

# Inclusive Communication Guide

This guide is designed to provide companies with a framework for creating a communication guide that ensures all communications reflect the organisations diversity and inclusion policies.

## Why is it important to have a communication guide in an organisation?

Having clear communications guidelines in an organisation is important as to ensure consistency, clarity and professionalism when communicating about diversity and inclusion across multiple business areas.

A communication guide is an important component of a successful diversity and inclusion strategy as it provides:

- **Consistency:** Consistent messaging reinforces the organisation's values and also their commitment to being inclusive. A guide helps maintain consistency in communication across various channels, including internal communications, external messaging, marketing materials, and customer interactions.
- **Clarity:** Clarity enhances communication effectiveness and reduces the risk of misinterpretation or confusion. A guide provides clear guidelines on language usage, tone, style, and formatting, helping to ensure that messages are clear, concise, and easy to understand.
- **Professionalism:** A guide sets professional standards for communication, reflecting the commitment to quality and excellence. Consistently high-quality communication enhances the organisation's reputation and credibility with stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors, and partners.
- **Commitment:** A guide helps maintain and reinforces the organisation's commitment to diversity and inclusion which can help foster a strong emotional connection with audiences.

- **Efficiency:** A guide streamlines the communication process by providing templates, guidelines, and best practices that enable employees to create effective communications more efficiently. This efficiency saves time and resources and ensures that communication efforts are focused and productive.
- **Compliance:** A guide helps ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, industry standards, and internal policies related to communication, such as privacy regulations, advertising guidelines, and corporate governance requirements.
- **Inclusivity:** A guide promotes inclusivity by providing guidance on inclusive language and communication practices that respect diverse perspectives, cultures, and identities. Inclusive communication fosters a welcoming and respectful environment for all stakeholders.
- **Alignment:** A guide facilitates alignment and coordination across different departments, teams, and individuals by providing a common framework and language for communication. This alignment supports collaboration and teamwork, enabling the organisation to work towards common goals more effectively.

## Communication guide framework

The following framework is provided as a guiding document for companies to modify and tailor to suit their own needs and requirements. The guide should be updated at least annually to ensure it stays current and aligned with best diversity and inclusion practices.

### Introduction

The introduction should stress the purpose and importance of inclusivity in communication. It should also articulate the organisation's commitment to diversity and inclusion (D&I) principles.

*For example:*

*Inclusivity in communication plays a vital role in fostering understanding, respect, and collaboration among individuals from diverse backgrounds. By embracing inclusivity, we aim to create environments where all voices are heard, valued, and respected, regardless of differences in race, ethnicity,*

*gender, sexuality, religion, age, ability, or other identities. The purpose of inclusivity in communication is to ensure that everyone feels included, represented, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents.*

*At [Company name], we strive to create a culture where diversity is celebrated, equity is promoted, and inclusion is woven into every aspect of our operations. Through our commitment to inclusivity in communication, we aim to foster a workplace where every individual feels respected, valued, and supported in achieving their full potential.*

## Inclusive Language

Inclusive language is critical in an organisation seeking to enhance its diversity and inclusivity. Guidelines on using inclusive language that respects diverse identities, backgrounds, and experiences are important and should be part of regular staff training and education. Inclusive language should be used in order to avoid the use of language that may reinforce stereotypes of marginalise people for diverse backgrounds.

## Cultural Sensitivity

Culturally sensitive communication includes respecting cultural norms, customs, and traditions.

Tips for avoiding cultural stereotypes and biases in communication may include:

- Using culturally-neutral greetings such as “Hello” or “Hi” to address individuals from various backgrounds.
- In meetings and discussions encourage minority groups to speak up; for example, “Let’s hear some different perspectives”.
- When discussing hypothetical scenarios, use inclusive pronouns like “they” and “them” or “their” rather than making assumptions about gender or identity.
- Recognise and celebrate the achievements of employees from diverse backgrounds. For example, “Congratulations to our team for their hard work on this project” acknowledges the collective effort without singling

out individuals. Avoid comments like, “You're such a hard worker for someone from your background.”

