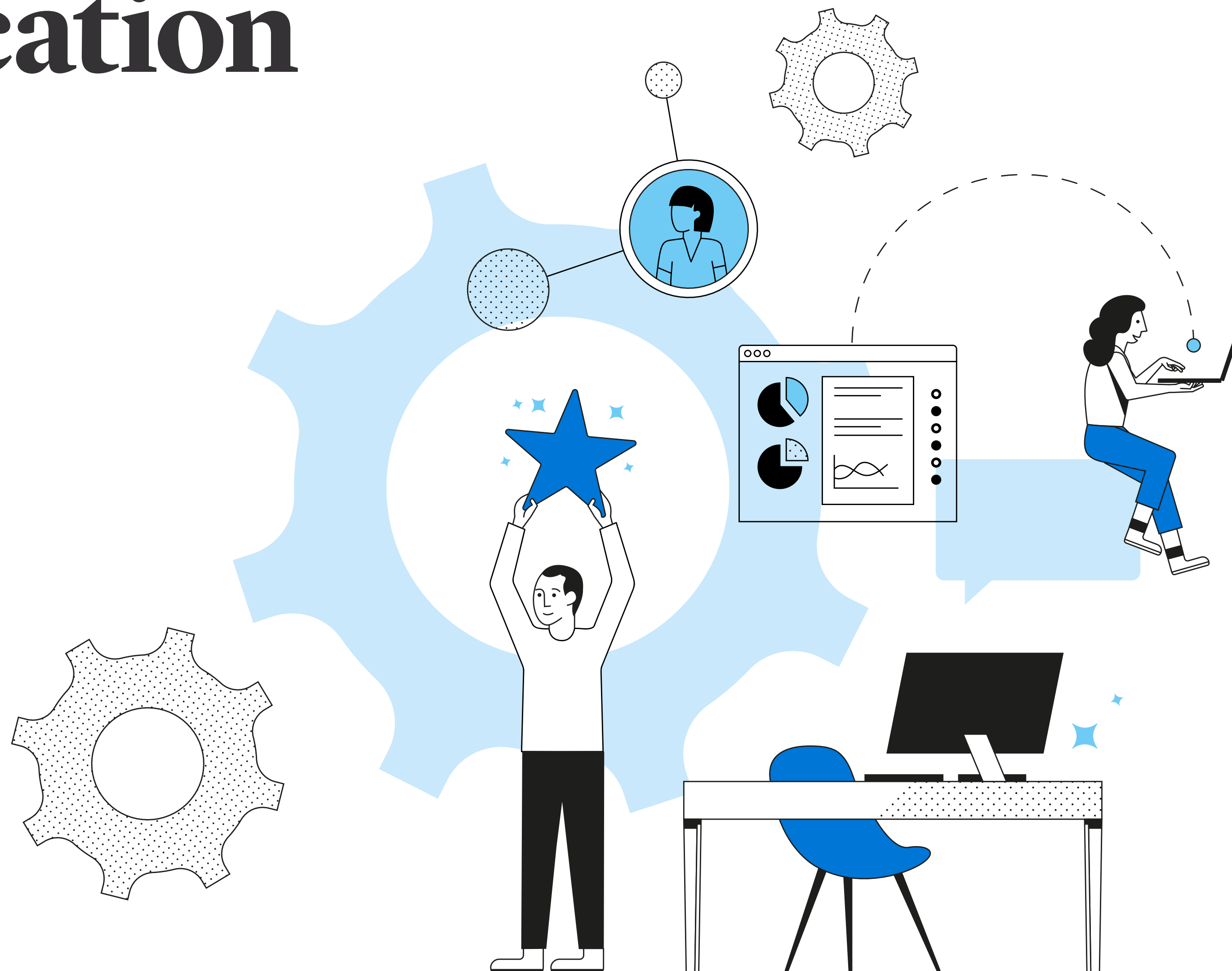


Your communication toolkit

6 steps to help you boost employee benefits value



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Introduction

We've designed this guide to help simplify the process of communicating workplace benefits to your employees. Why do you need this? Because employees won't automatically know what's available to them, when to access it, why and how it's relevant. They need support via communication to understand the 'what, why, when and how'.

