

# Report on the Internal Communication at the Climate Council Jönköping

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## 1. Introduction and Context

Climate change is the most pressing matter that mankind will face in the coming decades and will affect everyone. Therefore, it is tremendously important to collaborate, share ideas, and act as quickly as possible. The climate council is an excellent example of cross-sector collaboration with including the perspective of politics, non-governmental organizations as well as local and international businesses.

As a student of the newly established master's program *Sustainable Communication* at Jönköping University, I had the chance to put my theoretical knowledge into practice during week 9-13 in 2020. The goal of my internship was to create a strategy to improve the internal communication between the climate council members. My vision is to make communication within the council **faster, easier, and more transparent** for all. Because efficient collaboration relies on effective internal communication.

This report provides a brief overview of the five-week project and suggests strategies to improve internal communication at the climate council. First, there is going to be a short introduction to internal communication and why it is important for the climate council, followed by a short description of the project. Finally, the suggested internal communication strategies are going to be illustrated, followed by useful links and sources for further information.

## 2. What is internal communication?

Internal communication describes the communication between the members of a company or organization. The communication can be vertical (from the management positions to employees or vice versa) or horizontal (in-between employees on the same hierarchical level within the company). Common tools that are used for internal communication are, for instance, intranets, newsletters, and E-Mails, online tools (such as Microsoft Teams) but also physical meetings and informal conversations. Internal communication is a relatively new field and currently a problematic topic in many companies and organizations. However, effective internal communication comes with multiple benefits regarding the work itself and the working atmosphere.

## Benefits of improving internal communication



### More transparency

- Through staying updated on what other departments, colleagues, or members are working on, work procedures become more transparent for all.



### Stronger bonds

- A shared vision a key to a successful company or organization. Members need a sense of purpose and a specific goal that they are working towards to. Through creating a strong bond between the respective employers, this vision can be reached more easily.



### Innovative ideas

- Creative solutions and innovative ideas can be achieved by adding multiple perspectives. For instance, by discussing problems with colleagues who do not necessarily share the same professional background.

The opposite of internal communication is external communication. External communication describes how a company or organization communicates its image outside of the company environment, for example, to customers or the general public. Common tools used to communicate externally today are websites and social media. However, internal communication and external communication are often closely linked. Strong external communication can similarly lead to employers identifying with their workplace and its vision. It furthermore opens the door for professional collaborations and for recruiting new talents.

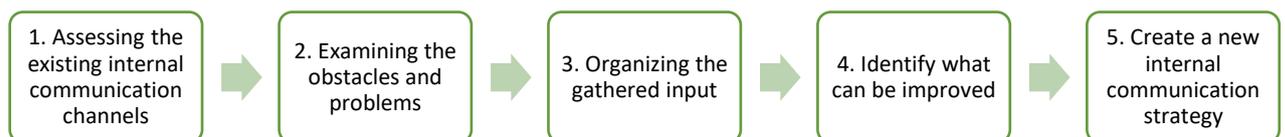
### 3. Why is internal communication important for the climate council?

It is important to note that collaborations, such as the climate council, do not have the same structure and flow of communication as a company or organization. Instead, the climate council is a heterogeneous group with members from many different backgrounds and with various ideas. Therefore, a hand-tailored and cost-efficient internal communication

solution is required. Through establishing efficient internal communication, it could be achieved to simplify communication in-between meetings and to share ideas which might lead to new projects. Furthermore, improved communication with each other will lead to better results, since shared knowledge is beneficial to everyone. Additionally, internal communication can accelerate the decision-making process, which is certainly advantageous, considering the urgency of climate change. Third, it can enhance personal relationships between the members, making collaborating and sharing creative ideas easier.

#### 4. Project description

The internal communication project was structured in five phases:



##### 4.1 Assessing the existing internal communication channels

The first phase of the project covered assessing the already existing channels which are being used for internal communication. At the given time, these were mainly the newsletter and the website. The YouTube channel was used as well but not necessarily a consistent tool for internal communication.

##### 4.2 Examining the obstacles and problems

This phase of the project is tremendously important and yet time-consuming. To provide a useful communication strategy, it is crucial to first examine where exactly the underlying problems are. Therefore, it is important to get to know the members of the council, their needs and wishes to adapt the communication strategy. Thus, I have addressed the topic at the climate council meeting on March 10, 2020, and let it be discussed by the members. Furthermore, I have interviewed the members of the communication group (*Kommunikationsgruppen*). The interviews of the communication group could provide helpful

insights in two ways. First, to further explore the possible problems and to get a better insight into the council's work. Second, to discuss internal communication from a communication expert's perspective and to investigate how the members handle internal communication at their respective companies as well.

