1.
Title Page

2.
Coming up in this module, we'll be asking what it takes to produce compelling communications, looking at the role of comms, as an individual, but also as a team, offering some checklists to help you plan and audit your messaging, and also showing some examples of comms in action, and seeing what we can learn from that.

There are worksheets in your materials tab to download, and as this module builds on the previous ones, in particular measuring impact, brand and identity, and network influence, you may also want those to hand.

3.
Let's begin with another reflective question: what does research show to be the most effective in making a compelling case for diversity and inclusion? We've offered four examples, so pause now and consider your answer. Let's go through these now.

Hopefully your demonstrable results from events and about the ongoing impact, and not just the attendance, because while this may be a great way to make your network more visible, it doesn't always translate to making the case for diversity and inclusion. This may be partly because of the stigma that surrounds D&I events as an excuse for a party. It can be an easy way to show you've done something, and prove people have attended and engaged, but it's important that if you have events they are seen to be strategic, with measurable outcomes that aren't just attendance.

Role model programmes are great in ramping up the personal aspect of what you're doing, and are particularly effective at lending support in office locations where cultural attitude doesn't necessarily match policy. You may remember we looked at that in the previous module on network influence for locations in the "yellow' or ambiguous environment.

Survey data is great if you can get it, but will usually involve a lot of investment and issues around privacy that the typical employee network doesn't always have access to. And if you leave it as data when you present it, it can offer an interpretative barrier than some people are unable or unwilling to get over. So you may need to be more abstract and use data from other sources, like the Mckinsey studies we've shown you, and there's another one coming up shortly.

To get the most from your background work, you'll want to combine the storytelling and data. This has been seen in previous polls, and also studies to be the most effective method of communicating the case for diversity and inclusion. It appeals to a broader audience and articulates the reality of what can be seen as theoretical data. Let's now look at how an inclusive narrative is built up using an example study.

4.
These results are from the 2016 Women in the Workplace study, which is ongoing and you

can see more of that in your further reading. We've chosen some charts that communicate a clear narrative, which brings in an increasingly broader audience than the single issue of women in workplace.

We begin with a very clear picture and familiar story of women being promoted less often to manager than men. In this study it's 100 women for every 130 men. Now you may have heard words like pipeline and parental leave around this issue, but I recommend a full reading of the report to see why that is not the case.

5.
The picture gets broader when we bring ethnicity into it – which isn't obviously going to be the issue they explore judging from the title of the research, but that's where the data takes us. The promotion at increasing levels between entry and C-suite becomes an even bleaker picture for women when they're also of colour, and that goes for men too. In fact, we can usefully turn this into a report on gender and ethnicity in the workplace more broadly to tell a more inclusive and compelling story for everyone – because where there is inequality against one group, it usually has repercussions beyond the known – and more importantly solutions that would benefit everyone. Let's look at another chart…

6.
This looks at attitudes to leadership that come out of how it is perceived, or branded and communicated. It shows that creating a more inclusive workplace is important for women and men. While there is a higher percentage of women who say they don't want the pressure of being a top executive, there is a factor on there which shows a majority male response. Twenty-one percent of men don't want to be a top executive because it's not consistent with who they are as a person, while almost a third of men who aspire to reach the top don't think they'll make it because they lack "the typical style of a top executive." Only about half of men say their companies embrace diverse leadership styles. We've now expanded our research to point to a challenge in leadership style and representation, rather than it just being an issue about "women".

7.
Some interesting stats that come up in this report include:

• 78% of companies' commitment to gender diversity is a top priority for their CEO.

• But this commitment does not always translate into visible action.

• Less than 50% of employees think their company is doing what it takes to improve gender diversity.

• More than 67% of employees say senior leaders do not regularly communicate the importance of gender diversity and are not held accountable for making progress.

The report concludes that "Companies need to more fully communicate why gender

diversity matters and how it benefits everyone. Using a combination of storytelling and data, companies should speak to the positive impact greater gender diversity has on individuals, on the company and its customers, and on society more broadly."

Of course action is needed, but it starts with setting the scene, and painting a positive future, so that you face less conflict as you begin to act.

8.
Let's start thinking about the communications role on a personal level. Take time to think about these questions on a personal level.

Think practically about all the skills needed to be a communicator, it leads us to conclude it's probably not the job of just one person, it takes a team. In your worksheets you have a template for conducting a communications skills audit and plan for your team. We encourage you to go through it with them, it might throw up some interesting information you didn't know about their past experience.

While you do that, here are some things to bear in mind for good communicators:

1) Remember in Network Influence we looked at the Golden Circle and highlighted how leading with a "WHY" message has greater impact. This becomes very obvious when you have a speaker who doesn't know the why. We've seen many sponsors for example thrown under the bus because they offered to introduce an event and weren't properly briefed on the purpose of it. Be a supportive comms team and make sure everyone involved understands the why as well as the what.

2) Knowing "who" is important too. You may have the same core message (or voice) about your network, but want to vary the tone depending on who you're talking to. For example, I don't use the same language or tone on webinars as I do when I'm talking to school groups.