Only then will they start to emotionally engage and appreciate the amazing value that employee benefits and wellbeing programmes can bring. They'll see how the overall programme supports corporate purpose and how individual benefits support them and their families; for example, protecting one of their biggest assets – their ability to earn a living – while also providing support to stay well, or get better.

Minimising complexity

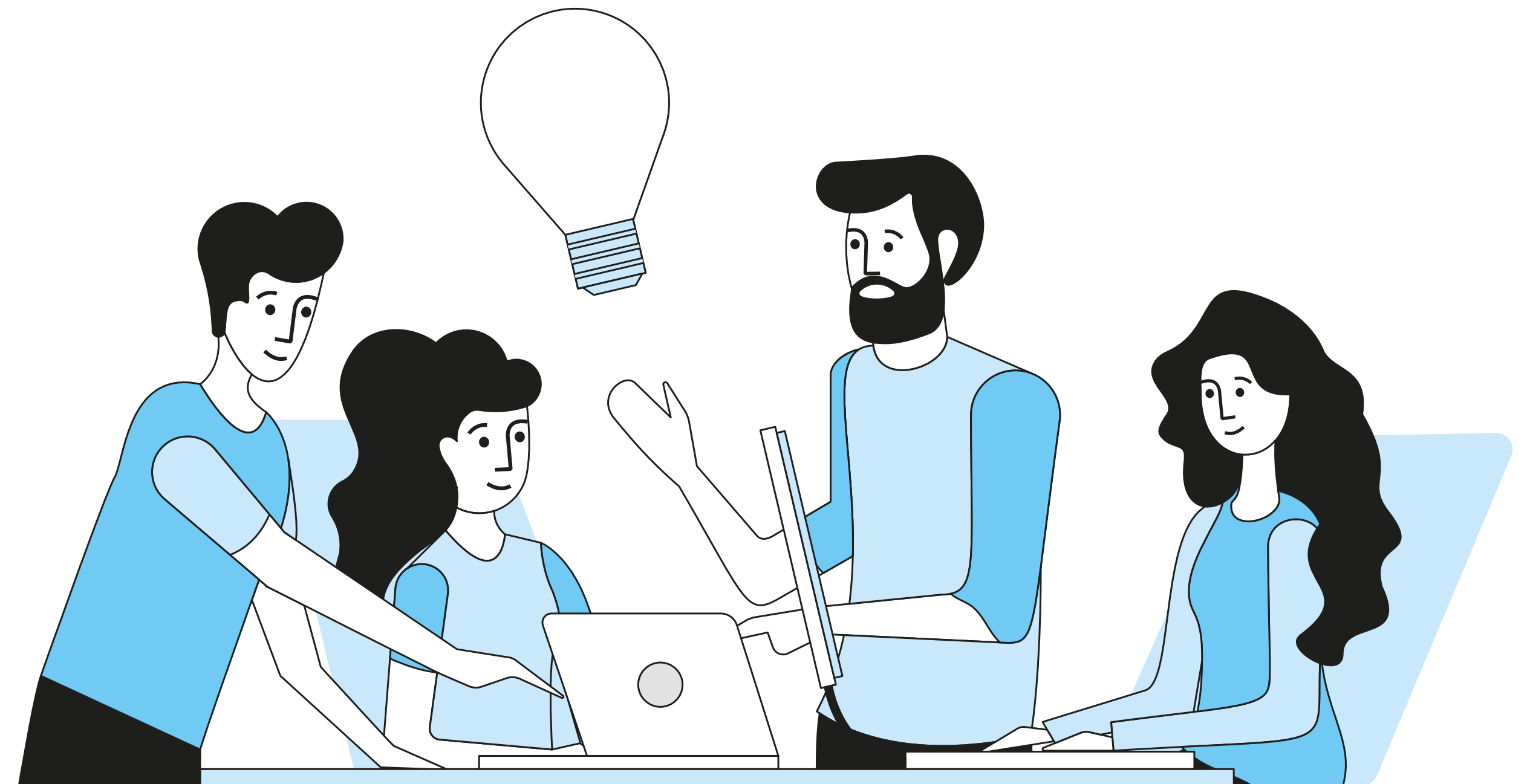
Communication needn't be complex. But, at the same time, there isn't a 'plug in and play' solution.

