

COMMUNICATIONS

vision – actions – results

At Stuart Notholt Communications Limited we take the messages businesses need to convey and put them into clear, intelligible terms. We're dedicated to plain speaking and jargon-free writing – creating common-sense communications that inform and motivate stakeholders.

SNC isn't a consultancy. Consultants talk; we act and deliver. That is why we are able to offer genuine value to clients, making a positive difference to their relationships with their staff, customers and investors.

We do this by reviewing all aspects of an organization's communications portfolio - their corporate identity, brand, artwork, print and websites - as well as the vision and values that underpin what they want to say. Then we work alongside them, giving robust no-nonsense advice and bringing our practical skills to bear in delivering bang-for-bucks and improving the quality of communications to the diverse audiences the modern business needs to influence.

Corporate communications and stakeholder management are increasingly recognized as essential elements of the senior business skills set, applying resources distinct from those traditionally found in marketing or other functions.

Stuart Notholt Communications Limited provides support across the communications mix on an interim or contract basis, including a specialism in internal communications, which is widely recognized as the most technically challenging and emotive of communications issues, particularly at times of merger/acquisition or rapid internal change.

Some of the areas of work that SNC undertakes include:

- Development and implementation of stakeholder engagement strategies
- Risk communications management and mitigation of major incidents
- Internal communications
- Business publishing and communications integration
- Brand and visual identity development
- Internet/intranet development and integration with brand
- Plain English and multiple language programmes
- Recruitment, establishment and/or interim management of communications teams
- Public Affairs including governmental work
- Media training of corporate spokespeople and expert witnesses
- Project management of large scale events
- Editorial and business writing assignments



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CLOSING THE CIRCLE

Run a word check on the brief for any major project plan and the chances are high that one word will be conspicuous by its absence. That word is 'communications'. Too often, the best laid plans include parameters for the project outcomes, and even the ways in which these are to be measured - but totally omit the means to communicate aims and results to key stakeholders.

This omission is not merely an academic one. Without on-going stakeholder involvement, participation and commitment, projects are likely to fail to meet their aims. Furthermore, without a programme to communicate successes the organization cannot fully reap the benefits of successful outcomes. We call that process 'closing the circle'.

Fortunately, help is at hand. Stuart Notholt Communications Ltd specializes in providing bolt-on communications solutions for complex multidisciplinary programmes. By ensuring that stakeholders are kept in the loop, and by providing Project Director level input, SNC can ensure that project outcomes are achieved – and recognized.

Aspects of 'closing the circle' work include:

- Establishing measurable communications outcomes for projects that are relevant to stakeholder groups
- Establishing and maintaining appropriate communications to stakeholders
- Ensuring core messages are consistent and understood across the organization, including (where appropriate) by investors, partners and staff
- Project management of the communications workstream
- Integration of internal communications and public relations processes into the project communications workstream
- Providing an independent and authoritative single source of contact and direction on communications issues



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RISK COMMUNICATIONS

In a world increasingly threatened by terrorism, natural disasters, and widespread disease outbreaks such as SARS or pandemic influenza, risk communications and post-incident business recovery should be high on the agenda for all responsible organizations.

Insightful risk communications strategies are essential to mitigate confused, ineffectual, fear-driven and other potentially damaging stakeholder responses to serious crises. Moreover, appropriate risk communications, including pre-planning and exercising, are essential in fostering the trust and confidence that are vital in a crisis situation. Yet too many organizations still omit to undertake basic contingency planning.

Even without a natural or man-made disaster, brand reputations are always at risk. Arthur Andersen spent millions on a new visual identity in the months before Enron, but when the scandal broke Andersen ripped itself apart and the Big Five suddenly became the Big Four. Ratner's, an otherwise sound £500m company, was famously destroyed in five seconds flat by a handful of ill-chosen words. How much better it would have been if these companies had spent a fraction of their budget on a properly structured communications strategy!

