

M&A Communications: Experienced Professionals and Processes Required.

There is a reason most companies don't have a full-time M&A Integration Communication Team on staff. The reason is you only need those resources and expertise ... when you need it. But make no mistake about it ... when you need it ... you absolutely must have it.



With that said, you don't just snap your fingers and assemble an experienced M&A Integration Communications Team utilizing existing, internal resources. You can't just pull people from the organization and expect them to have the scars, lessons learned, expertise and proven processes required to design and implement an effective M&A communications strategy. Why? Because these people have day jobs. You hired them to run specific areas of the business, not to be M&A integration communication experts.

No executive in his or her right mind would take a multi-million, sometimes multi-billion dollar, business initiative and ask inexperienced leaders to attack it on a part-time basis.

Or task leaders with defining a highly complex and intricate strategy when they have no track record of success in that area. It would be like asking your marketing team to step in and implement your new network security system or having your IT team define and execute your annual sales and marketing strategy.



Yet, this is what happens in many M&A transactions. Executives scramble to assemble a cross-functional team to define, manage and execute a communication strategy in support of the M&A integration process. They “layer” M&A communication strategy, planning and execution on top of the day jobs of inexperienced leaders across the organization. This is a recipe for disaster.

Executives who have gone through mergers and acquisitions understand how critical battle-tested M&A communications expertise is to a successful integration process. They don't put this highly strategic and visible initiative at risk by passing off M&A integration communication to leaders who can only address it on a part-time basis.

Industry research shows that 75 percent of M&A integration challenges are created by communication problems. These include unclear messages, gaps in communication, and ill-advised communication plans — internally and externally.

If you want your integration process to run smoothly and the transaction to deliver a maximum return, you need to take your communications strategy seriously.



The only way to do that is to engage a partner that has the proven resources, expertise, tools and processes it takes to ensure the M&A integration process is a success. There are four things you need to look for in this strategic communications partner.

1 Battle Scars: If you don't want to make rookie mistakes, make sure your partner has been there and done that when it comes to M&A integration. You need to benefit from the lessons they have learned over multiple transactions. You should benefit from the scars they have earned from designing and executing integration communication strategies that did and did not work in the past. You should ask for — and they should be willing to share — real war stories that illustrate the lessons they have learned.

2 Repeatable Tools: If they don't have a toolkit, then they have not been there and done that. M&A integration communication requires structured and sustained execution. The right partner can show you the tools and techniques they deploy to engineer and manage a disciplined strategic planning and implementation process.

3 Disciplined Processes: Speaking of process, the right partner will have defined processes that they use to drive discovery, development and execution of the integration story and communication plan. They should have documented steps to guide leaders through each phase of the M&A integration journey. Bottom-line, they should be able to show you what a successful messaging and communications roadmap looks like.

4 Negotiation Skills: This last requirement is critical. They must have experience working directly with the C-suite and functional leaders across complex organizations. Why is this important? Because this experience will ensure the partner knows how to navigate and diffuse political and organizational bombs that will crop up throughout the integration process. They will be seasoned negotiators, mentors and coaches. They will know how to forge and foster the executive relationships and buy-in that are required to execute a winning plan.



Remember, 75 percent of M&A integration challenges are rooted in communication. Communication problems quickly translate into business problems — negatively impacting employee engagement, organizational performance, customer retention and, in the end, profitability.

Don't put your transaction at risk. Secure the integration communication expertise and resources you need to drive optimal organizational performance throughout the entire M&A integration process.

Are you planning or in the midst of a merger or acquisition? Combined, our team has more than 50 years of hands-on experience across 75+ transactions in the M&A space. We can guide, instruct and manage strategic communication initiatives at critical points throughout your integration process.

Learn more about our M&A integration communication services at itsonmessage.com



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James F. O'Gara is the CEO and Founder of OnMessage a leading B2B Communications Consultancy. Mr. O'Gara has spent thousands of hours formulating winning go-to-market strategies and stories for dozens of Fortune 100 companies and hundreds of high-growth businesses. O'Gara's expertise in go-to-market strategy development, Voice of Customer research, messaging and positioning, as well as customer-centric culture development, has earned him the respect of executives around the world. His ability to breakdown strategy, sales, marketing and positioning challenges in complex industries has been invaluable to CEOs, CCOs and CMOs at a number of leading companies. James is also an active member of the Forbes Communications Council and his thought leadership often appears on Forbes.com.

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About OnMessage:

OnMessage is the B2B communications consultancy executives call when it counts. When strategic shifts in the business take place, when financial performance is on the line and when the message absolutely must deliver material business results. OnMessage specializes in helping C-suite and communications executives ...

- > Reposition and differentiate their businesses
- > Produce laser focused messaging / positioning for new product and service launches
- > Establish clear, compelling messaging for specific industries and geographic markets
- > Communicate changes in vision / strategy or leadership inside and outside of their organizations
- > Develop effective communication programs in support of M&A integration and other organizational changes

For the last 16 years, OnMessage has earned trust and respect from executives around the world.

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- > 500+ B2B Mid-Market and Fortune 1000 Companies Served
- > 600+ Strategic Messaging Engagements Delivered
- > +250 Successful Product Messaging/Positioning Platforms Developed
- > 75+ Years of Combined M&A Communication & Integration Experience
- > 50+ Years of Combined Organizational Communications Expertise
- > 16-Years of Consistently Exceeding Client Requirements

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