

**A STUDY OF INTERNAL CHANGE COMMUNICATION
PRACTICES: MESSAGE, MEDIA, CHANNEL AND
APPROACH**

A Thesis presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School at
the University of Missouri-Columbia

In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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MAY 2010

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**A STUDY OF INTERNAL CHANGE COMMUNICATION
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation for Cynthia Frisby, my thesis committee chair and advisor. It has been a long road, and with your words of encouragement, your invaluable feedback, and your time and support I made it to the finish line. Thank you.

I am also grateful to Dr. Maria Len-Rios for her incredible guidance as I stumbled my way through the journey that is quantitative research. To the remaining members of my thesis committee, Dr. Margaret Duffy and Dr. Michael Kramer, thank you for your insights, time and support.

To my friends and family: you provided a listening ear and a supportive hand whenever I needed it. Thank you.

Finally, I owe so much to my husband, Frank. Without you there is little doubt I could have made it through the hours, days and years needed to complete this chapter of my life. Your words of encouragement, unwavering dedication and incessant nagging helped me persevere. Thank you.

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A STUDY OF INTERNAL CHANGE COMMUNICATION PRACTICES: MESSAGE, MEDIA, CHANNEL AND APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

In a time when organizational change is occurring more frequently with higher stakes for implementing change successfully, it is critical for internal public relation practitioners to develop communication strategies using activities that are most effective in achieving the intended outcomes of the organizational change. By understanding theory of change and leveraging the Goodman and Truss (2004) communication wheel, this research identifies the communication practices – the messages, media, channels and approaches – that minimize employee uncertainty, increase employee support and reduce employee resistance to the organizational change. The results of the study add to the public relations literature by understanding how communications contributes to the success of planned organizational change. Data from 95 communication practitioners showed that disseminating messages that are personally relevant and provide insights into the company's purpose and vision for the change increase employee understanding of the change. Additionally, analysis of the survey findings reported using media that engage employee participation increase employee support for the change. Furthermore, the middle manager as communicator was associated to rallying employee support for the organizational change.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, organizational change has become more common due to a more challenging business environment of increased government regulation, globalization, technological developments and the changing workforce (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). Although common, implementing planned organizational change is fraught with human and organizational challenges. For the most part, planned organizational changes are implemented with mediocre to poor results due, in large part, to a lack of employee support (Kotter, 1995). Typically, people do not adapt well to change. This is a result of the uncertainty associated with the processes and outcomes of the change (DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998). Such uncertainty leads to high levels of anxiety and stress, as well as anger, job insecurity and poor health, which can cause employees to resist organization change (Bordia, Hobman Jones, et al., 2004).

Internal public relations, also referred to as internal or employee communications, is one of the key factors in overcoming employee resistance to planned organizational change: “rigor and consciousness in the communication of change are what differentiates a successful change from one that is derailed by resistance and uncertainty” (Ford & Ford, 1995; p.560). Ford and Ford (1995) classify organizational change as a communication-based and communication-driven phenomenon. The prominent role of internal communication during planned organizational change has resulted in the production of numerous public relations- and change management-based scholarly studies, and popular press books. However, as Lewis, Schmisser, Stephens and Weir

(2006) assert, the majority of the literature offers little guidance on the specific communication activities that contribute to the successful implementation of planned organizational change. The absence of this information can prevent the theoretical understanding of the critical steps in communicating change to the internal audience (Lewis & Seibold, 1998).

The goal of this study is to build on previous studies and determine how communication activities contribute to the success of planned organizational change. Specifically, this study will identify the communication activities (developed by internal public relations staff) used during the implementation of planned organizational change that minimize employee uncertainty, increase employee support and reduce employee resistance to the organizational change. These effects and their resulting actions by employees will determine the level of success of the implementation of the planned organizational change.

To achieve this goal, public relations professionals specializing in internal communications were surveyed using an online, self-administered questionnaire. Based on Kurt Lewin's Theory of Planned Change and Goodman and Truss' Change Communication Wheel, this study investigates the areas where communication professionals must make active decisions when creating change communications (Goodman & Truss, 2004). Specifically, this study examines the type of messages used to communicate change, the media used to share information, the channels or individuals used to speak to the change and the approaches adopted in delivering information. The purpose of investigating these areas is to improve our understanding of the tried and tested communication activities that assist employees to accept and support the planned

organizational change, which is a key contributor to the success of the implementation of the change program.

Before the activities used to communicate change can be identified it is important to define organizational change as it pertains to this study. This research examines Lewin's 1947 Theory of Planned Change to gain a more thorough understanding of the impact of change on organizations and the people they employ. As well, a review of the public relations and business literature focusing on change communication will be completed to underscore the importance of communication during planned organizational change.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Change Specific to this Study

Most companies or divisions of major corporations undergo planned organizational change every four to five years (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). Purser and Petranker (2005) define organizational change as the new direction a company takes to actualize a new reality that differs significantly in form or function from the current state. There are many reasons why an organization undergoes change. The need can be fueled by external factors such as new legislation or increased competition, or from internal forces to make improvements to meet future competitive demands. Response to these pressures can be either reactive (unplanned) where change programs are initiated in direct response to an event or they can be proactive (planned) where company leaders determine that things can be done better, more efficiently, more productively, more cost-effectively or more profitably (Price & Chahal, 2005; Ford & Ford, 1995). Planned organizational change, therefore, requires company leaders to specify their intended objectives and initiate the right change to achieve their stated vision (Kotter, 1995).

This study focuses on planned organization change, specifically planned organizational changes that are instituted to drive business performance. Such changes support innovation in an organization and can include a new product or service, technology, process, organizational strategy, corporate structure, or policy (Fidler & Johnson, 1984). This study does not consider mergers and acquisitions. Although mergers

and acquisitions are planned changes that can drive business performance, they involve a myriad of unique dynamics and resulting consequences that are beyond the scope of this study. Additionally, this study does not include unplanned organizational changes. Unlike planned organizational changes that are instituted by organizational leaders, unplanned changes cannot be predicted or expected. As a result, unplanned changes are “a low-probability, high impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly.” (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p.60). Examples of unplanned, crisis organizational changes include, but are not limited to, extortion, terrorist attacks, plant explosions, customer abuse and information sabotage.

Theory of Planned Change

Kurt Lewin’s Theory of Planned Change includes four elements that describe the process of change in the individual, group, organization or society. These four related elements include: Field Theory, Group Dynamics, Action Research and the Three-Step Model of Change. Taken together, the first three elements emphasize the importance of focusing change on the larger group. Individuals are constrained by group pressures, and changes made to group norms, roles, interactions and socialization processes will instigate changes in the individual. For change to be implemented successfully, it must be a participative and collaborative process that assists individuals in reflecting and gaining new insights on the importance of the change on their situation and how to go about making necessary changes (Burnes, 2004). A key factor in engaging employees in change is through communications. The role of communications is most evident in Lewin’s (1957) Three-Step Model of Change: unfreezing – moving – refreezing.

Prior to change taking place, unfreezing is needed to uproot old patterns and habits, and overcome strains of individual resistance. To achieve this, change implementers and supporters must motivate individuals to prepare for change by explaining the need for change and clarifying what changes are to be expected (Kritsonis, 2005). The second stage, moving, is a period of intense flux where implementation activities are enacted to move the company towards its new state. Depending on the type of change, implementation could involve deploying a new technology, adopting a new organizational structure or executing a new set of processes, among others. To support the implementation phase, activities can include communicating the benefits of the change, encouraging individuals to accept the change, and providing training to institute new behaviors or processes (Burnes, 2004; Kritsonis, 2005). In the final stage, refreezing, stability is regained by reinforcing new patterns and institutionalizing them through formal and informal mechanisms like policies and procedures (Kritsonis, 2005), all of which can be supported through communications.

Grunig and Hunt's (1984) proposed four communications-public relations processes for supporting organizational change during the moving and refreezing stages. The four models include: press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. The former two are focused on one-way communications where press agency depends on propaganda and hype to convince employees to accept and support the change, and public information based upon providing accurate information to employees. The two-way models view communication as a two-way process between management and staff. In the asymmetrical model, management collects employee feedback to understand how they can better persuade employees to accept the change.

The symmetrical model, on the other hand, engages employees to determine how both parties can better understand and work together to achieve change goals.

Engaging employees in two-way conversations during the implementation of the change can influence employees' cognitive and behavioral responses to be more favorable to the change. Smollan (2006) developed a dynamic model to illustrate the cognitive and behavioral responses individuals undergo during times of change. Individuals will appraise the change, considering the favorability of intended outcomes, as well as its justification, scale, pace and timing. This assessment will determine the individual's affective responses, which are displayed through their emotion, mood and temperament. These affective responses will then impact behavioral choices. For example, positive appraisals of the change will lead an individual to be content and express enthusiasm for the change, which will have the individual freely engage in implementation tasks. Unfavorable assessments, on the other hand, could lead an employee to reject the change by resisting the requirements of the change.