- Use inclusive language in workplace policies and procedures to ensure that they apply equitably to employees from diverse backgrounds.
- Avoid language that may unintentionally exclude or marginalise certain groups. For example, using idiomatic expressions or slang that may not be familiar to individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds like “hit the ground running” may be confusing or unclear to employees from linguistically diverse background workers.
- Be mindful of cultural references that may exclude those from other cultures. For instance, assuming everyone celebrates Christmas or understands references to popular cultural icons or figures.
- In communication materials like newsletters, website and social media posts, ensure that images and graphics reflect the diversity of the workforce.
- Ensure that written communication is accessible to employees with different language proficiencies by providing translations or summaries in multiple languages when necessary.

## Gender-Inclusive Language

Gender-inclusive language respects individuals of all genders. Some examples of gender-inclusive language include:

- Use gender-neutral pronouns and alternatives to gendered language. Rather than “he” or “her”, “them” and “they”.
- Use gender-neutral job titles such as “manager,” “supervisor,” or “leader” instead of gender-specific titles (e.g. “foreman”).
- Ensure that health and safety policies use gender-neutral language to apply equally to all employees. For example, use “all staff” instead of “his/her” or “men/women.”

## Accessibility

As part of communicating inclusively in the workplace, there is a need to ensure that communication materials are accessible to individuals with disabilities and adhere to guidelines for digital accessibility (e.g. web accessibility standards).

Recommendations include:

- Use clear and simple language to improve readability for individuals with cognitive disabilities or learning difficulties.
- Avoid jargon, technical terms, or complex language that may be difficult to understand.
- Provide multiple formats to accommodate different needs and preferences. This may include written materials in electronic and printed formats, audio recordings, and video presentations.
- Ensure that electronic documents are compatible with screen readers and assistive technologies used by individuals with visual impairments.
- Use accessible design elements, ensuring that documents, presentations, and websites are designed with accessibility in mind. This includes using high contrast colours, large fonts, and clear layouts to improve readability for individuals with visual impairments.
- Use alternative text descriptions for images and graphics to provide context for individuals using screen readers.
- Provide captions or transcripts for audio and video content to make them accessible to individuals with hearing impairments.
- Offer braille materials where possible with regards to important documents and information for individuals who are vision impaired. This may include safety manuals, training materials, and key company policies.
- Use communication platforms and tools that are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Ensure that video conferencing software supports closed captioning and that online collaboration platforms are compatible with screen readers and assistive technologies.

## Representation and imagery

Representation of diversity in imagery is a significant aspect of communication in the workplace. By ensuring that visual communication includes diverse images and avoids stereotypes, employees are made aware of the commitment the company is making to diversity and inclusivity.

Using diverse imagery in publications and materials to represent the variety of backgrounds, identities, and experiences among employees can go a long way to making staff from underrepresented groups feel like they belong. In newsletters, company profiles, website, social media postings it would be beneficial to include photos of employees from different ethnicities, genders, ages, abilities, and cultural backgrounds engaging in various workplace activities.

## Resources and References

Links to additional resources, training materials, and tools for promoting inclusivity in communication are provided below that may prove useful to those wanting to enhance their communication strategies and inclusivity within the workplace:

Inclusive workplaces: Inclusive communication guide

<https://qed.qld.gov.au/workingwithus/induction/workingforthedepartment/humanresources/Documents/inclusive-communication-guide.pdf>

Inclusive communication at work: a practical guide

<https://www.workvivo.com/blog/inclusive-communication-at-work-practical-guide/>

Creating inclusive and successful communications

<https://includeability.gov.au/resources-employers/creating-accessible-and-inclusive-communications>

A guide to inclusive communication online

<https://www.digital.nsw.gov.au/article/a-guide-to-inclusive-communication-online-you-can-always-ask-what-people-prefer>

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