Communication Strategy and Plan (Refresh)

Deliverable 2: Milestone 2

December 16, 2022
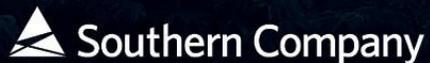
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Purpose

This document outlines the evolution of the ASCEND communication strategy to effectively and consistently communicate and engage with all stakeholders throughout the four-year program.

Provides the communication strategy progression from Pre-ASCEND to Mobilization and beyond.

Highlights the collaborative work that was done during pre-ASCEND which led to the development of communication materials and the strategy refresh.

Summarizes the communication plan that will be maintained throughout the program to align all communication activities.

Provides an overview of how we will target high-level stakeholders via specific channels by building awareness, understanding and readiness about ASCEND at the individual level.

Executive Summary

Communication Strategy Roadmap

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Communication Plan (Nov/Dec 2022):
Developed comprehensive communication plan to support the execution of the ASCEND communication strategy. The plan is a separate spreadsheet that outlines the execution of the strategy by phase, month and week. It will be a "living document, reviewed and updated frequently, and used to measure results and key drivers of the dashboard.

Strategy Refresh (Nov. 2022)
Updated and refreshed communication strategy, which includes accelerated material, new content and information, including updated communication objectives, strategy, stakeholder and channel overview, situation, calendar, as well as adding five strategic pillars, which are key elements of the strategy.

Collaborative Process (2018-Fall 2022)
During Pre-ASCEND, the leadership team attended multiple workshops and provided input that led to the development of key program materials such as the guiding principles, ways of working, vision statement, program overview, elevator pitch, and more.
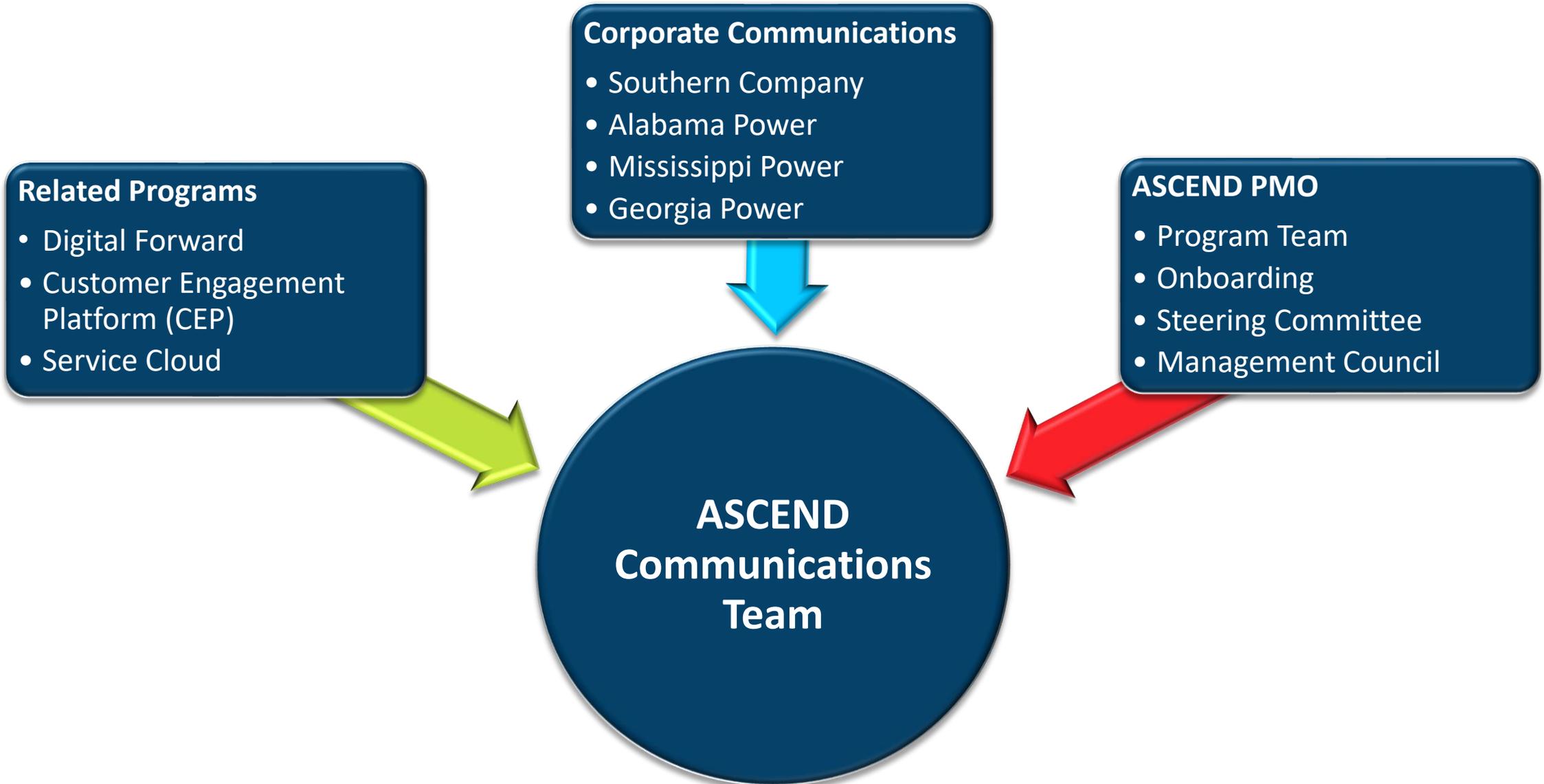
Pre-ASCEND (2018-2022)
Developed initial Leadership Engagement and Communication Strategies and Plans.