#### **4.3 Organizing the gathered input**

After receiving an extensive amount of input and ideas, as well as developing and discussing own ideas, it was necessary to organize the gathered input. In connection to that, it was important to focus on certain obstacles and issues, given the limited time frame of the project. Thus, clear and, more importantly, realistic goals had to be identified which could be achieved in this short time.

#### **4.4 Identify what can be improved**

Through organizing the gathered input, three main goals can be identified:

##### **1. Transparency and Inclusion**

The climate council has various working groups and focus groups. Throughout the interviews, I have observed that the communication between the groups and the council was sometimes not clear. Therefore, with improved internal communication, I aim as well to start developing a stronger communication in-between the varying groups and the "main" council. Furthermore, it could be interesting to engage the interested public more strongly in the future as well.

##### **2. Simplicity and Accessibility of information**

We are currently living in the so-called "information age". This also shapes our working behavior, meaning that we receive a tremendous amount of information (mainly E-Mails) throughout a workday. Therefore, the information communicated to the members of the climate council (for instance the newsletter) must be easily digestible and simply accessible.

##### **3. Cost Efficiency**

At present, there are countless online tools for internal communication which often require a high monthly fee. As previously indicated, most internal communication tools are rather designed for big corporations. The climate council, on the other hand, is a comparatively

lose and at the same time diverse collaboration. Therefore, the focus of this project is to: first, improve what is already being used. With some small changes, the tools that are currently used can be adapted to create more engaging content. Second, to rely on social media, where there is no need for an additional budget.

## 5. Internal communication strategy

			
<p><b>The Website</b></p> <p>Create a comment section to establish the possibility of dialogue with current news and to engage the interested public.</p>	<p><b>The Newsletter</b></p> <p>Condense the information and make it as easily digestible as possible to increase interest and participation.</p>	<p><b>Create a Facebook Page</b></p> <p>A Facebook Page could increase the council's visibility and to interact with the members and the interested public</p>	<p><b>Collaboration through a LinkedIn group</b></p> <p>Create a group on LinkedIn to connect the members easily and cost-efficiently. A LinkedIn group also allows to share ideas simply and quickly in-between meetings.</p>

### 5.1 The Website

The Website is presently one useful tool to inform about recent events and news. Currently, there is no possibility to comment on the posts. By adding a comment section, there is the possibility of dialogue and stronger engagement with the news from the council.

### 5.2 The Newsletter

One main difficulty that was mentioned throughout the interviews and in discussion with the climate council was time. In a world where one receives countless E-Mails per day, it might be the case that the newsletter does not reach an extensive audience. Generally, there is a need for some information to be spread to all members in a one-way-matter. However, it might be helpful to condense the newsletter a little bit and make the news easily consumable. This means that the most important information could be displayed

shortly in just one page, followed by more extensive elaborations in the following pages. This way, the information is easier to process and if one is interested in a certain topic, they can read more about it in the following pages. Since one does receive an extensive number of newsletters throughout one day, it is important that the newsletter stands out and evokes interest.

### **5.3 Create a Facebook Page**

Internal and external communication are closely linked. Expanding the external communication efficiently could lead to closer collaboration, dialogue, and a stronger shared identity.

Creating a Facebook Page could be a huge addition to the climate council's visibility and beneficial because of multiple reasons. First, there is the possibility to share posts of participating companies and interact with them and vice versa. Second, there is, again, the chance for dialogue and possible engagement of the interested public. And third, it could be an opportunity to share news in a faster and more efficient way than solely the newsletter. Even though the newsletter helps spread information directly to the members, through a Facebook page it would be possible to share news even faster and more frequently. The news would furthermore be easier to digest and not run the risk of disappearing in the countless E-Mails one gets throughout a day. This might also be a good place to share the results of the Sustainable Communication students with the council besides the meeting.

To ensure that the Facebook Page is visible, a Facebook Plug-In on the Website could be helpful. The Plug-In directly links to the page. Furthermore, it could be beneficial to announce the creation of the page in the newsletter or share it on the Länsstyrelsen i Jönköpings län Facebook Page. Therefore, the companies and organizations (and the interested public) would know where to find the council's new Facebook presence.

