds up theory and practice from previous chapters and suggests a role for internal communication practitioners as transformational leaders in organisations. Some management commentators maintain that most projects fail to deliver promised outcomes due largely to faulty communication. Seen in this light, internal communication will become increasingly important in the next decade. However, there is no magic internal communication “silver bullet”. What this course aims to provide is a basic grounding in theory and practice that can be used to tailor effective internal communication to the enormously varied organisational situations that exist.