As Dent and Goldberg (1999) state, "people do not resist change, per se;" rather they resist the obstacles standing in their way of accepting the change (p.26). Smollan (2006) categorizes these obstacles, or influential factors, as: an employee's emotional intelligence, disposition, previous experience of change, change and stress outside of the workplace; a manager's leadership ability, emotional intelligence and trustworthiness; and the organizational change context and culture (Smollan, 2006).

Such resistance to these obstacles can lead employees to develop negative views towards the intended outcomes of change, perceive a threat to their job security, which can later manifest to a myriad of consequences. These consequences can include: a

rampant rumor mill, decreased employee productivity, reduced employee morale and intentions to quit, all of which can impede the overall success of the planned change program. (Clampitt & Downs, 1993; DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998; Turnley & Feldman, 1999).

Employee resistance during times of change is a result of the psychological strain they experience during the implementation of planned organizational change. A major source of this strain is due to the uncertainties associated with the implementation of the change as well as the possible outcomes of the change (Bordia, Hunt, Paulsen, et al, 2004; DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998). According to research performed by Fidler and Johnson (1984), employee acceptance of, and thus their participation in, the change program “often rests on the extent to which communication can reduce uncertainty by ameliorating such factors as risk and complexity” (p. 704). Bordia and colleagues (2004) also found the use of communications throughout the change implementation process to be positively related to reduced levels of uncertainty. In addition to mitigating levels of uncertainty, communicating to internal publics during periods of planned change has been found to be a contributing factor to the success of implementing planned change (Spiker & Lesser, 1995).

Communicating Planned Organizational Change

There are numerous contingencies that affect the outcome of planned organizational change, of which communications is one (Lewis & Seibold, 1998). Covin and Kilmann (1990) identified 900 issues that directly affect the outcome of change implementation. They found poor communications to have a negative impact on implementing planned organizational change:

Failure to share information or to inform people adequately of what changes are necessary and why they are necessary were viewed as having a highly negative impact. (p.239).

Implementers managing the change program perceive the practice of communications to be directly related to the overall success of the change program. Seventy-two percent of change implementers associated informing employees as a critical step in successfully implementing planned change (Lewis, 1999). The importance of communication as evidenced through the empirical data are mirrored in the popular press, a vehicle many practitioners turn to for guidance and advice. Of Amazon.com's top 100 best-selling books on planned organizational change, three themes were identified: a) change agents are responsible for creating and communicating a vision for change, b) messages should be "consistent, clear and endlessly repeated" (p.122) to establish change, and c) perform communication tactics, such as establishing face-to-face interactions between supervisors and employees (Lewis, et al, 2006).

As a result of these findings, this study builds on these previous findings by addressing the following research question:

Research Question (RQ) 1: Does internal communication to employees contribute to the success of the planned organizational change?

For the most part, the literature defines success in general terms. Covin and Kilmann (1990) leave the definition of success up to the respondent to determine in their study. Lewis (2006) provides a more thorough look at this term, defining success when the change program achieves its intended outcomes. While the literature does little to qualify the meaning of success, many researchers have investigated the factors that have a negative impact on the results of the planned organizational change. Covin and

Kilmann (1990) identified lack of employee participation and support for the change as a key factor in diminished success rates of change programs. Similar findings were presented by DiFonzo and Bordia (1998) who explained employee resistance to change can result in consequences (as cited above) that can impede the implementation of the change.

This study, therefore, defines success as a planned organizational change program that achieves its goals for implementation, and elicits employee participation in and support for the change. Study participants will be left to rate the level of success of implementing their planned organizational change program. However, the latter criteria depends on employees experiencing little or no uncertainty about the change (be it its outcomes, employees' roles, etc.). As well, employees will display behaviors that do little to resist the program.

Using this definition of success, this study seeks to respond to its second research question:

RQ 2: What communication activities are perceived to successfully implement planned organizational change?

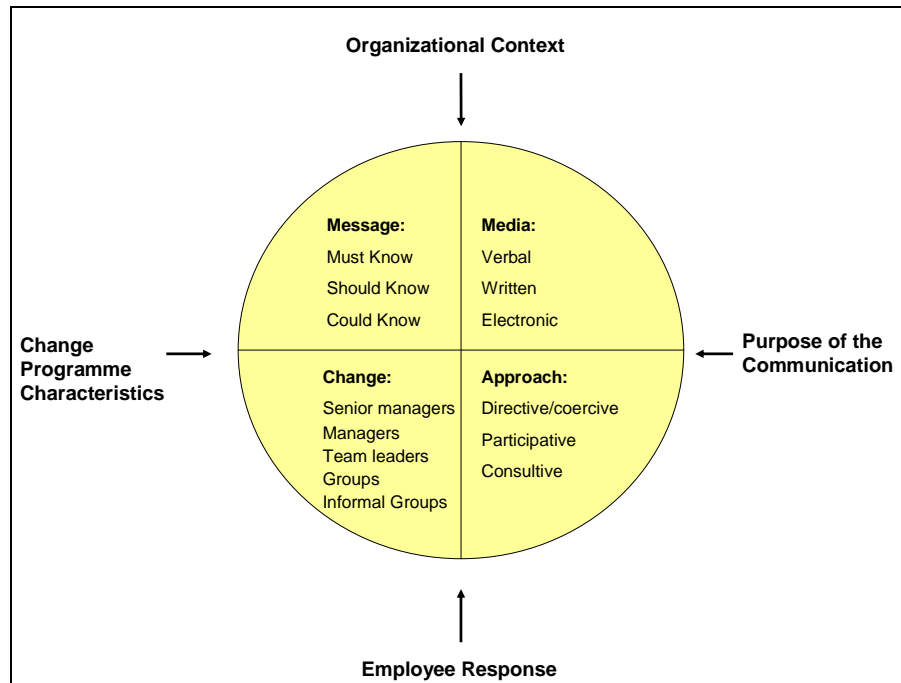
The Change Communication Wheel

Goodman and Truss (2004) developed a theoretical framework to describe the elements in developing a change communication strategy. The framework, the researchers called the Change Communication Wheel (see Figure 1), is divided into four quadrants – message, media, channel and approach – that represent the four areas where change communicators must make active decisions. According to the researchers,

effective communication strategies must consider the organizational context, the planned change being implemented as well as employees' possible reactions to the change.

Figure 1

Communication Model based on Goodman and Truss (2006).



In determining the message, Goodman and Truss (2004) call on change communicators to consider what employees must know, should know and could know. In determining what messages to communicate, Cameron and McCollum's (1993) study indicates that messages should be personally relevant by outlining how the change will affect them and their jobs. By not satisfying this need, employees will most likely seek information from alternative sources, including each other (Cameron & McCollum; 1993). A rampant rumor mill is built upon employee uncertainty and their attempt to fill their informational needs. Although born of uncertainties, the rumor mill leads to further uncertainties that then results in a host of other negative consequences, which will

impede the success of the implementation of the planned organizational change. For example, the erosion of trust between management and employees, lower employee morale and decreased dedication to the organization (DiFonzo & Bordia; 1998).

As a result of these findings, this study presents its first hypothesis:

Hypothesis (H) 1: Communicating personally relevant information to employees about the change, instead of information that does not respond to the individual effect of change, is perceived to reduce employee uncertainties about the planned organizational change.

With the increased use and availability of technology, messages can be disseminated to employees through a myriad of media. Change communicators can rely on print materials, in person meetings, email memos, podcast messages, and many more. With so many options, media can be categorized into mediated and interpersonal media. The choice of media depends on the complexity and risks associated with the planned organizational change program (Fidler & Johnson, 1984). Communications for change that are more complex and risky should be transmitted via interpersonal and interactive vehicles (e.g., face-to-face meetings) that can respond immediately to employee questions and concerns (Klein, 1995). Lewis' (1999) study, which surveyed 76 change implementers, reported high successful outcomes of implementing planned change when communicating about the change through in-person meetings. Engaging employees in ongoing and continuous conversations about change, as shown in Nutt's (1986) study, had a greater rate of success when implementing planned organizational change.

Therefore:

H2: Interpersonal media, instead of one-way communication vehicles, are perceived to engage employees to participate in the planned organizational change.

A third consideration in developing change communications is determining who should channel or relay the message. Companies undergoing planned organizational change frequently use change implementers, senior management and middle managers to communicate change (Lewis, 1999). In their study, Farmer, Slater and Wright (1998), identified the CEO as the key enabling communicator, explaining they are effective candidates in developing a shared management-staff vision of the change. Although these channels are the most popular, they are not considered the most effective. Instead, line supervisors are recommended as the most effective channel as they have the most contact with their employees and likely have a greater influence over their teams (Klein, 1996). Lewis (1999) seconds this notion, stating that the line supervisor acts as a translator for the change, interpreting abstract organizational changes into relevant information that employees can use to make changes in their daily work. The organizational structure for many corporations in the U.S. has evolved over the last decade and managerial roles have been consolidated into fewer layers. Saying this, Jo and Shim's (2005) study confirms employees to more likely to perceive useful information about their organizations from their immediate supervisors than from mediated communications. Building on these studies, this study hypothesizes the following:

H3: Channeling communications through the line supervisor, instead of the CEO, is perceived to encourage employees to support for the goals of the planned organizational change.