### **5.4 Collaboration through a LinkedIn group**

Whereas the Facebook Page is rather about linking external and internal communication, a LinkedIn group could specifically nurture the collaboration between the council's members and working/focus groups. Through a closed group, for instance, more private subjects could be discussed digitally in-between meetings. A LinkedIn group could be an incredibly

valuable addition to the communication processes in the council because of various reasons.

First, LinkedIn is widely used by the council's members. Thus, it is not necessary to get used to a new platform, create a new account, and adapt to new software. This significantly lowers the barrier of participating and engaging in the group. Once again, using what is already there could provoke a huge change in general communication behavior.

Second, this would be a very cost-effective way of connecting. Internal communication programs are often expensive and designed to support regular companies whereas a LinkedIn group requires low maintenance and is easily created.

Third, it makes communicating incredibly simple. If one member has an interest in collaborating with another member, they can easily exchange ideas through sharing it with other members in the group or via private messaging. However, there is no need to ask a third person (currently mostly Andreas) for contact data. Furthermore, through the profile function, the members can easily see who is participating, posting, or commenting. They are also able to see easily which kind of professional experience another member might have and how that could help in collaborating further. There is the opportunity to invite or link other users to the group as well, which could be helpful in certain projects. For instance, the projects of the respective sub-groups could be shared, and the members would have the chance to stay up to date.

Finally, interesting news and links can be shared easily in this way as well, once again avoiding the danger of invisibility because of the giant amount of E-Mails. Here, the results of the Sustainable Communication internships could be shared as well, and the profile of the respective students could be linked. As a result, the members would have the opportunity to get in touch with the students easily in a professional way.

For a rather heterogeneous group, like the climate council, this could be ideal because it is **inexpensive**, requires **low effort** from the members, and still allows them to **communicate, share, and comment quickly**. Besides, it could be considered to create a LinkedIn page dedicated to the council as well.

## **6. Implications and ideas for the future**

Due to the limited time frame of the project, it was necessary to focus on certain aspects of internal communication. However, throughout the interviews, other ideas were mentioned as well, which could be useful to improve internal and external communication even further in the future.

### **6.1 Inclusiveness and Internationalization**

It was mentioned that the content of the newsletter might not only be interesting for the participants, but also the interested public. In the future, it could be helpful to include the inhabitants of Jönköping county more. Additionally, from the perspective of an international student, it could be beneficial to provide information about the climate council in English. This could also be an advantage regarding the collaboration with students at Jönköping University. For instance, a Google Translate Plug-In on the website could make the information easier accessible for everyone.

### **6.2 Communication in times of crisis**

The council's four meetings per year are certainly important for its work and progress. In recent times, where physical contact should be limited, I have researched tools for online meetings as well. Therefore, the council could be prepared for events like the corona crisis and continue as usual. The most common and easy way to schedule online meetings is with Skype for business or Microsoft teams. Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that these tools are the most common ones used by the companies. Thus, it is the easiest to connect through these widely used channels.

### **6.3 Other platforms**

In the long run, it might as well be considered to create an Instagram and Twitter account as well as an official LinkedIn Page. Naturally, this is dependent on the given resources.

### **6.4 Evaluating the progress**

Effective internal communication can only be reached by regularly assessing the existing channels and check, whether the strategies are working accordingly. If necessary, they must be changed and adapted to the member's needs. If any of the strategies suggested are

going to be implemented, it is extremely important to review its success after a certain amount of time.

## 7. Useful Literature and further sources on internal communication

For further general interest in the topic of internal communication, I can recommend the following sources:

Cowan, D. (2014). *Strategic internal communication: how to build employee engagement and performance*. London: KoganPage.

Gillis, T. (2011). *The IABC handbook of organizational communication a guide to internal communication, public relations, marketing, and leadership* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Karanges, E., Johnston, K., Beatson, A., & Lings, I. (2015). The influence of internal communication on employee engagement: A pilot study. *Public Relations Review*, 41(1), 129–131. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.12.003>.

Omilion-Hodges, L., & Baker, C. (2014). Everyday talk and convincing conversations: Utilizing strategic internal communication. *Business Horizons*, 57(3), 435–445. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2014.02.002>

Smith, L. (2005). *Effective internal communication*. London: Kogan Page.

Welch, M. (2012). Appropriateness and acceptability: Employee perspectives of internal communication. *Public Relations Review*, 38(2), 246–254. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2011.12.017>.

## 8. Contact



If you are interested in additional information about the project or in collaborating, feel free to contact me. As a Master's Student of Sustainable Communication at Jönköping University, I firmly believe that we need to work on creative solutions on how to fight climate change and social injustice through effective communication and strong collaboration.

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