3) There are many channels you can use to communicate: email, posters, workshops, social media videos, surveys, and so on. Not only should a good communicator know where they are putting their message out, but monitor how it's performing, try variations, and test it again to get incrementally better results. If that sounds a bit much then go and have a chat with someone from your marketing or data or UX design team – and they'll probably be interested in what you're doing.

4) Someone who can write great comms, isn't necessarily the person you want standing in front of a conference. And the most senior person in your team might not be the right person to lead a youth event. Someone who is a good storyteller might struggle to find the data they need to support their narrative. So be practical about using everyone's skills to the fullest and also look for opportunities for those skills to be shared and developed. As part of this self-reflection a reminder to scrutinise your own biases when you communicate. Are you relying too much on personal experience and assumptions, could your message be more inclusive? To do this refer back to the ladder of inference from your measuring impact module, or you might also want to speak with recruitment about any bias-elimination writing tools they're using as they craft job descriptions.

5) To enhance buy-in from the whole organisation, you should make sure to align and

make references to the overall brand. In addition to reminding yourself of the values and strategy, look at some recent key communications, and see how you can build on their visual design and tone of voice.

6) A person engaging in regular communications, particularly on behalf of a group, should do the work to stay up to date on the issues faced, and the language used in that community. In the D&I space in particular, there can be references and trends which come and go, so you may want to be mindful of checking you're still using the right terms to be productive, engaging, and truthful.

9.
This is a little structure of building blocks that might be helpful to you when considering what sort of content to include in your comms.

At the very top you are ultimately looking to change behavior. That is what we talk about when we say transformational change, when we talk about culture change, when we talk about the impact that networks can have within organisations and what they're driving towards. We are ultimately looking to change behavior and measure that: like how people behave towards one another, how inclusive they are, how connected they are, how open they are, what people feel in terms of their working relationships and their ideas being welcomed.

Celebrating milestones like achieving strategic goals or anniversaries, or new appointments, is a good reason to hang a comms piece on, and it also demonstrates the value you're adding, which in turn adds credibility. As we know, proving D&I value is an ongoing effort, so you should think about sharing news like milestones and measured impact as adding to that effort.

You may have gathered some great data and metrics you want to share, as we've explored it's better to weave a story around that, and even better if that story is personal. In particular, leaders showing how they've changed their behaviour due to the efforts of a network is a great example, if potentially difficult to open up about. And as an extension of that – if you're proposing an action from this story, and data that changes behaviour, then demonstrate it in your own dealings and show that you too can walk the talk.

Ultimately what you are looking for in terms of having great comms and using these building blocks, is continuously engaging people, and building more and more awareness as you go on.

Another thing you'll want to consider besides the stories you're adding to your network narrative is whether the comms you offer are push or pull. For example pushing out emails, information on display screens in reception, and posters in public areas. Or pulling people in to answer queries on your network using your intranet, or being part of a new employee welcome pack.

Different people will find each method valuable at different times. You may find for example that a new employee only finds out about the group from an event (push comms), then goes to find out more about it on the intranet (pull comms). Or a sponsor doesn't attend your network meetings, but wants to read the monthly newsletter. Consider and if you can, find out, who engages with each type of communication so that you can tailor your information and your tone for the relevant audience.

This week your worksheets contain some checklists to help you plan and audit your communications. It's best to work through them with a real example of your upcoming communications.

10.

As we just mentioned, the company intranet is the core of your "pull" communications. It needs to anticipate all the queries that people might have about you, and act as a source of truth for your strategy and activities.

Here's an example of IBM's UK Eagle network. You'll notice first of all that it's full of invitations. Whether that's to watch showcase videos and profiles from the sponsor, to meet the team, find out more, or join in. They've focused on providing resources as their core content. They've got everything tagged and searchable, and bit more digital interactivity then you'd maybe normally expect – but then it's IBM and you'd guess they have the resources and specialism in an online solution. So the form in which you choose to concentrate your efforts can also match your brand – for example a marketing agency might focus on campaigns, a tech company on digital solutions, an arts organisation on inclusive exhibits and performances – it seems common sense, but it's worth highlighting.

I also like that they clearly signpost for different audiences – not just content. If you're an ally – you know where to go. They've obviously tracked a need for a BLT Women's Community based on feedback and attendance. There are helpful subject guides and a pathway for raising concerns. So you can see it's organised by audiences and actions – not just one continuous stream of comms going to everyone.

11.

This is a formal letter that went out to NHS staff concerning their updates on the COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionate effect on BAME colleagues. They note the need to make sure that they are more involved with key decision making, and tell people about a recent cross-NHS BAME network lead webinar focussed on giving the networks more power.

They said: "These networks, along with others, are critical to our organisational and system-wide response to the virus. We encourage you to engage and fully utilise the vast wisdom that they hold – and to develop such forums where they do not exist."

It follows an ideal communications structure of setting the scene with what we know from the past, what is affecting us in the present, and how we envision a more positive future.

