1
Title slide


2
Coming up, we'll be exploring why external communications can be so challenging, building trust and permissions, and the importance of aligning your brand. We'll offer tips on getting your network message out there with social media, events and awareness days, and what you should consider before you offer to speak on panels or on behalf of your organisation's PR.


3
To some people the term rhetoric might have negative connotations, being associated with political speech and a tenuous link to the truth. But rhetoric is one of the ancient arts of discourse and relates to persuasion - the ethics of which are up to you. It's a useful tool to optimise your communications, so we'll offer a simple tool which you can use as a lens as we go through this module.

Ethos is the way a speaker, or writer, affects the argument that is being made. This refers to your credibility and motivations. Why should people listen to you? What do you know? What outcome are you pushing for? Some people may already have made a decision about this before you start speaking, but you can help your case by clarifying this from the outset.

On the other side is the listener. Your ability to understand the audience and appeal to their emotions is Pathos. This may involve removing jargon, or bolstering your talk with evidence. You may want to inspire sympathy, or outrage.

The third part of the triangle is Logos, or the context of your message. Your audience will need to understand your argument, and be able to critique it on their own terms. They may question why now is the right time to engage with your message, and what spurred you to deliver it.

This is a short example of the structure in action from a network leader who spoke at a company town hall.

"Hello everyone, for those who don't me I've worked here for five years in market research, and I've been in the role of employee network chair for one year. While my colleagues in other networks are currently doing great work in inclusive recruitment and awareness campaigns, I wanted to bring my day job experience into my network role. That's why for the next three months we're looking at how to diversify our customer samples for market research.

Through conversations I've already had with some of you I know that there are concerns that it would be more difficult to recruit for research, and slow the process down, so I want to assure you that we'll be trialling it in small samples first to compare the results and get an objective viewpoint for ourselves, but also that I've seen this applied in other organisations and it gave a boost to the innovative ideas they were able to generate. If you'd like to see more about how our market research will reach the whole product lifecycle including your department we have an open project management tool for you to see and submit your questions at any time."

Hopefully you've observed that there, in under a minute, we have Ethos, Pathos, and Logos.

You can use the rhetorical triangle to check your communications are as persuasive as possible, by considering each of the three aspects. We've expanded this as a checklist in your worksheet so you can test and develop your own communications.


4
External communication is so challenging because it is hard to control after the initial statement. Within an organisation you can take time to understand context and have deeper, clarifying conversations. But in the world of retweets, opinion pieces, and corporate hostility this can quickly be taken out of your hands. This is why employee networks often find themselves barred from or too nervous to engage with a lot of external comms opportunities.

Formal external communication is usually carefully curated to put forward an important image or message about the organisation. This can range from press releases to your website content. But external comms should also be concerned with the messages that can't be regulated as directly or easily. Informal external comms can refer to any time that an employee talks about the organisation in the outside world.

A version of networked communication in this manner would be the whisper networks that came to light with the rise of the MeToo movement. Women were secretly sharing lists of men to avoid in their industry. More recently they were published in the open which opened them up to both praise by people who had faced common abuse, the observation that many vulnerable women had not previously had access to these lists, and the criticism that claims were without evidence. What we definitely know from this example is that external communications are happening, and that marginalised communities will often look to their own networks for advice and support.

Staff are continuously absorbing information through internal comms, and workplace behaviour, so if organisations want positive informal comms then they have to make sure that the internal and external worlds are aligned.


5
The first tip for alignment is to check that internal and external comms teams are working together. As networks, you won't be responsible for this in its entirety, of course, but you can make sure that your interactions with them take this into account. For example, have there been any instances where employees have learned something about the organisation from external comms rather than through internal comms as a priority stakeholder? It can foster resentment if the workforce is not treated as well as your customers or users.