The last area of consideration in the Goodman and Truss (2004) model for communicating during change is approach. Many public relations professionals following the public information model that focuses on a one-way communication approach (Farmer et al, 1998). While this is effective with external publics, findings suggest otherwise when considering internal publics. Instead, change communications to employees should include elements that will both tell and listen to publics (Farmer et al, 1998). This statement is supported by Nutt's (1986) research that identified four modes of implementing change: persuasion, edict, intervention and participation. The first two modes used persuasion or positions of power to enforce changes upon employees, while the latter two engaged employees in developing and carrying out the change. Nutt found implementation by persuasion and edict to be the most commonly used modes, but both proved to be the least effective. Instead, the processes that allowed for employee involvement and ongoing communications between change agents and end-users, as demonstrated in the intervention and participation modes, had the greatest rate of success.

Ford and Ford (1995) completed a study identifying four distinct conversations of change. Although conversations can be one-sided (e.g., do it), to achieve a thorough understanding for the change and encourage actions to institute the change a two-way conversation is required to engage employees to ask questions for clarification and gain general agreement. Feedback serves as an important function for change implementers to revitalize the change program and reduce resistance and uncertainty (Lewis, 2000). Lewis (2006) found employees perceived a successful implementation of change when they were engaged in dialogue with key stakeholders (leaders, change implementers, middle managers) to clarify and negotiate points about the change. This finding, however,

contradicts Lewis' (1999) earlier conclusions where change implementers perceived success to be related to disseminating information about change and not engaging employee participation in the process. Drawing on the findings that highlight the importance of two-way conversations during times of change, this study suggests:

H4: A participatory approach to communications, instead of a directive approach, is perceived to lower employee resistance towards the planned organizational change.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study used an online questionnaire survey to test the two research questions and the four hypotheses this study was based upon. To summarize, the research questions are:

- **RQ1:** Does internal communication to employees contribute to the success of the planned organizational change?
- **RQ 2:** What communication activities are perceived to successfully implement planned organizational change?

The hypotheses for this study are:

- **H1:** Communicating personally relevant information to employees about the change, instead of information that does not respond to the individual effect of change, is perceived to reduce employee uncertainties about the planned organizational change.
- **H2:** Interpersonal media, instead of one-way communications vehicles, are perceived to engage employees to participate in the planned organizational change.
- **H3:** Channeling communications through the line supervisor, instead of the CEO, is perceived to encourage employees to support for the goals of the planned organizational change.

- **H4:** A participatory approach to communications, instead of a directive approach, is perceived to lower employee resistance towards the planned organizational change.

An online survey tool was selected for this study because it offers several advantages. It was an easy and convenient way for participants to complete the survey. As well, it collected and stored the data, which were later organized in a way that best met the researcher's needs. This option was also selected because it was easily distributed via email that allowed for a greater pool of participants to access and complete the survey (Wright, 2005). As a result, this online survey option may have yielded a richer data set that includes a greater variety of experiences and opinions that otherwise may not have been possible. One drawback for online surveys is the inability to verify whether the person recruited actually completed the survey (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

Research Design

The experiment was presented in a form of an online questionnaire, using the online survey tool provider, SurveyMonkey.com. The researcher opened an account with SurveyMonkey.com in order to create the survey and to store the collected data. Although an account is required to develop an online questionnaire, the survey can be accessed and completed by anyone who has an Internet connection and has a direct link to the survey. Responses to the survey are anonymous and stored directly in the researcher's SurveyMonkey.com account.

Once the online questionnaire was closed, results were organized and any incomplete or invalid responses (i.e., respondents who did not fit the requirements of the

sample) were removed. Mean and standard deviations were used to summarize the data. Additionally, to identify bias or analysis of variance, both t tests and ANOVA calculations were performed. Lastly, the research questions and hypotheses were tested using several statistical tests, including Pearson's correlation and multiple regressions.

Participants

Participants for this study were randomly selected from a list of US-based members of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) with at least five years of Employee (or Internal) Communications experience. The IABC, which the researcher is a member, is a professional network of more than 15,000 public relations professionals fulfilling a variety of business communicator roles in organizations in more than 70 countries. The IABC was selected to gather participants as its membership are working professional communicators who will have significant experience working with internal publics, which is the target audience this research is based upon.

Initially, 300 IABC members with at least five years professional experience working in the United States were randomly selected. However, an additional 200 were invited to complete the survey due to initially low response rates. Of the total 500 individuals invited to participate in this survey, only 95 responses were considered valid and were analyzed for this study.

Procedures

To randomly select a sample population for this study, the researcher performed an advanced search of the IABC member database. The researcher is a member of the

IABC and has access to member lists and is eligible to contact members via email registered with the IABC. The search criteria used to identify survey participants focused on three categories: “country”, “area of experience”, and “year started in profession”. For country, the researcher selected the United States. Employee Communications was selected in the category of “area of experience”. To ensure survey participants had at least five years experience, the researcher selected 2002 as “year started in profession”.

Using these criteria, the advanced search produced a listing of 2,000 IABC members. To narrow this search to the target sample of 300 participants, every fifth member in the list was selected to receive the survey. This same random sample method was used to select the additional 200 participants who were invited to complete the questionnaire.

Once the sample was selected, the questionnaire was created using SurveyMonkey.com. As a result, an URL address that linked directly to the survey was produced. This link was included in an introductory email to the selected participants. The email introduced and provided a brief background of the researcher, and explained the significance and purpose of the research being conducted. The survey was available to survey participants for 21 consecutive days. On day 14, due to low completion rates, the survey was distributed to the additional 200 randomly selected participants.

The questionnaire included 21 questions. However, before participants could respond to these questions, they were required to read and agree to the Consent Form. Those who did not agree to the Consent Form were directed to exit the survey without completing any questions. Those who did provide their consent proceeded through the

survey and once completed were directed to a thank you note that included the researcher's contact information if the participant had questions about the study.

Design

The questionnaire was designed to determine the messages, media, channels and approaches experienced public relations professionals used to communicate change to internal publics and gauge those activities that contributed to the success of the planned organizational change. The questions in the survey were divided into four sections, beginning with introductory questions to better understand who the participant was and ensure they fit the criteria required for this survey. Those who did not fit the criteria were directed to exit the survey. For example, respondents who answered "no" to the question, "Have you supported internal communications for an organizational change initiative in the past five (5) years?" were not eligible for this survey and were blocked from continuing to the next question.

The second section of the survey provided background information on the role the participant played in communicating change internally and their perceptions of implementing organizational change in their companies. The third section focused on the communication practices used to communicate change to internal publics. Lastly, the final section of the survey asked for respondents' perceptions of employee reactions to the organizational change.

Independent Variables

Message. To determine the type of messages used to communicate planned organization change, the survey asked respondents "How well did the organization

communicate the following information to employees about the change?” Respondents were asked to rate five message types using a five-point Likert scale with values from “Not at all Well” to “Very Well”. These message types included: a) “Why the company decided to implement the change.” b) “The company’s objectives for the change.” c) “What changes employees should expect to happen as the change is implemented.” d) “How the change would affect employees.” and e) “What affected employees need to do to help implement the change.”

Media. To determine the media used to communicate to and capture feedback from employees, the survey asked, “What media were used most frequently to communicate the change to employees?” and “How well did the organization capture feedback from employees using the following media?” Respondents were asked to rate five media types using a five-point Likert scale with values from “Not at all Frequently” to “Very Frequently”. These five media included: a) Print messages; b) Face-to-face forums; c) Virtual meetings; and d) Electronic media. A sixth option, “Other”, was also added to avoid ignoring important media used to communicate change. Lewis (1999) used close-ended questions with only seven media options in her study, which she concluded limited the scope of her study.

Channel. To gain a complete list of the channels – or communicators – used to communicate planned organizational change, the questionnaire asked, “Which members of the organization were most responsible for communicating the change to employees?” A five-point Likert scale with ratings from “Not at all Responsible” to “Very Responsible” was used to rate the six channel options, which included: a) CEO; b) Senior executives/leaders; c) Middle managers; d) Line supervisors; and e) Members of the

organizational change team. A seventh option, “Other”, was also added to avoid ignoring important channels used to communicate change. These six channel options were selected as they were used in previous research and it is the intent of this study to build on these previous findings (Klein, 1996; Lewis, 1999). However, these channels may not all be available in all organizations. For example, the line supervisor, due to the flattening of the organization structure of corporate America, may no longer be an available position at the respondents’ organizations.

Approach. The approach describes how messages are communicated to employees. To determine the approach used to communicate change, the surveys asked respondents to rate their level of agreement to the question: “Employees affected by the change were consulted about plans related to implementing the organizational change.” Respondents used a five-point Likert scale with a range from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” to respond to this question.