Stuart Notholt Communications Ltd can help with:

- The creation of bespoke risk communications strategies
- Auditing internal communications processes and how they would operate in a crisis when mainstream communications channels may be interrupted
- Establishment of emergency media handling protocols, up to and including 7/7 and 9/11 scenarios and pandemic influenza.
- War gaming and senior management media training
- Communications aspects of evacuation procedures, working with premises managers and human resources departments
- Communicating through business interruption and business recovery processes
- Defensive PR – confidential handling of incidents likely to result in major reputational damage

Stuart Notholt has experience in risk communications management gained through working with Strategic Health Authorities in the development of pandemic flu countermeasures communications for regional and local NHS organizations. With the outbreak of swine flu in May 2009, he worked with Department of Health colleagues as a member of the Department's NHS and Social Care Implementation 'major incident' team and was subsequently on the Silver Command team for Hillingdon Borough in West London. He was also responsible for the creation of post-9/11 internal communications strategies for the Financial Services Authority and for product development work at Crawford-THG (the world's largest risk management firm).



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INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Internal communications is widely recognized as the most complex and difficult area of corporate communications, particularly during times of challenging changes in the organization.

On the face of it, it is hard to see why this should be so. After all, unlike other communications audiences, employers tend to have a pretty good idea of who their staff are, where they live, and even how much they earn. The problem is that the reverse is also true – employees know far more about the company and its foibles than other stakeholders and have a healthy disdain for anything that smacks of 'management propaganda'.

The issue isn't helped by the fact that many corporations regard 'internal communications' as being primarily the publication of an in-house newsletter featuring the exciting goings on at the latest staff awayday, possibly backed up by an annual message from the Chairman, and a 'staff survey' - often with ill-defined objectives - conducted every two years or so. Not surprisingly, employees are all too often poorly informed, and highly cynical, about the company's aims, values and future.

Here are some of the issues:

- Alignment and integration of employees communications with strategic aims and objectives
- Identification and elimination of internal barriers to good communications
- Intranet evaluation and overhaul
- Integration of intranets with brand and internet
- Staff surveying that candidly identifies the issues
- Development of information centres and knowledge-sharing resources
- Programme management of merger/acquisition/disposal and other emotive change issues
- Design, publication and launch of effective employees publications and communications resources
- Multiple-language support and other accessibility issues
- Confidential handling of PR issues relating to staff redundancy or possible malpractice

*Stuart Notholt, the principal Director of SN Communications Ltd, has over twenty years' experience delivering internal communications solutions to complex global organizations. (See the **case studies** sheets for details.)*



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INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

These are some of the high-level internal communications programmes that Stuart Notholt has been responsible for delivering.

Case studies

Engagement with NHS staff over swine flu vaccination programme

Staff facing research at NHS Hillingdon, in West London, revealed a high level of resistance to accepting the swine flu vaccination being offered to all NHS front-line personnel. As interim Communication Manager for Pandemic Flu, engaged with staff through meetings, the creation of a dedicated intranet site, and extensive promotional work emphasizing the benefits to staff, their families, and colleagues. Result was a far higher uptake of the vaccination than initially anticipated.

New product launch and internal merger

Interim Head of Internal Communications for the new Wealth Management business within Lloyds TSB. Corporate communications and business transformation programme arising out of merger of three advisory/sales teams to create new business. Wrote and then implemented Strategic Communications plan. Worked with stakeholders to determine, and deliver, their internal communications requirements. Specific projects included management and organization of high-profile launch conference, complete restructuring of internal communications function, re-design of intranet, and making strategic recommendations for future communications processes.

Development of international PR strategy

Consultancy services to CB Richard Ellis (international property developers). Brief was to develop a cohesive public relations and media strategy for the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) division. The division's regional offices had been acquired through acquisition and/or local expansion, so there was little commonality in approach to PR matters and inadequate synergy on cross-border issues and projects. The differing legal and logistical positions of the PR discipline in a very wide range of countries and cultures needed to be considered. Strategic report was delivered, followed by a detailed media process guide and implementation plan, which was adopted by the newly recruited EMEA PR manager.

