

Do's and Don'ts of Communicating with Workers

Activity	Do's	Don'ts
Stakeholder analysis	Do it every time. Would you trust a pilot flying an aircraft without instruments?	Ever assume that you know what stakeholders are thinking. You don't.
Small group meetings	Meet with groups of up to 150 and tell them the facts.	Conspicuously avoid workers, or send junior officials who cannot speak with authority
Worker brochures	Tell them what they need to know, and tell them the facts, including the bad news. Hand them out in small group meetings.	Fill it up with propaganda and blandishments (these will diminish the credibility of the message).
Town-hall style mass meetings with unions and other potential critics. Or radio debates.	Go ahead if you have sensible, civilized critics who are respected by the workers, and if you are fully prepared	Do it unless you are reasonably sure that there will be no violence or overt 'grand-standing'.
Videos	Let real workers show your audience – in their own words - - how they overcame change and survived other examples of private participation in infrastructure (PPI)	Lie, or let officials get on-screen to turn it into a political propaganda event. (Your credibility will be irreparably lost).
Work with reporters	Take them on road trips so they can meet real workers who have survived (and thrived) on PPI and similar reforms.	Tell lies, break promises, cancel engagements. It will be counterproductive.
Let politicians and bureaucrats on camera or on stage do so sparingly if they are gifted communicators and inspiring people – but try to check that their message is "on brief"if they are boring, ordinary, and just want the publicity. It is hard to say no, but harmful if they take over or disrupt your event.
Make videos for meetings and broadcast	Worth a million words. And usually more convincing than grand speeches..	Ever resort to propaganda. Let real people talk in their own words.
Mass media Ads (radio, newspapers & television)	But realize that your audience will be enormous.	If you want to keep some issues chiefly between you and the workers.
Use humor in ads	If we all laugh together we feel more cohesive as we face problems	Vilify any group, even if you think they deserve it. It hurts – not helps.
Posters	Put them near the pay window and places workers go frequently. Use them to create awareness or provide critical information ("the last day for applications is")	Create slogans without detailed answers given in other media, lest it look propagandistic and unbelievable.
Be creative. Use media in different ways.	Make cheap videos just to show politicians and civil servants. Consider role-playing exercises at meetings. The object here is to make different sides empathetic to one another.	Ever underestimate your audience or speak down to them. They will realize it, hate it, and then ignore or oppose the message you are trying to convey.

(Source: Adam Smith Institute, personal communication)