Dependent Variables

Success. The survey included seven questions to measure participants’ perceptions of the level of success in implementing the organizational change. The first question was worded as follows: “The company successfully achieved the intended outcomes of the organizational change.” Respondents were then asked to rate the level of success using a five-point Likert scale. To qualify perceptions of success, the survey asked respondents to rate, using a five-point Likert scale with values from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”, employees’ reactions to the change. Three questions focused on the level of employee understanding about the affect of the change on the company and on the employee, as well as understanding of the employee’s role in

implementing the change. Additionally, respondents were asked to gauge the opportunities for employees to discuss the change, the level of employee support for the change and how frequently employees demonstrated behaviors to resist the change.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The online survey captured 95 responses, which were analyzed using the SPSS statistical tool and will be reviewed here. Initially, the survey was completed by 127 communicators; however, 32 (25.2%) responses were invalid as respondents did not agree to the terms of the survey (3), did not meet the criteria of the survey (4) or did not complete the survey (25).

An examination of the participants' roles in communicating change was performed to determine any bias between groups. Survey respondents selected between two categories to describe their role: "an employee of the company" (N = 85) or "an external consultant to the company" (N = 9). No bias was revealed between these two groups and their perceptions of success of the planned organizational change. Almost 78% of consultants agreed or strongly agreed that the company was successful in implementing the planned organizational change and 69.4% of employees of the company did. A t test analysis revealed no significant difference between these groups, $t(92) = 0.49, p = .63$.

The study analyzed the number of employees affected by the change and the communication practices used to determine if employee populations had an impact on the activities performed. A majority of the 95 respondents (N = 69 or 72.6%) supported planned organizational change programs that affected more than 1,000 employees. Those communicating to more than 1,000 employees ($M = 3.3$) used print messages more often

than when communicating to employees less than 1,000 ($M = 2.5$). This difference was tested using an independent group t test, and was shown to be significant, $t(90) = 2.30$, $p = .024$. However, there was little difference between these two groups when using electronic media, $t(91) = 1.88$, $p = .064$. In regards to channel use, those communicating to more than 1,000 employees leveraged the CEO ($M = 3.7$), Senior Executives/Leaders ($M = 4.4$) and Line Supervisors ($M = 3.6$) more so than the other group. The mean scores for leveraging the CEO, Senior Executives/Leaders and Line Supervisors as channels for those communicating to less than 1,000 employees were 2.6, 3.8, and 3, respectively. These differences revealed to be significant using an independent group t test: CEO $t(81) = 2.84$, $p = .006$; Senior Executive/Leaders $t(93) = 2.63$, $p = .010$; and Line Supervisor $t(85) = 1.86$, $p = .037$. No significant difference was revealed for the other channels.

The survey identified the type of planned change programs implemented and communicated by the participant's companies. The types of change programs were analyzed to determine if they had an impact to the perceived levels of success and the perceived levels of employee resistance towards the change. "Restructuring of organizational or jobs" was the most significant ($N = 26$), "Changes in the way work is done (e.g., introduction of new technology or process)" ($N = 23$), and "Changes in work group, team or unit work assignments" ($N = 20$) were ranked the three most significant change programs the respondents communicated about. Although not ranked highest in any one of the three categories of significance, "Downsizing (elimination of jobs)" was a more popular selection (N (most significant, second significant and third significant) = 42) than "Changes in work group, team, or unit work assignments" (See Table 1). An independent group t test confirms that no statistical significance was found between the

type of change programs and respondents' perceived level of success of the change ($p > .05$) or the frequency of employee resistance to the change ($p > .05$).

Table 1

Most significant types of planned organizational change programs (N = 95)

Type of change program	Most Significant		Second Most Significant		Third Most Significant		Total	
	Freq. (N)	Perc. (%)	Freq. (N)	Perc. (%)	Freq. (N)	Perc. (%)	Freq. (N)	Perc. (%)
Restructuring of org departs or jobs	26	27.4	13	13.7	12	12.6	51	53.7
Changes in the way work is done (e.g., intro new technology or processes)	25	26.3	23	24.2	17	17.9	65	68.4
Downsizing (elimination of jobs)	16	16.8	16	16.8	10	10.5	42	44.2
Changes in type of employee rewards (e.g., pay, benefits)	9	9.5	9	9.5	11	11.6	29	30.5
Changes in job descript, job duties or job resps	7	7.4	10	10.5	9	9.5	26	27.4
Changes in perf eval methods (e.g., appraisal system)	4	4.2	5	5.3	6	6.3	16	16.8
Changes in work group, team, or unit work assign.	2	2.1	13	13.7	20	21.1	35	36.8

Research Question 1

Research Question (RQ) 1 seeks to determine if internal communications is perceived to contribute to the success of planned organizational change. An analysis of the level of engagement of communicators throughout the implementation of the change revealed a positive, significant relationship to the level of success in achieving the intended outcomes of the organizational change. An analysis using Pearson's correlation coefficient supported this observation, $r(93) = .41, p < .01$.

The data define success of the planned organizational change as having a positive, significant relationship with employee understanding of the affect of the change upon them. A Pearson's correlation coefficient supports this relationship, $r(93) = .37, p < .01$. A second Pearson's correlation model determined that success had a positive, significant relationship to perceived employee support for the change program, $r(93) = .30, p < .01$. Additionally, perceived employee support for the change was found to have a significant, negative relationship with perceived employee behaviors that resist the goals of the change program, $r(93) = -.36, p < .01$.

The study also indicated that communicating and sharing information with employees was positively and significantly associated with higher levels of success. The information shared included the five message types listed in the survey, which included: a) "Why the company decided to implement the change" ($M=4.17, SD=.859$); b) "The company's objectives for the change" ($M=4.0, SD=.838$); c) "What changes employees should expect to happen as the change is implemented" ($M=3.79, SD=.966$); d) "How the change would affect employees" ($M=3.78, SD=.958$); and e) "What affected employees need to do to help implement the change" ($M=3.6, SD=1.061$). To support this

relationship, a Pearson’s correlation coefficient was performed for each message type and each showed a significant relationship with higher levels of success, $p < .01$ (See Table 2).

Table 2

Pearson Correlation matrix among messages communicated and level of success of implementing the change program

Level of success	Messages communicated during organizational change					
	Why the company decided to implement the change	The company’s objectives for the change	What changes employees should expect to happen as change is implemented	How the change would affect employees	What affected employees need to do to help implement the change	
Level of success	1.000	.345**	.289**	.417**	.385**	.438**

** $p < .01$

Research Question 2

RQ 2 seeks to determine what communication activities result in successfully implementing planned organizational change. To respond to this question, the following four hypotheses were developed and the results are reported below.

Hypothesis 1

This study hypothesized that communicating personally relevant information to employees about the planned organizational change, instead of information that does not respond to the individual effect of the change would reduce perceived employee uncertainties about the planned organizational change. The type of messages used to communicate about the change were examined for each of the three levels of employee

understanding about the change – understanding of the affect on the company, understanding of the affect on the individual and understanding the individual’s role in implementing the change.

A multiple regression model was developed where the dependent variable was “Employees affected by the change understood how the organizational change would affect the company” ($M=3.94$, $SD=.755$) and the independent variables were the five types of messages communicated. This model revealed that all messages were predictors in improving understanding of the affect of the change on the company, $F(5, 88) = 13.64$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .41$). However, messages that explained “Why the company decided to implement the change” had a significant impact in the model, $\beta = .46$, $t(93) = 3.88$, $p < .001$ (see Table 3).

Table 3

Summary of regression analysis for variables predicting employees’ understanding of how the organizational change would affect the company

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Why the company decided to implement the change.	.401	.104	.456***
The company’s objectives for the change.	.132	.110	.145
What changes employees should expect to happen as the change is implemented.	.060	.106	.076
How the change would affect employees.	-.076	.126	-.096
What affected employees need to do to help implement the change.	.146	.092	.204

Note: $R^2 = .44$. *** $p < .001$

A second regression model was created with the dependent variable, “Employees affected by the change understood how the organizational change would affect them” ($M=3.82$, $SD=.825$), and independent variables as the five message types. The model revealed that, together, these message types were predictors in improving the perceived understanding of the affect of the change on them, $F(5, 88) = 17.19$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .47$. Upon analyzing the coefficients, two message types “What changes employees should expect to happen as the change is implemented” and “The company’s objectives for the change” showed significant, positive impact in the model, $\beta = .452$, $t(93) = 1.44$, $p = .004$ and $\beta = .313$, $t(93) = 2.73$, $p = .008$, respectively (see Table 4). The former message is personally relevant and had the greatest impact in this model, which supports this hypothesis.