If you want to avoid situations where informal external comms damages the organisation's reputation, then you must make sure that appropriate internal channels are functioning first. Networks can help by providing the first channel for issues to emerge in a safe space, before they are addressed in a more formal, systemic manner. Difficult conversations will happen,

so it's best to address them head on, in a productive and inclusive way.

Organisations rarely report that their employees understand the brand strategy in high numbers. And yet they want their products, services, and customer experience to reflect their core values. Networks can help by adopting specific talking points, designed by external comms teams, and testing them among their membership. A mature network will be concerned not only with its own membership, but how it can influence the broader organisation. By researching employee's depth of understanding, and willingness to share the brand strategy, they can offer valuable feedback. When employees feel comfortable talking openly about brand, it means the external comms team can use this, and networked communication to speak to customers in a way that feels more authentic than a press release.

And when it comes to seeking permission for networks to engage in external communications, it may be best to take the approach that you're seeking the opportunity to help these teams, rather than use their resources in a way that might trouble them. For example, asking what campaigns are coming up and how your network might be able to lend its voice. By building trust in this way you will eventually feel freer to lead conversations in the open without fear of overstepping.


6
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 have gained the trust of your organisation's comms team first. 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.

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've seen through studies into cognitive behaviour, getting people

actively involved rather than teaching them, makes for better advocates. They are more likely to change their beliefs through having to act in a different way, than change their actions by being challenged on their beliefs. Cognitive tasks can engage people - like a snapshot survey, competition, or laying out a challenge.

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.

Timing: TIming is 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. You'll probably be familiar with using the collective effort of a celebration or memorial day to raise awareness, as this is a very common approach to external comms, we're going to look at that in more detail.


7
Awareness days, weeks, or months can be a saturated market, 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.

At Radius we've seen greater success when all networks collaborate on a calendar event, instead of sticking to their own corner. For example, how do your ethnicity, ability, belief and LGBT+ networks contribute to International Women's day? Not only will this broaden your reach and diversify the audience and contributions, it pools your resources in a more manageable way than a single network committee having to fill the day with content by themselves. You can view them as the curators of the event, but not the sole voice.

There are many different types of awareness days you might consider, we've linked to a useful resource in your materials so you can explore for yourself. So it may be worth considering whether some of the less obvious ones provide you with an opportunity. For example, January 20th's "Blue Monday" has become an annual hot topic for the press. But to get their proper attention, you'll need to have a good story, and to make it worth your while, it should be aligned with your broader strategy.

If you want to do further research on what kind of stories get traction, then make sure to follow your favourite journalists and targeted news sources to see what they engage with. You can also use Google Trends to see what people are searching for. Networks may not necessarily think to go this far when planning their communications, but it's a good way to check you understand current issues in broader society, and helps you to make the case to your organisation about conversations you should be engaging with.

8
Networks sometimes forget that events, whether face to face, online, internal or external, are in fact part of your communications. Ideally, every event should have a key message and finish with a call to action. So don't forget to run all these tips and your existing comms strategy through the lens of your events too. We've got a couple of examples of how networks have approached events with a specific focus on how they work as external

communications.

An organisation in the travel industry would normally spend a lot of their marketing budget on flying clients into an exciting location for their annual conference. But in the year of lockdown they decided that rather than cancel, they would take it online. This allowed a potentially more diverse crowd to attend than usual, and it was decided to ask the ability network to help them and challenge them on how they could make this more inclusive. What began as a consultative exercise evolved into something more, as the network leaders proved their maturity in this space, and understanding of the organisation's needs. Instead of hiding their contribution in the background they chose to moderate a large number of the key talks and panel discussions. This showed their commitment to inclusion front and centre of their major marketing event. It opened up a new line of enquiry for their clients and kick-started a reframing of how they talk about global travel opportunities. The key communication message was "we've all experienced more restrictions in what we can do with our free time, and limited spare funds - we now want to consider this more carefully in future, even in a "back to business" situation. Their call to action was to intentionally seek more inclusive opportunities to open further business partnerships.