The cornerstone of any effective communication plan is knowing your audience, targeting your messages and channels appropriately, measuring outcomes and making adjustments. It's also about joined-up thinking; using communications to help integrate benefits into wider wellbeing programmes that support both HR and overall business goals.

This is a team effort; from across business departments to partnering with providers and intermediaries to collate and combine the data needed to help make decisions around programme design and communication. Decisions that lead to value creation for people and for business.

Communication at its best can:

- Change attitudes and opinions
- Build commitment
- Change behaviour
- Improve business performance



What is employee engagement, and why does it matter?

Employee engagement is about creating an environment that allows your employees to give their best each day. It makes them feel committed to the organisation and motivated to contribute towards its success.

It's based on trust, integrity, two-way commitment and good communication between an organisation and its employees. It's an approach which we believe increases the chances of business success.

Employee engagement isn't something that can be achieved through benefits and wellbeing services alone.

But, that said, wellbeing underpins all aspects that need to be considered as part of an engagement programme. These include: management practices; roles and responsibilities; career progression and the work environment.

In other words, it's an area that demands attention, for lots of good reasons, from recruitment and retention, to absence management.

It's also worth noting that corporate governance reform insists that all private companies with over 250 employees must now report on what they are doing to ensure workforce engagement (as well as engagement with customers and communities) in their annual reports and accounts.¹



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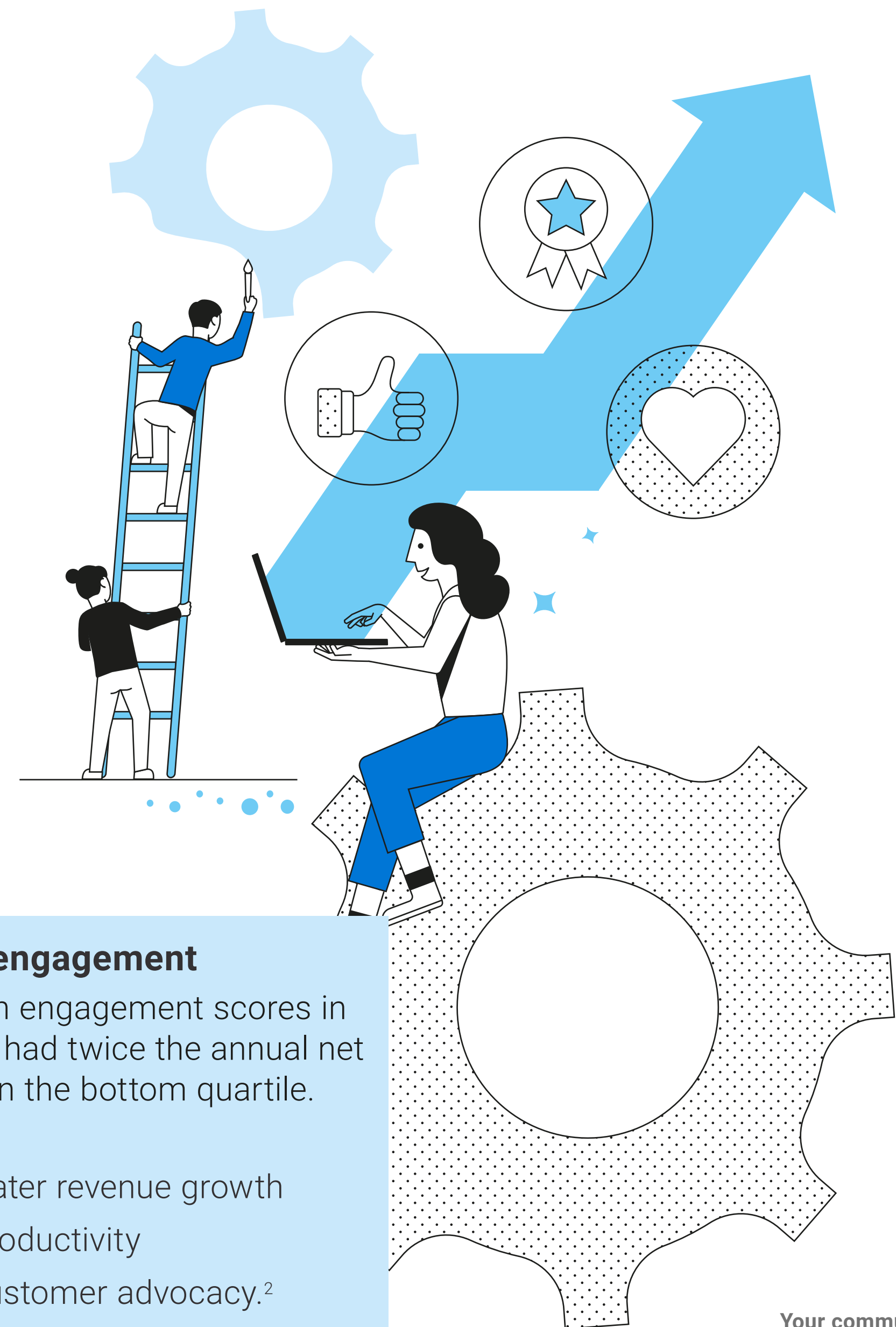
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Start thinking of employees as customers