The communication strategy roadmap outlines the progression from 2018, how we have leveraged the previous work, and are using it to drive a refreshed strategy and execution of the plan that aligns with program evolution.

Communication Operating Model

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Corporate Communications

- Southern Company
- Alabama Power
- Mississippi Power
- Georgia Power

Related Programs

- Digital Forward
- Customer Engagement Platform (CEP)
- Service Cloud

ASCEND PMO

- Program Team
- Onboarding
- Steering Committee
- Management Council

ASCEND Communications Team

Five Strategic Communication Pillars

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ASCEND Communication Library

Develop a myriad of ASCEND communication materials to be used throughout the lifespan of the program, including videos, articles, fact sheets, messaging, infographics, emails, FAQs, and more.

ASCEND Stakeholder Prioritization

- Target communications specific to audience – both on the program and employee side.
- Prioritize stakeholder groups by high, medium and low-impact to determine what communications goes to which stakeholders and how often.

Channels

To target specific stakeholder groups, numerous channels will be used to ensure the right audience receives the right message at the right time.

ASCEND Communication Guidelines

- Develop brand templates and guidelines and share with ASCEND team.
- Ensure all communication materials follow the standards.

Communication Plan

Detailed spreadsheet that outlines ongoing communication activity to keep ASCEND team and other key stakeholders (high-impact) informed, updated and engaged throughout each phase of the program.

Progress to Date and the Journey Ahead

Strategy and Communication Plan Development

Pre-ASCEND

- Conducted analysis of Pre-ASCEND engagement and communication strategy.
- Held multiple strategic planning workshops with leadership and program team.
- Collaborative process provided key input for the development of future communication materials.

- Refreshed ASCEND Communication Strategy & Plan .
- Developed communications plan organized by program implementation phases and key communication activities/events by month, week, etc.
- Finalized program identity (i.e., approved vision statement, refined guiding principles, program summary, etc.)

STRATEGY & PLAN IN ACTION

Collaboration

Communications Framework

Engagement and Communication Best Practices

As part of outputs from a previous engagement and communication workshops, the following communication standards were validated to continue to support the program's approach to leadership engagement and communications.

1 Keep it **simple** and **consistent**, while **relevant** and **honest**, using the language of the audience.

2 Communicate the **right** message, at the right time; keep it **clear** and **concise** to the right people.

3 No surprises. Communicate **before** people need to know.

4 Communication flows **two ways**: we will actively listen, share information and ask for feedback.

5 Be opportunistic – use **existing** and **multiple** communication channels.

Communication Objectives

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The ASCEND communication plan aims to accomplish the following objectives:

Educate employees about ASCEND and why Southern Company is implementing the program.

Generate employee awareness, engagement, and momentum about ASCEND.

Ensure consistent messaging and branding across the ASCEND team, Southern Company and OPCO's.

Reach intended and targeted audiences using a variety of appropriate channels.