Table 4

Summary of regression analysis for variables predicting employees’ perceived understanding of how the organizational change would affect them

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Why the company decided to implement the change.	-.034	.107	-.035
The company’s objectives for the change.	.310	.114	.313*
What changes employees should expect to happen as the change is implemented.	-.022	.110	-.025
How the change would affect employees.	.391	.131	.452*
What affected employees need to do to help implement the change.	.136	.095	.174

Note: $R^2 = .47$. * $p < .05$

A third regression model, where the dependent was “Employees affected by the change understood their role in implementing the organizational change” ($M=3.51$, $SD=.886$) and, again, the predictor variables were the five message types. As with the previous two models, communicating these message types predicted greater perceived employee understanding of their role in the change, $F(5, 88) = 12.39$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .41$. An analysis of the coefficients in this model identified that the personally relevant message, “What affected employees need to do to help implement the change”, had a positive, significant impact, $\beta = .528$, $t(93) = 4.04$, $p < .001$ and supports this hypothesis (see Table 5).

Table 5

Summary of regression analysis for variables predicting employees’ perceived understanding of the role they play in implementing the organizational change

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Why the company decided to implement the change.	.115	.122	.113
The company’s objectives for the change.	.236	.129	.225
What changes employees should expect to happen as the change is implemented.	-.065	.125	-.071
How the change would affect employees.	-.016	.149	-.017
What affected employees need to do to help implement the change.	.436	.108	.528***

Note: $R^2 = .41$. *** $p < .001$

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 suggested that using interpersonal media, instead of one-way communication vehicles, are perceived to engage employees in the planned organizational change. Results indicate that the two most commonly used media to distribute communications were via “electronic media” ($M = 4.41$, $SD=1.076$) and “face-to-face meetings” ($M = 3.96$, $SD=1.061$). Of these two media options, face-to-face forums are highly interpersonal and an analysis using Pearson’s correlation coefficient revealed a significant relationship between communicating through face-to-face forums and perceived improved employee engagement, $r(93) = .51$, $p < .01$ (see Table 6). This analysis did not indicate a significant relationship between electronic media and employee engagement. Thus, the hypothesis is supported.

Table 6

Pearson Correlation matrix comparing perceived employee engagement to the type of media used to communicate to employees about the organizational change

	Media Used to Communicate to Employees about Organizational Change					
	Employee Engagemt.	Electronic media	Face-to-face forums	Print messages	Social Media	Virtual meetings
Employee Engagement	1.000	.068	.513**	.203	.085	.190

** $p < .01$

Respondents also used media to receive feedback from employees affected by the change. Face-to-face meetings ($M = 3.57$, $SD=1.217$) and electronic media ($M = 3.19$, $SD=1.397$) were the most frequently used media in collecting feedback. A Pearson’s correlation coefficient analysis indicated that capturing feedback via face-to-face

meetings was most significantly associated to higher levels of perceived employee engagement in the change, $r(95) = .37, p < .01$. Additionally, this model revealed a significant relationship between use of virtual meetings, and to a lesser extent electronic media, to higher levels of employee engagement: $r(79) = .29, p < .01$ and $r(89) = .21, p < .05$, respectively (see Table 7).

Table 7

Pearson Correlation matrix comparing perceived employee engagement to the type of media used to capture feedback from employees about the organizational change

	Media Used to Capture Feedback from Employees about Organizational Change					
	Employee Engagement	Electronic media	Face-to-face forums	Print messages	Social Media	Virtual meetings
Employee Engagemt	1.000	.209*	.370**	.170	.101	.292**

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Hypothesis 3

In Hypothesis 3, this study proposed that communicating change through the line supervisor, instead of the CEO, was perceived to encourage employee support for the goals of the planned organizational change. The survey offered respondents six options to select from: a) CEO ($M=3.41, SD=.1.554$); b) Senior Executives/Leaders ($M=4.22, SD=.970$); c) Middle Managers ($M=4.03, SD=.972$); d) Line Supervisors ($M=3.47, SD=1.228$); e) Members of the Organization Change Team ($M=3.34, SD=1.428$); and f) Other (open-ended). A Pearson's correlation coefficient model was used to analyze the relationship between these channels and improved levels of employee support ($M=3, SD=1$). For an alpha level of .05, the Line Supervisor was statistically non-significant to

this model, $r(85) = .002, p < .985$. However, the model did reveal a statistically significant relationship between higher levels of perceived employee support and both the Middle Managers and the Members of the Organization Change Team, $r(91) = .231, p < .05$ and $r(84) = .217, p < .05$, respectively (see Table 8).

Table 8

Pearson Correlation of the channels used to communicate change and perceived employee support for the change program

	Employees supported the change program	Channels used to Communicate Change				
		CEO	Senior Executives/ Leaders	Middle Managers	Line Supervisors	Members of the Org Change Team
Employees supported the change program	1.000	-.040	.063	.231*	.002	.217*

* $p < .05$

Hypothesis 4

Lastly, this study hypothesized that using a participatory approach to communication, instead of a directive approach, was perceived to lower levels of employee resistance towards the planned organizational change. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson's Correlation coefficient model addressed the relationship between "How frequently did employees demonstrate behaviors that resist the goals of the change program" ($M=2.96, SD=.837$) and "Employees affected by the change were consulted about plans related to implementing the organizational change" ($M=3.05, SD=1.095$). For an alpha level of .05, this model found these two variables to be statistically non-significant, $r(93) = .13, p < .21$. However, a significant, positive relationship was found

between a participatory approach and perceived employee support for the change program, $r(93) = .25, p < .05$.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

To summarize, data from the 95 responses collected for this research supports earlier findings that communicating to employees about planned organizational change during its implementation is associated with perceived success in achieving the intended outcomes of the planned change program. Planned organizational change, as defined by this study, are those changes that leaders institute to drive business performance. This study did not include mergers and acquisitions changes, or unplanned organizational changes that are unexpectedly imposed on a company, and have unclear causes and effects on the company. Building on previous research, this study also identifies several communication activities communicators can employ to mitigate employee uncertainties, increase employee engagement and raise employee support for the company's change goals. As per the literature reviewed for this study, these factors influence the level of success in implementing planned organizational change.

Communicating Change Successfully

In determining the best communication activities to employ during planned organizational change, communicators must consider the organizational context as well as change program characteristics (Goodman & Truss, 2004). The data collected from the 95 survey respondents reveals a significant difference in the types of communication activities used when communicating planned change to more than 1,000 affected employees as compared to populations less than 1,000 affected employees. However, the

type of change being implemented was not found to have a statistically significant relationship on the type of communications employed.

The first research question for this research set out to determine if communicating to internal publics contributes to the success of the planned organizational change. Spiker and Lesser's (1995) research suggested that sharing information with employees was a factor in successfully implementing change. This study seconds these findings as all message types included in the questionnaire were found to be statistically correlated to higher levels of success.

One of the key factors of success, as defined by this study, is reduced employee uncertainties about the change. This study found specific messages to have a greater impact in raising perceived employee understanding about the change. Aligned to Cameron and McCullum's (1993) study, this research found personally relevant messages, especially those that respond to "how the change would affect employees" and "what affected employees need to do to help implement the change," to increase perceived understanding about the change. Additionally, through multiple regression analysis, message types that explained the purpose and the vision for the change were statistically significant to improving perceived understanding of the change.

In addition to identifying message types, this study aimed to identify the specific media, channels and approaches used to communicate change successfully. In 1999, Lewis reported communicators who leveraged in-person meetings reported high successful outcomes of the planned change. Technologies have advanced since Lewis' (1999) study and will continue to do so, offering communicators new interactive media options to use when communicating change. Using face-to-face meetings to communicate

to and collect feedback from employees was also associated with improved levels of employee engagement, an element of a successful implementation of a planned change program. Additionally, virtual meeting platforms, which allow for easy dialogue between tellers and receivers, had a statistically significant relationship to perceived employee engagement. Perceived higher levels of employee engagement, as the data suggest, is associated with improved levels of perceived employee support for the change.

In regards to channel, both Klein (1996) and Lewis (1999) identify the line supervisor as the key communicator for change. The data from this research did not support this finding. Instead, the middle manager and members of the organizational change team, were statistically associated with influencing perceived employee support for the change. One explanation for this result is the evolution of the structure of many corporate firms in the U.S. since the time of Klein's (1996) and Lewis' (1999) studies. As a result, roles titled "line supervisor" may no longer exist in many organizations and as organizations have flattened these duties have been consolidated into middle management roles. As a result, responses to this question may have been skewed due to this nomenclature of the term "line supervisor". Additionally, the use of members of the organizational team as a key channel of communication is a curious finding. Looking back to previous studies, we find that Lewis (1999) found the change implementation team to be the primary source of information about the change in 30% of companies included in her study. Although the popularity of this channel aligns with Lewis's (1999) findings, it may indicate a flaw in the question used for this study: "which members of the organization were most responsible for communicating the change to employees?" Communicators, and other members of the change team, are likely most responsible for

developing communications; however, these communications are usually developed on behalf of others in the company. For example, members of the organizational change team may develop talking points, but it is the middle manager who delivers the messages to employees.