Re-branding and development of new corporate identity, vision, and values

Lead Director for The National Autistic Society on the re-branding, development of the strategic plan, and delivery of new visual identity, both internally and externally. The NAS is the lead provider of services in its sector, and employs around 2,800 people. However, the overall brand of the organization needed extensive modernization and re-focusing on local service delivery. Managed all aspects of the re-launch, including internal marketing, focus groups, re-design of intranet and promotion to staff at all levels of the new vision and values of the organization.



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Communications aspects of disaster recovery planning

Member of the high-level group established in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks to review the Financial Services Authority's response to large-scale disaster. Individual brief focused on internal communications in a crisis, including confidence building and establishment of evacuation and business interruption systems. Measured and evaluated staff response to proposals and exercises, and provided internal communications expertise to disaster recovery programme.

Intranet project management

Responsible for the evaluation, re-design and re-launch of intranet services for Lloyds TSB, the National Autistic Society and Financial Services Authority. (Also responsible for first-generation intranet launch at Crawford-THG.) Undertook project management of exercise to ensure intranet aligned correctly to brand, and that key message delivered. Undertook evaluation of accessibility, other media options, and likely uptake of intranet services. Led the design, user testing and re-launch of intranet services ensuring management objectives met.

Internal communications at a time of expansion

Launched first worldwide internal communications system at Tate & Lyle Group. The Group had undergone a period of very rapid expansion through acquisition, particularly in the USA. The new direction, size, and role of the Group needed to be developed a set of 'core values' that could be recognized and understood by all employees, regardless of location and national corporate culture. Worked with local internal communications providers worldwide to ensure key business messages integrated. Developed first firm-wide corporate identity, brand, and visual guidelines. Used technological innovations to reduce overall production costs by one third. Programme involved widespread publications design, commissioning and editing.

Internal communications following merger

Responsible for all aspects of the internal communications of the merger between Thomas Howell Group and Crawford Inc to create Crawford-THG, world's largest risk management firm. The new organization had legacy issues in that it had grown by multiple merger, but little focus had been given to integrating new member companies into an overall group ethos. Provided brand, vision and values for new organization and reinforced this with extensive internal communications marketing, collateral, and support. Used external media coverage and above-the-line advertising in trade press to reinforce internal messages



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MEDIA TRAINING

Training in how to deal with the media should be an essential part of the personal development plan for all staff who may be called upon to act as a spokesperson for their organization. Media training gives managers, at all levels, the skills necessary to successfully talk to journalists, prepare a media briefing, and ensure that the organization's position on a given subject is accurately and professionally communicated.

"Bad news" can seriously damage the reputation of even the most successful and dynamic enterprises. Contracts may be delayed or cancelled, disposals or redundancies may be sometimes necessary and human mistakes happen. It is human nature not to want to talk about such things, but this can be dangerous with regard to the media. Yet too often senior managers seem to assume that a potential 'bad news' story will simply go away or that the media will not find out about it! Media training can ensure that managers know how to handle negative or 'defensive' public relations issues.

Media Training from Stuart Notholt Communications Ltd is carried out by experienced journalists who are ideally placed to act as 'poachers turned gamekeepers' in advising corporate managers how to handle the press. Media Training can be offered as a module (as part of a broader management skills training package, for example) or as a bespoke programme dealing with the specific needs of the organization.

Aspects of Media Training include:

- How to draft and clear media statements and confidential position papers
- Key do's and don'ts when speaking to the press
- How to handle confidentiality, exclusives and media briefings
- Interview techniques for broadcast media
- Role plays – dealing with 'out of the blue' interviews and press calls
- Defensive and contingency planning PR – handling of media incidents which may result in major reputational damage
- What to do when things go wrong...

For handling the communications and media aspects of very serious incidents, in the 7/7 or 9/11 category, see our Media Recovery product.



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STUART NOTHOLT - PROFILE

Stuart Notholt has over 20 years' experience in delivering corporate communications solutions to major organizations, whether in the commercial, governmental or not-for-profit sectors. He works as a freelance interim communications specialist providing support across the communications mix. He specializes in those areas that are widely regarded as among the most challenging and emotive of communications issues – risk communications, stakeholder relations and internal communications.