Generate engagement and pride among the ASCEND team about being a part of this transformative program and opportunity.

ASCEND Overview

ASCEND is making company history!

ASCEND will be one of the most comprehensive Customer Service & Marketing transformation programs in Southern Company's history.

ASCEND will transform how we business!

Through the program, we will replace our current Meter Data Management (MDM) and Customer Information (CIS) systems with a new Oracle CIS system called Customer to Meter (C2M). This will also include Advanced Analytics Platform (AAP), Commercial Engagement Portal (CEP), and Service Cloud.

ASCEND will be deployed to three electric OPCOs!

C2M, an industry proven technology, will be rolled out to Alabama Power, Georgia Power and Mississippi Power in a consolidated implementation.
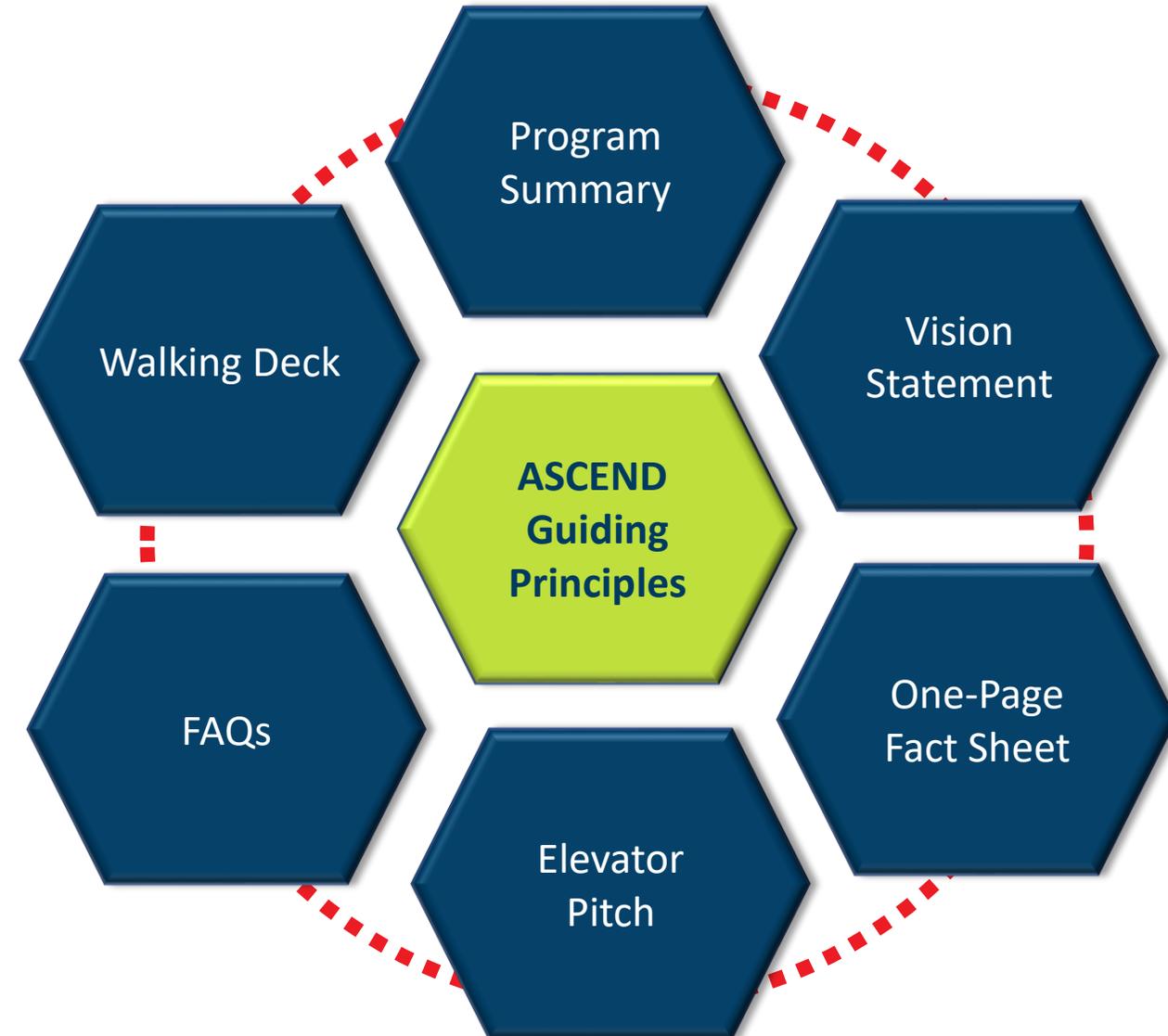
ASCEND will help us build the future of energy!