In the second example a gender network in a telecommunications company partnered with an arts festival to explore the lesser known acronym of STEAM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths. The network felt that coding camps for young women was overplayed, and for a change of pace invested in an unconference, where communities from tech and arts set their own workshop agendas. They aimed to explore how they could reframe the idea that getting more women into the industry was about increasing the engineering degree pipeline, and how by including arts and humanities professionals in the interview and apprenticeship process they could gain a more diverse workforce not only in gender, but thought too. Their key message was, as an organisation we want to cast a wider net for our recruitment and benefit from more diverse experiences. The call to action for the tech community was to challenge recruitment ads which called for specific qualifications, and for the arts educators to let their students know the full breadth of opportunities that could be open to them by exploring their options.

As ever, you can hear more examples of how network leaders have approached external comms in your materials tab.

9

Experienced network leads are often asked to join panel discussions or deliver keynote speeches at corporate events. While it can be appealing to accept every offer so that you can develop your personal network and brand, it pays to pause and consider whether you're being strategic about your choices.

First of all, consider whether you have something to say.

This may seem obvious, but it can be tempting to accept invitations to speak before you've even had a chance to consider what you'd be saying. While we don't want to diminish anyone's confidence in building up your experience, you should think carefully about

whether it's a platform you could offer to a peer who has more knowledge or personal experience. The issue may be something you're aware of, but don't yet fully understand. By all means respond to requests that you're interested, and want to take some time to research the topic, but be realistic about what you can offer.

You should then decide whether the company or event reflects your values.

Do your homework, and check that you won't be embarrassed into supporting an event or company with a poor track record on things you value. Companies aren't usually happy to be challenged in front of an audience, and it could be detrimental to your longer term network plans, or your own sense of authenticity  Likewise, it's best to support efforts that already align with the great work you're doing.

Another common consideration is to ask whether the panel is diverse and inclusive.

Some organisations already have a policy which states that all external panel contributions should have taken diversity into account. This is a healthy practice because you'll be taken much more seriously if you demonstrate the same inclusive practices you speak about. Are there a range of experiences as well as demographics in the room? Have they made accommodation for people of all backgrounds and abilities to attend or participate? You may want to create a checklist of questions to ask organisers.

There are more tips in your further reading.

10
Networks are instrumental in preventing bad situations before they arise, but occasionally situations will arise that may require a PR response, and networks may find themselves consulting on appropriate statements and actions.

If you're asked to do this the first question should be - is this of mutual benefit? Are we supporting each other in this situation to make things better, or am I being asked to lend credence to a statement I don't believe in. Nobody wants to be a CSR puppet.

But it's often the case that a crisis can be used as an opportunity to turn things around and get momentum behind some changes you'd like to make. So how do we handle a PR crisis?

First of all, understand the problem. Inaction is rarely an option, so you must be sure whether your organisation is 100% in the right, in which case you need proof so you can publicly refute the problem. If that is not the case, then it's best to apologise and deal with the fallout.

Following an official apology you can engage in listening and conversation, which is most often achieved through social media in the public sphere, but can be tested among your network members too. Remember your tips on rhetoric when you're trying to move the conversation into a more positive direction: what gives the speaker expertise to respond to this, is it best handled by PR or a member of the affected community, for example, someone

from your network committee? Who are you talking to? In social media terms this means determining genuinely concerned customers from trolls, and knowing when your energy is well spent, and when it's not. And what are the facts of the situation that can keep the conversation grounded in a productive reality?

And thirdly, what are the actions? To show you're really listening it's good to publicly announce what changes have arisen in your organisation or strategy as a result of this crisis.That doesn't mean you have to appear as though you started from nothing and are building from scratch, in order to minimise the appearance of ignorance, you can also tout what related actions you took in the past that have had a positive effect, which you intend to continue or reinvest in. Putting your actions out in the open also makes you more accountable to a broader range of stakeholders, including your customers.