One of the most significant factors in communicating change to employees is the approach used to do so. Burnes (2004) suggested implementing change through a participative and collaborative process. Employee engagement in two-way conversation is the basis of a participatory approach. Almost 70 percent of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that they engaged employees in dialogue about the change throughout the implementation program. By involving employees in conversations during change, especially during the moving and refreezing stages, has been associated with achieving change goals and producing more favorable employee responses to the change (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Smollan, 2006). This research did not find a statistically significant relationship between a participatory approach and reduced levels of perceived employee resistance towards the change. This result may be one of the limitations of having a participant pool comprised solely of internal communication professionals. As a result of their role, study participants may not be aware of or be exposed to employees resisting the change. Additionally, survey respondents, who were responsible for developing the communications, may not have wanted to own fault that their work did not successfully overcome resistance. Results, however, did find a positive, significant relationship between a participatory approach and improved levels of perceived employee support for the change.

Best Practices

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this research lies in the several best practices it offers in successfully communicating change to internal publics. Messages that communicate personally relevant information, coupled with information that provides insights to the company's purpose and vision for the change can increase perceived employee understanding of the change, and reduce perceived uncertainties. Interpersonal media, specifically face-to-face meetings and virtual meetings allow employees to be more fully engaged in the change. According to this research, channeling communications through the middle managers and leveraging a participatory communication approach will encourage greater perceived employee support for the change.

Limitations and Future Research

There are elements of this research that can be improved in order to enhance future research. First and foremost, a convenience sample was used for this study. Although the participant pool was randomly selected from the IABC membership listing of employee communication professionals, convenience samples can contain unknown quantities of error. Additionally, only 95 valid survey responses were included in the data for this survey, which may have limited the generalizability of the results. Future research should attempt to capture a larger sample size to determine if the results presented in this study remain true. Additionally, the survey was completed solely by internal communication professionals. As a result their responses regarding the employee experience were based on perception. Future research should include employees to better understand the impact of communications during planned organizational change to their

state of mind. As stated earlier in this research, communications is only one of the key activities in implementing planned organizational change. Therefore, future studies should be broadened to understand the contribution level of communications to successfully implement planned organizational change. It would also be interesting to see future research that focused on unplanned organizational change to determine if there is an overlap of communication activities between organizational change types. Lastly, as technologies continue to advance and new, interactive communication vehicles become available to internal communicators, their value in communicating change to employees should be investigated.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This research was inspired by the need of internal public relations practitioners for a set of tried and tested best practices for communicating planned organizational change to employees. After reviewing the theory of change literature and the change communication research, along with presenting the theoretical framework for this study and defining the concepts to be used herein, this paper succinctly presented the methodology and thoroughly reviewed the results.

This study makes a valuable contribution to understanding the communication activities that contribute to successfully implementing organizational change. An important finding and one that reinforces previous research is the importance of communicating messages that are personally relevant to employees during organizational change. By doing so, employee uncertainties will be reduced. Among the most surprising findings in this study is the relationship between the middle managers as change communicator and improved employee support for the change. Results also reinforced the importance of engaging employees in dialogue through face-to-face meetings and virtual meetings to rally support.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Informed Consent Form

Researcher: Lisa Durante, Master's Student, University of Missouri-Columbia, Email: ldurante@hotmail.com

Project title: Communicating Change Internally: Identifying Messages, Media, Channels and Approaches that Contribute to the Success of Planned Organization Change

You are being asked to volunteer to participate in a research study. Please review the following and select the appropriate box below before continuing with to the survey.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This study is being conducted in an effort to identify the communication activities that support the successful implementation of organizational change. When you are invited to participate in research, you have the right to be informed about the study procedures so that you can decide whether you want to consent to participation. Please feel free to ask the researcher any questions you may have about the information in this letter or about the study.

You have the right to know what you will be asked to do so that you can decide whether or not to be in the study. Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to be in the study if you do not want to. You may refuse to be in the study and nothing will happen. If you do not want to continue to be in the study, stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits you are otherwise entitled.

The purpose of this research is to improve our understanding of the tried and tested communication activities that assist employees to accept and support the organizational change, which is a key contributor to the success of the implementation of the change program.

This study will take approximately 20 minutes for you to complete.

You will be asked to complete a set of questions. Please respond as truthfully as possible to each question.

There will be approximately 300 people who have been asked to complete this survey. The approximate number of participants involved in the study is not important to a decision to take part in the research.

By participating in this study you will provide your professional expertise and personally relevant experience in communicating change to internal audiences. Your participation will benefit the purpose of this study and further the research in communicating organizational change.

Your participation in this study is not expected to cause you any risks greater than those encountered in everyday life. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher.

The following survey is completely anonymous. It will not ask any personally identifiable information and your participation will remain confidential.

Please contact Lisa Durante at ldurante@hotmail.com if you have any questions about the research.

The Campus Institutional Review Board approved this research study. You may contact the Campus Institutional Review Board if you have any questions about your rights, concerns, complaints or concerns as a research participant.

You can contact the Campus Institutional Review Board directly by telephone or email to voice or solicit any concerns, questions, input or complaints about the research study.

Campus Institutional Review Board, 483 McReynolds Hall, Columbia, MO 65211; (573) 882-9585; Email: umcresearchirb@missouri.edu; www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm.

1. **Once you have read the above consent form, please select one of the following:**
 - a. I have read this consent form and agree to participate in this study. My questions about this research have been answered. I know that I can remove myself from this study at anytime without any problems.
 - b. I will not participate in this study.

II. Introduction

2. **Have you supported internal communications for an organizational change initiative in the past five (5) years?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. **Rank the three (3) most significant organizational change programs where you provided internal communications support in the past five (5) years.**

	Most Significant	2nd Most Significant	3rd Most Significant
Changes in job description, job duties or job responsibilities			
Changes in performance evaluation methods (e.g., appraisal system)			
Changes in the way work is done (e.g., introduction of new technology or processes)			
Changes in type of employee rewards (e.g., pay, benefits)			
Changes in work group, team, or unit work assignments			
Downsizing (elimination of jobs)			
Restructuring of organizational departments or jobs			

III. Background Information

4. **In what capacity did you provide internal communication support for the planned organizational change?**
 - a. An employee of the company
 - b. An external consultant to the company
 - c. Other (please specify)

5. **How many employees were affected by the organizational change that you provided internal communication support?**
 - a. 1 – 99 employees
 - b. 100 – 499 employees
 - c. 500 – 999 employees
 - d. 1,000 – 4,999 employees
 - e. 5,000 employees or more

6. **The company implementing the change identified employee communications as one of the key activities in implementing organizational change.**
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

7. **As an employee communication advisor you were engaged throughout the organizational change program.**
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

8. **Did the company perform an assessment to measure the level of success of the organizational change?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

9. **The company successfully achieved the intended outcomes of the organizational change.**
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

IV. Communication Practices

When completing the following questions, consider the most significant organizational change program where you provided internal communication support in the last five (5) years.

10. **How well did the organization communicate the following information to employees about the change?**

	Very Well				Not at all Well
Why the company decided to implement the change.					
The company's objectives for the change.					
What changes employees should expect to happen as the change is implemented.					
How the change would affect employees.					
What affected employees need to do to help implement the change.					

11. **How frequently was the following media used to communicate change to employees?**

	Very Frequently				Very Infrequently
Electronic media					
Face-to-face forums					
Print messages					
Social Media					
Virtual meetings					

12. How well did the organization capture feedback from employees using the following media?

	Very Well				Not at all Well
Electronic media					
Face-to-face forums					
Print messages					
Social Media					
Virtual meetings					

13. Employees affected by the change were consulted about plans related to implementing the organizational change.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

14. Which members of the organization were most responsible for communicating the change to employees?

	Very Responsible				Not at all Responsible
CEO					
Senior Executives/Leaders					
Middle Managers					
Line Supervisors					
Members of the Organization Change Team					

V. Employee Reactions to Change

When completing the following questions, consider the most significant organizational change program where you provided internal communication support in the last five (5) years.

15. Employees affected by the change understood how the organizational change would affect the company.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

16. Employees affected by the change understood how the organizational change would affect them.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree

- e. Strongly Disagree
- 17. Employees affected by the change understood their role in implementing the organizational change.**
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
- 18. Employees affected by the change understood their role in implementing the organizational change.**
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
- 19. Employees affected by the change had the opportunity to engage in discussions (i.e., ask questions, discuss concerns) about the planned organizational change throughout the planning and implementation of the change.**
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
- 20. Employees supported the change program.**
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
- 21. How frequently did employees demonstrate behaviors that resist the goals of the change program**
- a. Very frequently
 - b. Frequently
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Infrequently
 - e. Very Infrequently

VI. Thank you

Your participation in this survey is very much appreciated.

If you have any questions about the research being conducted, please contact the researcher directly.

Researcher: Lisa Durante, Master's Student, University of Missouri-Columbia, Email: ldurante@hotmail.com

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

The following letter was distributed via email to the study sample group, inviting communicators to participate in the self-administered questionnaire.