Over the next four years, through ASCEND, we will implement technology with new capabilities that will elevate the customer experience, empower Southern Company employees and help us build the future of energy.

Program Identity

- **The program identity is the foundation for all communications and will continue to evolve as we move through the different program phases.**

- **All communications will:**
  - **Include employee and customer-focused messaging aimed at increasing project awareness and adoption.**
  - **Align with our Communication Best Practices, Communication and Brand Guidelines and core program tenets.**

- **Will continue to update or develop new communication materials such as recently refining the ASCEND program guiding principles, and writing the approved vision statement, program summary, etc.**

Program Summary

Vision Statement

Walking Deck

ASCEND Guiding Principles

FAQs

Elevator Pitch

One-Page Fact Sheet

Recent Additions

GUIDING PRINCIPLES: ONE TEAM – ONE VISION

Program Summary

Elevator Pitch

ASCEND Vision Statement

Brand Guidelines

Each document is linked to the SoCo SharePoint site so you can access the information you need quickly!

Communication Pillars

Pillar 1: Communication Library

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- Develop a myriad of ASCEND communication materials for the program.
- Examples of materials include videos to website content, message documents, fact sheets, infographics, and much more.
- Collaborate with the ASCEND team to identify its communication needs and support ongoing communication efforts.
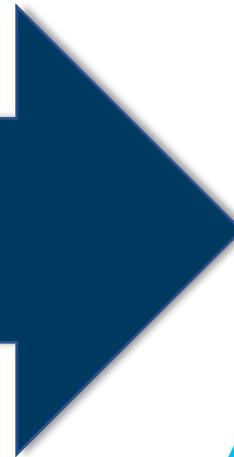
Message Map

Written Materials

Presentations

Website/Intranet/Apps

Videos

Images

Recognition Materials

Branded Merchandise

Communication Library

Pillar 2: Stakeholder Prioritization

- Stakeholder analysis is a critical next step in the communication execution process. This includes categorizing stakeholders into three buckets – high-impact, medium-impact and low-impact.

- From there we can assess the frequency of communication by stakeholder group, which messages and information they need to receive and how to best disseminate the information.

- We will also create different categories (or tiers/layers) for the actual ASCEND team members because not all ASCEND communications will go to all team members.

- Separately we will assess and determine who the program spokesperson(s) will be internally.

- As part of categorizing and prioritizing stakeholders, we will develop distribution lists to support the different stakeholder groups.
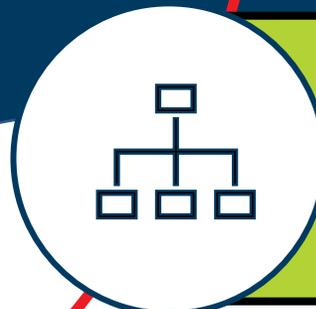
Categories
- High-Impact
- Medium- Impact
- Low-Impact

Internal Stakeholders
- ASCEND Team
- Other Internal Stakeholders/Key Departments (Customer Service, IT, Regulatory, HR, etc.)

External Stakeholders
- Public Service Commission
- Customers
- Legislators
- Third-Party Vendors

Pillar 3: Communication Channels

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Throughout the execution of the ASCEND communication strategy, we will utilize a variety of channels to disseminate information through a variety of channels to engage with stakeholders.

Meetings

Staff/Team Meetings
Provide updates to entire business groups delivered by business leadership (i.e., SVP, VP, Director).

All-Hands/Townhall
High-level program wide announcements that would be provided to specific business groups, or just large in-person or virtual meetings.

Info. Sessions/Workshops
Engaging information sessions that are used to train, educate or create excitement and drive awareness to stakeholders.

Change Champion Meetings
A group of key employees from each business area that provide insight on business processes and help communicate Project updates to their teams.

Training
Provide ongoing training, and onboarding as needed to new and existing ASCEND team members.