"It was a pleasure to work with somebody of such calibre and dedication to the task in hand. He is a highly gifted and creative communicator. He is a man of scrupulous integrity and great energy and enthusiasm. I cannot commend him to you too highly."

— Alan J. Cleary, Commissioner, United Nations Compensation Commission

Principal areas of expertise

Strategic agility and leadership

- Led co-ordination and creation of pandemic flu strategic communications plans for all ten English Strategic Health Authorities, ensuring commonality with agreed national strategy and messaging.
- Led, with two other senior directors, the overall direction of £110m business employing 2,800 people throughout UK.
- Created and led Development Directorate for new organization.
- Delivered brand development projects during times of major change, winning approval at Board and throughout the organization at all staff levels. Internal survey indicated 95% acceptance of new brand proposition.
- Audited and re-designed PR strategy for the Europe, Middle East and Africa Division of a major PLC to make it more cohesive and responsive to business needs.
- Developed post-9/11 disaster recovery internal communications strategy
- Effective people manager with highest managerial approval rating within organization, as measured by staff survey at Financial Services Authority.

Successful tactical delivery

- Ensured all NHS Primary Care Trusts had pandemic flu communications plans in position by agreed deadline. National assessment indicated that 90% had a high level of confidence in their communications planning.
- Joined Department of Health colleagues on major incident team assembled to co-ordinate UK-wide response to swine flu outbreak.
- Led on delivery of Financial Services Authority Handbook of Rules and Guidance (in hard copy, CD and web versions) to 23,000 regulated firms, resulting in overall saving of £9m; project used by Adobe as a case study.
- Launched Public Autism Resource & Information Service (PARIS) for National Autistic Society; a unique web-based database of resources for people with autism and their carers. Ten thousand hits in first year.
- Launched worldwide internal communications using technological developments to reduce overall production costs by one third. (Tate & Lyle PLC; Crawford-THG; National Autistic Society)

- Widespread publications design, commissioning and editing.
- Developed integrated 'pitch suite' of presentations and resources aimed at enabling organization to pitch for bigger business opportunities, including successful £40m bids to United Nations.

Political acumen

- Extensive experience in complex global organizations; attuned to international cultural, legal and commercial sensitivities.
- Has worked across public, private and voluntary sectors, ensuring the different and diverse needs of each are met. Through work with Parliamentary and official groups, including All Party groups in the House of Commons, has operated at Ministerial and senior official level, gaining support for the aims of organization at Whitehall, Westminster, and the devolved institutions.
- Worked on project basis for charities and major donors (such as Vodafone) to ensure alignment of donor and charitable objectives.

Stuart Notholt's interim management roles have included work for...

National Health Service

Interim Communications Manager for NHS Hillingdon. As a member of the Silver Command for dealing with swine flu, upgraded the swine flu communications plan, ensuring commonality with plans in other agencies and sectors of the NHS, and engaged in hands-on work across the communications mix, including media handling, acting as the lead contact for the voluntary sector, developing the relevant sections of the internet/intranet, and introducing new communications tools, such as a Twitter news feed. Also drafted the overall NHS Hillingdon strategic and operational communications plans.

Department of Health

Communications Manager for the Department of Health Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Team, working on strategies for England-wide Strategic Health Authorities and over 300 local NHS Trusts in preparing communications countermeasures for a future pandemic influenza outbreak. A high profile project involving multiple agencies. Pandemic influenza is officially regarded as the greatest single health threat facing the UK. Worked with colleagues in responding to May 2009 swine flu outbreak.

Victim Support

Director of Development, responsible for the establishment of a new division covering communications, fundraising, policy work, and volunteer development. Victim Support was merging 77 local organizations into one national body so new national systems had to be developed from scratch. Established and led divisional Senior Management Team, introducing new internal communications process, formed national fundraising team and created new training and development resource. Led on creation of three-year strategy and drafted Annual Plan.