Participate in a Survey to Identify Best Practices in Change Communications

My name is Lisa Durante. I'm full-time communications professional and I'm a master's student with the University of Missouri. I am also a member of the IABC.

I'm currently conducting a research study to identify the best practices experienced communicators use to communicate change to employees. You have been randomly selected to participate in an online questionnaire survey.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ZKgt_2bZK_2fWP_2budSr0ylcApQ_3d_3d

If the link doesn't open by clicking on it, please copy and paste into your web browser

The survey is completely anonymous and will take approximately 15 minutes of your time. Please complete the survey by October 31.

If you have already completed this survey, thank you and please disregard this email.

Many thanks in advance for your participation.
Lisa

About the Research

This survey is a part of a master's thesis study being conducted for the University of Missouri. The purpose of the study is to identify employee communication activities that have successfully supported the implementation of organizational change.

About the Researcher

Lisa Durante is a part-time Strategic Communication Master's student with the University of Missouri. She is also a member of the IABC.

If you want additional information about the researcher, this research or the potential use of your survey responses, contact Lisa Durante via e-mail at ldurante@hotmail.com.

IRB APPLICATION FORM

Campus IRB Exempt Application
Project Number: 1110458
Review Number: 69158

SECTION A - Request for Exempt Status Designation

(1) Request for EXEMPT status review.

Request for EXEMPT status review. In order to receive an exemption from review by the Campus IRB, the proposal must meet a specific criteria set forth by the regulations in 45 CFR 46. To avoid delay, you must answer each question and upload all requested information to be considered for exemption from the federal regulations governing human subject research. LINK: [Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46: Federal Regulations](#)

SECTION B - Investigators

(1) Research Staff (students must have a faculty member listed as an advisor)

Name	Dept.	Role	Educational Training Date
Cynthia Frisby	Advertising	Advisor	03-21-2006
Lisa Durante	Journalism	Student Investigator	01-11-2009

Restriction: All key personnel are required to be certified for completion of a protection of human research participants education program that is approved by the Campus IRB. Applications will not be reviewed if the key personnel have not certified approved training.

Restriction: All applications must have a primary investigator selected unless they are a student. A student should list themselves as a "student investigator".

Restriction: (STUDENT INVESTIGATORS): Student applications must have an advisor listed. Applications will not be reviewed until:

- The student and advisor have current human subject training certification
- The advisor has completed the Advisor Approval Form for this application.

NOTE: (The Advisor Approval Form may be accessed under the IRB Forms section of eIRB, and must be submitted by your advisor before submitting this Application to the Campus IRB.)

(2) Is the research funded? *

Yes No

(3) If applicable, how is the project funded?

- External Sponsor (e.g.grant, contract)
- Internal Source: (any MU center, entity, or unit)
- Awarded
- Pending

(4) Select which funding source applies:

External Funding: Please upload any applicable funding proposals.

- Internal

-
- External
 Not Applicable

(5) Do any of the key personnel or research team members of this project have a financial interest related to this project? *

Yes No

(6) Describe any "Financial Conflicts of Interest" a research team member may have.

In accordance with the Department of Health and Human Services guidelines, the Campus IRB recognizes institutions and individuals involved in human subjects research may establish financial relationships related to or separate from particular research projects. Those financial relationships may create financial interests of monetary value, such as payments for services, equity interests, or intellectual property rights. A financial interest related to a research study may be a conflicting financial interest. The Department recognizes that some conflicting financial interests in research may affect the rights and welfare of human subjects. The Campus IRB must ensure that an investigator doesn't have a financial interest that compromises the protection of human research subjects.

(7) If YES, please explain:

(8) Do any of the key personnel or research team members of this project have a financial interest with any sponsor of this research?

Project not funded; not applicable

No

Yes. The Campus IRB may require disclosure of financial interests during the consent process.

(9) If yes, please explain:

(10) If YES, has the financial interest been disclosed to the Conflict of Interest Committee?

If yes, please upload the Conflict of Interest Committee's written decision in eIRB.

Yes No

(11) If NO, an updated Financial Disclosure form must be filed with the Conflict of Interest Committee simultaneously with the submission of this application. This application will not be approved until the Conflict of Interest Committee has made a decision. The IRB will take the Conflict of Interest Committee decision into consideration when reviewing an application.

SECTION C - Project Information

(1) Project Title *

Communicating Change Internally: Identifying Messages, Media, Channels and Approaches that Contribute to the Success of Planned Organization Change

(2) Description *

Provide a detailed description of your project. Include background, specific objectives, and the nature of involvement of the subject participants.

Organizational change is implemented in most companies every four to five years. For the most part, these changes are implemented with mediocre to poor results due, in large part, to a lack of employee support. Internal public relations, also referred to as internal communications, is one of the key factors in overcoming employee resistance to planned organizational change.

Therefore the objective of this study is to identify internal communication best practices.

Specifically, it will identify the messages, media, channels and approaches that have contributed to the success of planned organization change

To identify these best practices, a questionnaire survey will be administered to communication professionals. Participants will be randomly selected from a list of US members of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) with at least five years of Employee (or Internal) Communication experience. The IABC, which the researcher is a member, is a professional network of more than 15,000 business communication professionals in more than 70 countries.

The questionnaire survey will be administered through the online survey provider called SurveyMonkey.com. Participants will be emailed (using email addresses captured from the IABC listing) a cover letter explaining the purpose and objective of the study, and requesting their participation in the study. A link to the online survey will also be provided. Participants will have 14 days upon receiving the link to the online survey to complete the questionnaire. Since this is an online survey, participants can complete the survey using their own computers at a time and place they deem most convenient.

(3) Instruments *

List each of the instruments you will use in your research. When listing your instruments (i.e., surveys, questionnaires, inventories, observational techniques, etc.), define the purpose of each instrument. Upload each instrument for IRB review.

If you are conducting interviews or focus groups, upload a list of all questions or topics to be covered. If specific questions have not yet been developed, provide examples of the types of questions you will ask.

A questionnaire survey will be used to collect data for this study. The purpose of the survey is to ask seasoned professional communicators to identify the internal communication best practices they have used that contributed to the success of planned organizational change. A list of questions has been uploaded for review.

The survey will be administered using an online survey tool powered by SurveyMonkey (see www.SurveyMonkey.com for more information). SurveyMonkey is a registration-based online survey tool that helps create and administer surveys. As well, SurveyMonkey anonymously collects and stores survey responses, which can be retrieved only by the researcher once the survey is closed.

Primarily, the researcher decided to use an online survey tool to administer this questionnaire because it is easy to access and use for both the researcher and study participants. Survey participants can access and complete the questionnaire using their own computer (with an Internet connection) at a time and place they deem most convenient. Also, since the survey is completed online, responses are anonymous and cannot be traced back to the individual. In addition, using an online tool enables participants outside of the researcher's geographic location to participate in this survey.

(4) Specify the primary location of data collection. *

If you are conducting research at another facility, university, agency, school or research location, please upload written verification for permission from the site's authorized representative.

If you are conducting research outside of the United States, please upload written verification for permission from the site's authorized representative, as required by National, State, and Local regulations and/or policies.

Research will be conducted virtually using an online survey tool that will be emailed directly to randomly selected participants.

Participants have been selected from a listing of US members of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). The researcher is a member of the IABC and has access and eligibility to email a survey to membership colleagues.

(5) Project Dates

Provide the estimated start and end dates for your project.

A. Start Date*

10-01-2008

B. End Date*

10-15-2008

(6) Does the research involve an investigation into legal matters, illegal activities, admissions of guilt of illegal acts, any admission of breaches of legal duties or noncompliant legal matters? *

Yes No

(7) If YES, please explain.

SECTION D - Exempt Categories

(1) REQUEST FOR EXEMPTION: Check

(2) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods. *

a. The research does not involve prisoners as participants.

b. The research is not FDA regulated.

c. The research cannot involve significant physical invasions or intrusions upon the privacy of participants; or observation of behavior in settings where participants have a reasonable expectation of privacy

d. The research cannot involve deception of research participants

e. The research cannot involve techniques which expose participants to discomfort or harassment beyond levels encountered in daily life

f. The research cannot involve investigation of legal matters, illegal activities, and admissions of guilt involve illegal acts or violations of parole.

Yes No

(3) If YES, please provide a statement justifying the proposed activities meet this criteria.

(4) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; AND (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation. *

a. The research does not involve prisoners as participants.

b. The research is not FDA regulated.

c. If children are involved, their participation is limited to either educational tests or observation of public behavior where the investigator does not participate in the observed activities.

d. If children are involved, the procedures do not involve survey procedures or interviews.

e. *The research cannot involve significant physical invasions or intrusions upon the privacy of participants; or observation of behavior in settings where participants have a reasonable expectation of privacy*

f. *The research cannot involve deception of research participants*

g. *The research cannot involve techniques which expose participants to discomfort or harassment beyond levels encountered in daily life*

h. *The research cannot involve investigation of legal matters, illegal activities, and admissions of guilt involve illegal acts or violations of parole.*

Yes No

(5) If YES, please provide a statement justifying the proposed activities meet this criteria.