Next time we'll be stepping out of your cosy local committee even further by exploring expansion from local to regional and even global networks.

## INTERVIEWS VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

| Names | Commentary |
| --- | --- |
| CH | So thinking around your kind of communications, both internal and external, can you tell me about your most effective piece, or pieces, of internal comms so, for example, what was it?  How did you pull it together and what impact did it have? |
| AC | The most successful one is unsurprisingly enough going to be around about Pride this year which is unusual because there were very few Prides.  So we've always ran … for the past three years … we've always ran a locational and time agnostic network so all our events and all our items have to be accessible for everyone, regardless of location and regardless of how many hours they work so, if somebody's [00:45] so you have to be able to access the content after or before or we have to record it in some way and it has to be able to be on video … or recorded in some way so we were quite lucky that we had already had all that in place so, when Covid kicked in and we were all sent to work from home in March, … we could … we basically just pivoted round. Unsurprisingly enough, we had amazing Pride plans.  They all got canned because Newcastle and Glasgow went … so we quickly changed that to Tell us why you're proud Pride in 2020.  We ran an internal competition which was on our … intranet site.  We could comms out for our customers on our social media and all our social media channels as an organisation.  We even had our own way … so we changed over the local to the Virgin Money Progressive Pride logo and we even mentioned Vibrant in it which was quite nice.  For that, we asked people to record a very short video clip to allow us to have a Pride parade … |
| CH | OK |
| AC | … telling us why they're proud for Pride in 2020 … |
| CH | OK |

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| AC | … we then knitted together so many video clips that we ended up having three different parades … |
| CH | Wow (laughs) |
| AC | … which represented the three different parades that we would have done.  One of them went out customer facing … which was fantastic … and it was basically explaining why somebody who either works with Virgin Money or banks with Virgin Money or potentially wants to bank with Virgin Money, why they're proud for Pride in 2020 and what it means to them.  It wasn't about why they're proud that Virgin Money was supporting it or why Virgin Money was doing this.   It was why them, they, as an individual thought it was important so we got some really dynamic and different videos.  When we published them on the intranet for when we would have had … Pride in August … we didn't do it in June, we did it in August because it aligned with when we would have been at the Prides – I love how Pride month's June but most UK Prides are August (laughs) … so we published them and the amount of comments because it allowed people who hadn't engaged with Vibrant before actually as individual stories.  It was nothing about Virgin Money. It linked to our … our purpose as an organisation and it aligned to the purpose of Vibrant but it was that whole individual stories and really, really short succinct very, very quick, like approach and also because everybody dressed it in so many different ways.  It was like Pride.  The different clothes, because it was all different outfits.  Some people had rainbow flags; some people had glitter guns. |

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| FJ | Why did you choose to do that as a group of network leaders? |
| KS | Because we kind of realised, I guess … it's … it's such a … I don't want to use the term privileged position but, to a certain extent, we are.  We work for a large global organisation in where we've got certain facilities … that, you know … local communities or … or local support groups [03:58] so we can sort of well wouldn't it be great if we could support local communities with what we have without actually providing funds or, you know, some … it's always difficult to get budget to do something but, if there's things already at your disposal that doesn't cost you anything and doesn't make a massive difference for somebody … for a local group, then why wouldn't we do that?  So those were … those were the … kind of like the … the, I guess, the thinking … that was the thinking behind that. |
| FJ | Yeah, having an impact beyond the borders of your organisation.  And what sort of … what sort of groups and charities have you been supporting? |
| KS | That's a good question and I probably should have looked at.  I know that the area that they looked at this … specifically and I know that some of it has happened … was in the Manchester area.  Don't ask me the charity because I won't know that.  If anybody's interested, I can get the information and send it into you and Hannah.  And also … up north … we had a very, very amazing … kind of like charter lead at one of our offices and he was so proactive in all this stuff and he got … he … he ended up providing not our facilities but ended up providing … getting |

together with a … a local community centre and providing education to, I think it was a parents … parents of … LGBTQ children.  So kind of like education and utilising our … and our local centre's … facilities.

