

# WATCH OUT FOR THESE COSTLY MISTAKES

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Benefit  
News!



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Whether you're  
using an outsourced  
communications  
group, internal  
communications

staff or someone from your human resources team, your company is spending money on HR communications, so don't make these common, costly mistakes.

## Mistake #1: Failure to plan

Every communication, an eight-page newsletter to a 140-character tweet, has an objective: an outcome you wish to achieve. Before ever putting pen to paper... ahem...finger to Smartphone, write up your plan for your communications. A typical plan includes your objective, target audience, ways to reach your audience, key messages and timing. Once it's written, get buy-in from all stakeholders. Proper planning will help you stay on track and budget.

**Tip** — Only second to improper planning is the failure to stick to the plan. If someone asks for a message to be added, check it against your plan. If it doesn't fit the objective, leave it out. Plan a separate communication for that messaging.

## Mistake #2: Too many cooks in the kitchen

Everyone has an opinion...and rarely the same one. If you've created your communications plan and received buy-in, there's no reason one or two people couldn't execute the plan. If it's your company's culture to design by committee, be sure to assign one person to be the point of contact, mediator and tie breaker. But keep in mind, the designated person must have, or be granted, the authority to fill all those roles. Excessive changes, especially late in the game, can be time consuming and very costly.

**Tip** — Anymore we all have the attention span of a child. You have about three seconds to grab your audience and not much longer to keep them. Minimize the number of messages you put into one communication. Be concise, and then tell them more than once.

## Mistake #3: Forgetting corporate communications

We've seen it too many times. A brochure is about ready to print, or worse, already printed, and then corporate communications sees it. Next thing we know we're reprinting. If you have a corporate communications staff, involve them early and have them review the final materials for sign-off. Even if you are abiding by the corporate style guide and graphics standards, you may not be working from an up-to-date version.

**Tip** — If you're writing the materials yourself, take off your HR "benefit geek" hat. Communicate to the employee level in everyday language. A way to test this is to ask a non-benefits person to review your communications. If the average person doesn't understand what you're saying, rework it.

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