Digital

Videos
Quick videos that will be used to inform, educate, and provide key updates. They will often be included in emails .

Podcast/Webcasts/Live-Streams
Audio or Video interviews and discussions to provide updates on the latest Project news.

ASCEND Intranet/SharePoint
Central sites that will house all communications and the latest project information for stakeholders.

Microsoft Teams
A hub site for smaller groups to remain in communication and grab key documents. Change Champion network could utilize this.

Dashboards
Provide key stats and activities for stakeholders to follow along with the progress of the project and change journey.

Written

Email
Emails are a basic channel of communication that will be used sparingly but will contain key attachments and quick bite size information.

Executive Communications
Supporting executive needs regarding presentations, messaging, talking points, etc.

SharePoint Messages
A monthly/bimonthly newsletter can be used to summarize key project information to all stakeholders..

SoCo Intranet and OPCO Social Apps
Internal mobile app where employees can chat about different topics and can also receive company updates. (Fuel, Current, etc.).

Poster/Flyers/Signage
Posters/Flyers that are targeted messages for specific stakeholders or can be broad and informative. i.e. Bulleting Board announcements.

Pillar 4: Communication Guidelines

From the tone-of-voice to mark usage, each element serves a specific purpose and visually represents the brand.

ASCEND logo was designed to increase awareness of CIS program internally and reinforce the Southern Company brand.

ASCEND name signals we are elevating our customer experience AND growing our business and technology acumen and skills.

Anyone who develops and/or presents materials specific to ASCEND should be aware of communication guidelines to ensure consistency in all communications.

Logo draws inspiration from Southern Company triangle to represent our goal of ascending to the top.

Peaks in the middle represent the three electric companies and signify movement upward and forward together.

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Pillar 5: ASCEND Communication Plan

- The communication plan outlines the execution of the communication strategy to reach, inform and engage stakeholders throughout the program.
- The plan is broken down by communication work products that are required to successfully support all key events, communications and activities.

Establish a cadence of ongoing communication during all phases of the program.

Created a detailed communication plan that will be reviewed daily and updated frequently throughout the program.

Monthly updates, monthly town hall meetings, status emails, meetings.

Kickoff each new program phase with an announcement and video for the ASCEND team.

Establish when to communicate with low and medium-impact stakeholders.

Outline key engagement and recognition campaigns, i.e. games, contests for team and employees.

Utilize a variety of tactics, tools, channels, formats throughout the campaign.

Develop the communications approach and communication toolkit for the internal ASCEND pre-launch and launch.

Next Steps

Next Steps: Putting the Plan into Action

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- Below are examples of the different types of communication activities outlined in the communication plan that will be leveraged to bring the plan to life.

- Next, we need to analyze and define our stakeholders, align specific channels to reach appropriate audiences, and identify owners and reviewers for each communication activity to ensure success.

Click here to review the current communication plan which will be frequently updated and reviewed in real-time.

Communication Library (i.e. Message Map, Walking Deck, FAQs)

Launch-Related Activities

Intranet Profiles and Articles

Monthly and Quarterly Status Updates

On and Off-Site Events

Workshops

Training and Onboarding
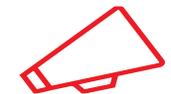
Program Communications

What's Ahead?

1 Stakeholder Analysis

2 Library Development

3 ASCEND Launch

4 Change Impact Assessment

5 Ongoing Plan Maintenance

Ongoing partnership and collaboration will continue to be essential to ASCEND's success!