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SN          Pride marches around the world will not take place the way … they normally do.  The cities can't host them … and … so … we're going virtual.  So we're still going to find a way to engage … in June on this … we've just launched it internally and we're going to our clients as well.  So I think that … that'll be interesting to see how you can still build a global community with technology, with shared values and a desire to … to show support and … allyship (is that a word?) …

FJ          Yes

SN          … for … for people and … and their rights and their inclusion so we'll see what it looks like.  We're excited about it … but I think I can imagine us seeing more and more of that, picking up on how social media can go, you know, viral quite quickly.  We have to use the technology that's there and the … the energy that's there.

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FJ          And from that perspective in terms of … it sounds like you … you've got it going and you were working on it internally at the organisations and yet there's so many companies now involved, what benefits have you seen from it being not just in the organisations that you started it in?  What benefits do you see it being wider and you getting involved with a wider network?

MM          Yeah, so, taking this as being external was in partnership with the Lord Mayor's Office.  It was through their power diversity breakfast and present … having a couple of colleagues present the This is Me campaign at the power diversity breakfast, it ignited the interest from other companies. So we've been looking for a mechanism.  The benefit that I see in this is now you have many organisations, right, openly talking about mental health and wellbeing which not only removes the stigma in the workplace, it helps remove the stigma more broadly in society, right?  So I've had colleagues say to me You know, I've kept my diagnosis even from my family or my partner for years and just knowing that there's support … or through the campaign, knowing where to go to find support in the community, which is something I didn't even want to put myself forward to, has helped me more … it has helped me more broadly in my life.  Hearing this from colleagues in other organisations, right, there's an organisational benefit but more broadly today we're creating a societal benefit and removing the stigma around mental health.  The This is Me campaign is now part of a broader UK wide awareness of what needs to be done which I'm very proud of my colleagues for starting.

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FJ          One of the things you talked about was actually you're quite confident with public speaking and … and you've done quite a lot of that.  It would be really interesting to have some of your insights then if … I don't know

|       | if you speak outside your … your organisation but what do you think … what advice would you give is the most consideration for you when you're speaking outside your organisation? |
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| PA    | So, yeah, I've spoken at London Build Expo which is … it's a big event that took place in Olympia in London … and I've spoken at the House of Lords and I've spoken at … the Royal Institute of British Architects so … at their headquarters when they did events.  Obviously it's been a bit limited now (laughs) because of Covid but … I'd say, you know, I'm not saying anything controversial about, you know … I don't think I've said anything controversial about what our company's doing.  In fact, I've shown great pride in what we're doing and, you know, if it's something that I'm passionate about, then I don't need to rehearse it.  I just kind of speak from the heart and I say I … as I'm doing now, you know … I … I'm just speaking about something which I've sort of become an expert in because I'm doing this on … on a nearly day to day basis on top of my day job and, again, it's not seen as a burden.  It's something that I'm willing to do so I think, if anybody is speaking out, just be authentic.  You know what you're doing is a good thing and it's just kind of emphasising that to everyone and … I think also, yeah … yeah, I think … that's kind of what could happen.  My mind's gone blank now (laughing) … |
| FJ    | Be authentic and be yourself. |
| PA    | Yes, yeah, definitely. |

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| CH    | From your perspective, what is the most important consideration for you when speaking outside of the organisation? |
| GTS   | I think it's to … be positive about what we're doing.  I think we're very quick to beat ourselves up if we feel we haven't done enough but I think we are doing a lot of really positive, good work and we are making a difference so I think, for external comms, it's really important that we show off the achievements that we've made, the progress that we're making and just have a really positive vibe to the work that we're doing. |