We're including this example because along with the communications you put out about your activities, it's important to try and get inclusion within top level communications. It legitimises what you do to a wider audience, and shows that you're fundamentally aligned to organisation strategy. In addition to the letter, it comes with an annex of actions, which is so easy for readers to digest if they're short on time, or need to refer back to it later. You can see how their networks play a key part in those actions. The full letter is available in your further reading.

12.
A word of warning about any public facing platform – in particular something like social media. Use it wisely, it can be a dangerous game and open you up to the trolls of the world. It can also be a broad marketing tool – but you'd definitely need to get the advice and permission of your organisation's comms team. A general approach would be to spend more than twice the time on external comms as internal because the repercussions can be out of your hands.

We are going to offer some positive tips for social media impact, but also, if you want to know more about how damaging it can be to people's lives and careers, then we recommend the book "So you've been publicly shamed" by Jon Ronson.

Now, here are 5 useful pillars for thinking about how to broaden the reach of your social media, but you could take this into any content strategy really.

Co-branding: By doing this companies aim to double to their audience, and gain valuable brand association. As a network this could take the form of working with another network within your organisation, or a similar network from another organisation. There are many umbrella inclusion networks by industry out there, and you might consider linking up with them. One of the most useful things you can get out of this - besides recruitment and good PR - is it gives you somewhere to practice executing both a global and local strategy, as you have to think about the needs of multiple audiences, locations and companies.

The wow-effect: This is doing something so impressive that other people are compelled to share it. For you it might take the form of a fun video, or award, or groundbreaking piece of research, or personal story - something that isn't easily ignored.

Cognitive tasks: As we saw with "what works and what doesn't" in the Network Influence module, getting people actively involved rather than teaching them, makes for better advocates. Cognitive tasks also engage people - like a snapshot survey, competition, or laying out a challenge.

Timing: You'll be familiar with using the collective effort of a celebration or memorial day to raise awareness. This can be a saturated market these days, you may just get drowned out by similar voices. So always question the relevance of doing it, and the effort vs reward ratio, particularly if parades are involved. TIming is also about staying current, and looking out for a worthwhile zeitgeist. The obvious conclusion to this is if you join in with a trending hashtag, you're likely to be seen, just make sure it's for a good reason and you're not jumping on a bandwagon without fact-checking first.

Campaign: This is about sustained messaging over a longer period. How do you put forward an idea in several different ways to try and infiltrate the consciousness by repetition. This is the communications reality of having an end goal, but with many strategic milestones that you can achieve in different ways.

13.
This module's recommended bonus content interview is with Alan Holmes from Lockheed Martin Corporation. He talks about their pressing need to enable conversations on a local and global level in a time of rapid change and challenge.

As a global defence organisation they have tight rules on what technology can be used by their employee networks so the first step was to look at what technology was available to them, and would be flexible enough to work over multiple time zones, so they went with communication hub Slack.

By putting less emphasis on face to face video calls that happened at one allotted time, they were able to have more dynamic conversations across locations, and because it has functionality that lets you create and join subgroups, by employees interested in particular issues for example, they saw the emergence of focussed conversations like supporting those impacted by the US rollback of trans healthcare. As asynchronous communication is not time-bound the conversation flows 24 hours, as employees in different countries engage during their daylight hours.

User driven content has meant it doesn't need the same level of approval by the organisation and so is quicker meaning conversations are being had in real-time making it very current and relevant.

Because they have a strong channel of communication now with multiple strands, they have deliberately gone out and asked employees how they are feeling. They have encouraged them to share their challenges so they don't feel so alone, and their networks have played a large part in this.

There's one more thing I want to point out from this video, and that's the poster in Alan's background. It's Stonewall's well known slogan "Some people are gay. Get over it." I've mentioned that poster campaigns have higher potential impact than we might think in the Measuring Impact module, whether it's because people are spending time at a coffee point, or avoiding eye-contact in the lift. Well here it is in practice again. Every video call Alan has with internal teams or external clients, that message is clearly visible. I would call it the modern equivalent of adding inclusive badges and messages to your email signature. And it's something most people in your network can do.

14.
We wanted to finish by also acknowledging that while strategic communication for proven impact is super-important, so is just providing a supportive community. Many networks will have members who joined so they didn't feel so alone within the workplace, socially, or as a minority. While we may sometimes criticise events for high-cost low-impact, that's not to take away from the important work networks do in bringing people together so they can be at ease in their everyday conversations. Communications is a conversation, and networks are a community. So if you pick one task from this module, let it be to make sure that your networks have a persistent place they can go to, like a chat platform, where they can converse with their community.

Some organisations say it's too complicated to do this, and is advanced - it isn't. There may be hurdles from an IT perspective and security, but chatting online is now a fundamental part of how the majority of the workforce communicates, so calling it advanced is a stretch. We can adopt more modern practices - the great 2020 lockdown has shown us that. Resistance to more agile working is usually because a sense of urgency hasn't been properly understood. It may be safer from one perspective to resist opening up communications, but what about the psychological safety of having a community at work? Have they recognised your perspective?

We've explored reaching out across and beyond your existing network, but we're going to turn the lens in on your own team development, allyship, and intersectionality in the next module with widening your network.