(6) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; OR (ii) Federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter. *

a. *The research does not involve prisoners as participants.*

b. *The research is not FDA regulated.*

c. *The research cannot involve significant physical invasions or intrusions upon the privacy of participants; or observation of behavior in settings where participants have a reasonable expectation of privacy*

d. *The research cannot involve deception of research participants*

e. *The research cannot involve techniques which expose participants to discomfort or harassment beyond levels encountered in daily life*

f. *The research cannot involve investigation of legal matters, illegal activities, and admissions of guilt involve illegal acts or violations of parole.*

Yes No

(7) If YES, please provide a statement justifying the proposed activities meet this criteria.

(8) Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. *

a. *The research does not involve prisoners as participants.*

b. *The research is not FDA regulated.*

c. *The research cannot involve significant physical invasions or intrusions upon the privacy of participants; or observation of behavior in settings where participants have a reasonable expectation of privacy*

d. *The research cannot involve deception of research participants*

e. The research cannot involve techniques which expose participants to discomfort or harassment beyond levels encountered in daily life

f. The research cannot involve investigation of legal matters, illegal activities, and admissions of guilt involve illegal acts or violations of parole.

Yes No

(9) If YES, please provide a statement justifying the proposed activities meet this criteria.

(10) Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of Department or Agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i) Public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs. *

a. The research does not involve prisoners as participants.

b. The research is not FDA regulated.

c. The research delivers a public benefit (e.g., financial or medical benefits as provided under the Social Security Act) or service (e.g., social, supportive, or nutrition services provided under the Older Americans Act).

d. The research is conducted pursuant to specific federal statutory authority.

e. There is no statutory requirement that an IRB review the research.

f. The research cannot involve significant physical invasions or intrusions upon the privacy of participants; or observation of behavior in settings where participants have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

g. The research cannot involve deception of research participants.

h. The research cannot involve techniques which expose participants to discomfort or harassment beyond levels encountered in daily life.

i. The research cannot involve investigation of legal matters, illegal activities, and admissions of guilt involve illegal acts or violations of parole.

Yes No

(11) If YES, please provide a statement justifying the proposed activities meet this criteria.

(12) Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. *

a. The research cannot involve significant physical invasions or intrusions upon the privacy of participants; or observation of behavior in settings where participants have a reasonable expectation of privacy

b. The research cannot involve deception of research participants

c. The research cannot involve techniques which expose participants to discomfort or harassment

beyond levels encountered in daily life

d. The research cannot involve investigation of legal matters, illegal activities, and admissions of guilt involve illegal acts or violations of parole.

Yes No

(13) If YES, please provide a statement justifying the proposed activities meet this criteria.

SECTION E - Characteristics

(1) Selection and recruitment of subjects must be equitable. The investigator should assure the recruitment processes are free from undue influence or coercion.

(2) Subject Characteristics *

Please select all of the following that you propose to target to INCLUDE in your project:

	Category	Action
	Adults (persons 18 and older)	Include
	Children (Under the age of 18)	Exclude
	Cognitively Impaired or Mentally Impaired	Exclude
	Employees in their workplace	Exclude
	Pregnant Women, Fetuses, or Neonates	Exclude
	Prisoners or Parolees	Exclude
	Third Parties (A third party is an individual about whom researchers obtain information from the human subjects without that individual's prior consent)	Exclude
	Ward of the Court	Exclude
	Minority Persons	Exclude
	Elderly Persons	Exclude
	Incompetent Persons	Exclude
	Low Income Persons	Exclude
	Students	Exclude

SECTION F - Recruitment Process and Subject Participation

(1) Subject Recruitment *

Please describe the process for how subjects will be recruited. Include a description of any incentives, fliers, letters, verbal scripts, etc., that you intend to use when recruiting potential subjects. (It is not necessary to submit these materials for review).

Subjects will be randomly selected from a listing of US members of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). The researcher is a member of the IABC with access to member email lists and eligibility to send a survey to membership colleagues.

Once 300 randomly selected members have been identified, an email will be sent outlining the purpose of the study, instructions on how to complete the survey and the date to complete the survey. The email will also stipulate that the survey is completely voluntary. In addition, a link to the SurveyMonkey survey will be included so individuals can easily access and complete the survey. No other recruiting materials will be used.

SECTION G - Risk/Benefits

(1) What benefits to the subject or society may result from the research? *

By completing this research, the researcher will attempt to fill the gap within the public relations literature by offering best practices in communicating organizational change. By surveying experienced internal communication professionals, this research will assess the messages, media, channels and approaches used to communicate change to internal publics and gauge the activities that contribute to the success of planned organizational change.

(2) What potential risks may be exposed to the subjects from participation in the research? (Consider all potential physical, psychological, social, legal, economical or other risks).

EXPLAIN how the risks will be minimized. *

No risks will be posed on the individual subjects who voluntarily decide to participate in this research. However, should any subject have concerns or questions about the research, the researcher will respond to those as necessary.

SECTION H - Consent Process

(1) Research that qualifies as Exempt is, by default, "exempt" from the regulatory requirements for informed consent. However, the basic ethical principle of Respect for Persons outlined in the Belmont Report compels investigators to obtain an individual's consent whenever possible. Permission may be obtained orally or in writing. If a written document is used, it should include all of the elements on the SAMPLE Informed Consent Template available on the Campus IRB website; however, it is not necessary to submit this document for review. Investigators are expected to protect the privacy of subjects by maintaining confidentiality of their identity in relation to the data.

(2) Informed Consent

A. Describe in detail how you intend to inform prospective subjects about their participation in this research and obtain their voluntary permission. Include the type of permission (written or oral) and who will obtain permission.*

The first page of the online survey will include an Informed Consent letter (based on the template found on the Campus IRB website). Voluntary participants will have two options to select: (a) I have read this consent form and agree to participate in this study. My questions about this research have been answered. I know that I can remove myself from this study at anytime without any problems. (b) I will not participate in this study.

Selection of option (a) will be accepted in lieu of a signature. Upon selecting option (a), participants will be guided to the first question of the survey. If option (b) is selected, participants will be guided to the end of the survey. Participants will be required to select one of the two options before continuing with the survey.

SECTION I - Other

(1) Will the activities involve the use of any type of drugs, herbs, caffeine, food-additives, or tobacco? *

Yes No

(2) If you answered YES to Question 1, please provide a complete description of how you propose to incorporate the substance in the research activities.

IRB APPROVAL FORM



Campus Institutional Review Board
University of Missouri-Columbia

483 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO
65211-1150
PHONE: (573) 882- 9585
FAX: (573) 884-0663

IRB #	1110458
Project Title	Communicating Change Internally: Identifying Messages, Media, Channels and Approaches that Contribute to the Success of Planned Organization Change
Approval Date	Sep 22, 2008
Expiration Date	Sep 22, 2009
Investigators	Durante, Lisa
Project Status	Approved Active Exempt

Your application on the above-referenced project was received. It has been assigned project number 1110458. **Please refer to this number to identify your project whenever you contact our office.**

All applications are reviewed in the order received. If your project cannot be approved exempt or expedited, you will receive notice of the date your project is set for full board review. Following review of your application by the board, you will receive notice of the Campus IRBs determination.

We are happy to inform you that the review status of your application can be monitored online by accessing the **Open Saved IRB Project** feature. We will make every effort to review your application as soon as possible and update all project review information online immediately. We respectfully request that you make every effort to monitor the status of your file online and avoid email or telephone inquiries to our office so that we may continue to process applications efficiently without undue interruptions. Please be aware that our office receives and reviews high volumes of activities daily, and has developed the online system to diminish the number of telephone inquiries regarding the approval status of an application to avoid further delays in processing operations. We appreciate your support of our efforts to conduct our review operations in a more efficient matter. However, please be aware that you should continue to contact our office if any emergency, adverse event, or any matter affecting the protection of human subjects arises.

If you submit an incomplete application, it will be placed **ON HOLD PENDING PI RESPONSE** for you and categorized internally as a PENDING FILE. Please be aware that **PENDING FILES DO NOT RECEIVE PRIORITY REVIEW**. As a result, the office is not in a position to permit the investigator to rely upon the original submission date for administrative operations or approval requests. Any Campus IRB requests for additional information to complete the application submission process can be reviewed online by accessing the **Open Saved IRB Project** feature. Please open the **Comments** feature and upload the requested information immediately via

the **Document Storage** feature in the eIRB online system. We highly encourage you to respond to our requests for information immediately, to avoid any delays in the approval process. If you believe that pertinent information has been left out of your application, please contact our office immediately.

In order to view and/or continue to complete your IRB Application, Amendment, Continuing Review Report, Deviation Report, and/or Adverse Event Report, go to "**Open Saved IRB Project**" and click on "**Project Forms.**"

If you have questions regarding any IRB procedural processes, please feel free to contact the IRB office at (573) 882-9585.

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