Appendix

Communication Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities	Input	Drafter	Reviewer	Distributer
Program Leadership	• Ad hoc review communications and engagement materials to ensure accuracy of change impacts and correct language, alignment with brand, etc.	✓		✓	
OR Leads	• Review communications and engagement materials to ensure accuracy of change impacts and correct language, alignment with brand, etc.	✓		✓	
PMO	• Define and maintain standards for project management across ASCEND. • Standardize and monitor deliverables to ensure program success.	✓	✓		
Communications Analyst(s)	• Outline consistent messaging across the program releases. • Partner with Change Analyst to draft communications and engagement to impacted stakeholders. • Review and distribute communications and engagement materials.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Change Analyst(s)	• Report key impacts. • Partner with Communications and Engagement Analyst to draft communications to impacted stakeholders. • Address open issues / risks / concerns raised by the team.	✓	✓		
Training Team	• Provide input for training communication needs • Partner with Communications and Engagement Analyst to draft communications and engagement to impacted stakeholders	✓	✓		
Change Network	• Create a network of key stakeholders who will properly cascade information to impacted business areas • Provide input about the most effective channels of distribution • Distribute communications and engagement materials	✓			✓
Release Leads	• Partner with Change Analyst to help Change Analyst understand key change impacts to business areas • Partner with Change Analyst to help Change Analyst understand technical functionality and resulting change impacts. • Provide input on communications and engagement materials to ensure accuracy of information.	✓	✓		✓
Functional Analyst/SME(s)	• Provide input about the most effective channels of distribution. • Provide input on communications and engagement content.	✓		✓	
Corporate Communications	• Provide ad hoc support or input on communications and engagement content.	✓	✓	✓	✓

Communications Approval Process

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Planned Communications
On-Going

Unplanned / Ad Hoc Communications
Turnaround and review time required

Execute Comms Plan

- Communications Strategy
- Communications Plan
- Draft As Per Plan
- Approve As Per Plan
- Distribute As Per Plan

Sample Communications Reviewers

**Communication Team
Business Engagement Manager /
Work-stream Leads
Program Leads**

Unplanned Comms Protocol

- Draft Communication
- Content Owner Review
- Comms Team Review for Branding
- Approve
- Communication Distribution

Example: Training Plan & Schedule

Event is known in advance and has been logged on the Communication Plan. Audiences, messaging, developers are identified, templates are provided; approval times and distribution lists are planned.

Example: UAT Shutdown Update

Decision would trigger an unplanned communication event. Based on the immediate need, an expedited, ad hoc communication process would be used.

Stakeholders: Change and Adoption

ASCEND Program Team

- Executive Program Sponsors
- Executive Steering Committee
- Program Leadership
- BPOs and BPMs
- Program Delivery Teams
- Change Champion Network
- Customer Experience

Support Departments & Business Partners

- Executive Leadership
- Other Steering bodies
- OPCO Business Teams
- Frontline Employees
- "First Followers"
- External Influencers (commission, customer, etc.)
- Impacted Departments

Making the change happen.

Adopting and embracing the change.

ASCEND Stakeholders

	Program			Support Departments and Business Partners			External and Enterprise	
	ASCEND Team	Executive Steering Committee	Management Council	Primary	Secondary	Casual	External	All Employees
Overview	Project team members	Project leadership	Management Council	Read/write users	Read only users	Ancillary impacted parties	Customers ,Third-Party Vendors , etc.	All Southern Company -employees
Engagement timeframe	Throughout the project	Throughout the project	Throughout the project	Immediately after design	Prior to testing	Beginning of testing	Select during design, build and test and all after test is complete	Prior to go-live
Primary method(s) of engagement	Ongoing events and updates	Monthly meetings and event participation	Meetings every two months / every month closer to go-live	Comms, change network, and extensive training/ proficiency labs	Comms, change network, and training/proficiency as necessary	Comms and change network	Design workshops, testing, comms and in-person meetings	Comms
Additional Considerations	Potential for fatigue/burnout due to length of project	Governance and project timeline drivers (go/no-go, etc.)	The right people attend the right meetings	Time constraints/ commitments and bubble resourcing	Balance between involvement and level of impact	Potential for feeling disconnected	Language and customer outreach with Corporate Affairs	Leverage Corporate Affairs

Engagement Measurement

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Qualitative Measures

Informal and anecdotal feedback can be gathered quickly or in real time to provide an indication of people's current location on the change curve and of the effectiveness of communication activities to date.

To Leadership
- Town Halls
- Staff meetings

To Program Team
- SharePoint
- Program Mailbox

To Team Members
- OPCO Leads
- Change Network

Quantitative Measures

Formal feedback can be gathered via a planned, targeted, and broad effort to develop an analysis and understand trends overtime.

Surveys
- Pulse surveys
- Mailbox surveys
- Menti/Mural Participation
- Intranet Polls/Quizzes

'Button Clicks'
- SharePoint visits
- Voting Tools
- Email Open Rates
- Video Clickthrough Rates

Attendance
- Meetings / Office Hours
- Change Network
- Virtual/Teams Calls or Live Streams

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