Lloyds-TSB

Interim Head of Internal Communications for the new Lloyds-TSB Wealth Management business. Corporate communications and business transformation programme arising out of merger of three advisory/sales teams to create new business. Wrote and then implemented Strategic Communications plan. Worked with individual workstreams to determine, and deliver, their internal communications requirements. Specific projects included management and organization of high-profile launch conference.

SNC Africa

Developed and personally led 'Destination Benin 2007'. Field trip, business fact-finding and promotional programme aimed at raising the profile of Benin, in West Africa, as a tourist and business destination. Worked alongside Business Action for Africa and other programmes aimed at enhancing the reputation of Africa.

CB Richard Ellis

Development of a cohesive public relations and media strategy for the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) division of CB Richard Ellis. Strategic report was delivered, followed by a detailed media process guide and implementation plan, which was adopted by the newly recruited EMEA PR manager.

Previous posts:

- The National Autistic Society
- Financial Services Authority
- Ernst & Young
- Ernst & Young
- Crawford-THG Ltd
- Foreign & Colonial

Affiliations and external posts:

- Fellow and Past President, Chartered Institute of Journalists
- Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society
- Author, Fields of Fire – An Atlas of Ethnic Conflict
- Consultant to Foreign Office 'Know How Fund'
- Member, Royal African Society (occasional contributor to journal, African Affairs)
- Steering Committee member, Glass Slipper Appeal (Marsden Hospital appeal)
- Official Gibraltar Government Observer, Gibraltar Referendum, 2002
- Member, Parochial Church Council, Chiddingstone Causeway, Kent
- Graduate in Geography from Mansfield College, Oxford University
- Colonel in the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels
- Contributor to RUSI risk communications publications and events

"Stuart is a highly intelligent and intellectual person. He is analytical in his approach and demonstrates sound judgement and common sense. He is a good listener. His powers of written expression are very good indeed and he can be relied on to draft clear, concise and accurate statements of policy covering a range of complex and sensitive issues."

— Vernon Beauchamp, CEO, The National Autistic Society



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NOT-FOR-PROFIT SECTOR ACTIVITIES

Stuart Notholt has extensive experience of working at a senior level in the charities and not-for-profit sector, ensuring that the different and diverse needs of stakeholders - be they donors, users, carers, or volunteers - are met. Through work with Parliamentary and official groups, including All Party groups in the House of Commons, he has operated at Ministerial and senior official level, gaining support for the aims of his client organizations at Whitehall, Westminster, and the devolved institutions.

Stuart was Divisional Director of Communications & Public Affairs for The National Autistic Society from 2002-6, where he reported to the CEO and was responsible, with two other Senior Management Team Directors, for the overall management of the Society. He managed a team of 37 (plus 300 volunteers) with a direct budget of over £4 million. He was lead director covering the areas of policy and campaigning, marketing, advocacy, PR and events management, information services and publications (including web-based services). In this role, he was also responsible for initial drafting of the Society's Strategic Plan, covering all aspects of the organization's work and objectives. He was also responsible for major corporate relationships, such as those with Vodafone, Barclays, House of Fraser and Clifford Chance, and worked very closely with the Marketing & Fundraising Director to ensure that the opportunities presented by the synergy between policy, research and fundraising were understood and developed.

In 2006-7 he worked on a number of freelance charity projects through his own organization, SNC Africa. These included business and IT support to an educational charity in Uganda and work with the Business Action for Africa consortium around projects designed to commemorate the 2007 abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. He personally designed and led an educational project taking journalists, students and potential investors to Benin, in West Africa (see www.notholt.net/benin).

As interim Director of Development for Victim Support (2007-8) he was responsible for relaunching the fundraising function to take account of the new needs of the organization, winning Board approval. He also drafted the organization's strategic plan at a time of considerable change in the organization, which was merging 77 separate constituent charities into one national body. He also developed programmes with MIND, Mencap and other partners for supporting the needs of vulnerable individuals, whether as victims or witnesses of crime.

He is a Steering Group member of the Glass Slipper Appeal, which raises funds for the Royal Marsden Hospital, and is involved in local fundraising for a number of charities. His charitable work was recognized in 2009 with his commissioning as a Colonel in the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels.



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