Evidence for engagement

Companies with engagement scores in the top quartile had twice the annual net profit of those in the bottom quartile.

Plus, they had:

- 2.5 times greater revenue growth
- 18% higher productivity
- 12% higher customer advocacy.²

Start thinking of your employees as customers

To understand what good communication looks like, think about those companies you know in the online space that you would rate highly for customer experience.

For a start, they get to know their customers, they target campaigns and promotions very carefully.

They use data to present content that is relevant, and ask for feedback. They'll show how that feedback is translated into action. For instance they might pull a product line in response to feedback, and let their audience know about it.


It should be exactly the same where your employees are concerned. Consumer marketers would never dream of using a one-size-fits-all communication. So why can this approach persist in the workplace?

Your employees are arguably your most important customers. If they're happy and motivated, your customers feel it – and that makes a world of difference to your organisation's reputation.

It's with this in mind that the following toolkit has been designed. Think of your employees as customers as you work through this and you won't go far wrong.

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“To win in the marketplace, you must first win in the workplace”

Doug Conant, former President and CEO of the Campbell Soup Company

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Step 1: Where do you want to be?

Step 1: Where do you want to be?

Measuring success, impact and outcomes

It's important to start with the end in mind (outcomes and business impact), specifically focusing on what you want your audience to:

Know – knowledge

Feel – mood, emotions

Think – views, opinions

Do – behaviour, actions

To give you some hints and tips, we've completed an example plan with a hypothetical launch in mind.



[Download the example plan](#)

To help you define your outcomes and business impact, look at:

Organisational strategy and goals

What are the business' overriding goals? Has it clearly articulated its purpose and how will your employee benefits and wellbeing services better align? For instance, an absence management and cultural improvement goal might be to manage work-related stress. Your Group Income Protection can help via early intervention and rehabilitation, plus preventative support in the shape of help with stress risk assessments, better targeting of embedded value services such as the employee assistance programme, along with education, awareness, training and perhaps social prescribing.

Leadership vision and expectations

Speak to your business leaders before any communication campaign and ask them to describe the desired outcome through a people lens, not a business sense. You could ask them:

- What does success look and feel like?
- What are they aiming to change and why?
- Is there anything they want to keep the same?
- What challenges will you need to overcome?

Communication strategy

Think about what tactics you can already use to communicate targeted messages on an ongoing basis, not just as one-offs:

- Line manager briefing packs
- Digital signage
- Wellbeing champions
- Video
- Company social media
- Letters
- Emails

Team thinking

HR shouldn't feel they're doing this alone. Consider a project team with colleagues in other relevant departments, such as IT, Marketing and Internal Communications.

Also, ideally include employees from across the business and regularly show them planned communications, asking:

"If we did this, what do you think employees would know, think, feel, do?"



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Step 2: Where are you now?

Step 2: Where are you now?

Auditing and assessing gaps

Now you know where you want to be, it's time to assess where you are now with regards to your communication capabilities. This will help you to:

- Understand the gap between now and the future desired state. In doing so, you can better manage future expectations
- Understand the communication needs and the journey your employees need to go on
- Manage resistance

- Leverage champions
- Put realistic measures in place

We've put together a basic table to help you progress from business goals to communication objectives, and highlighted the key questions to ask along the way.



[Download the plan](#)



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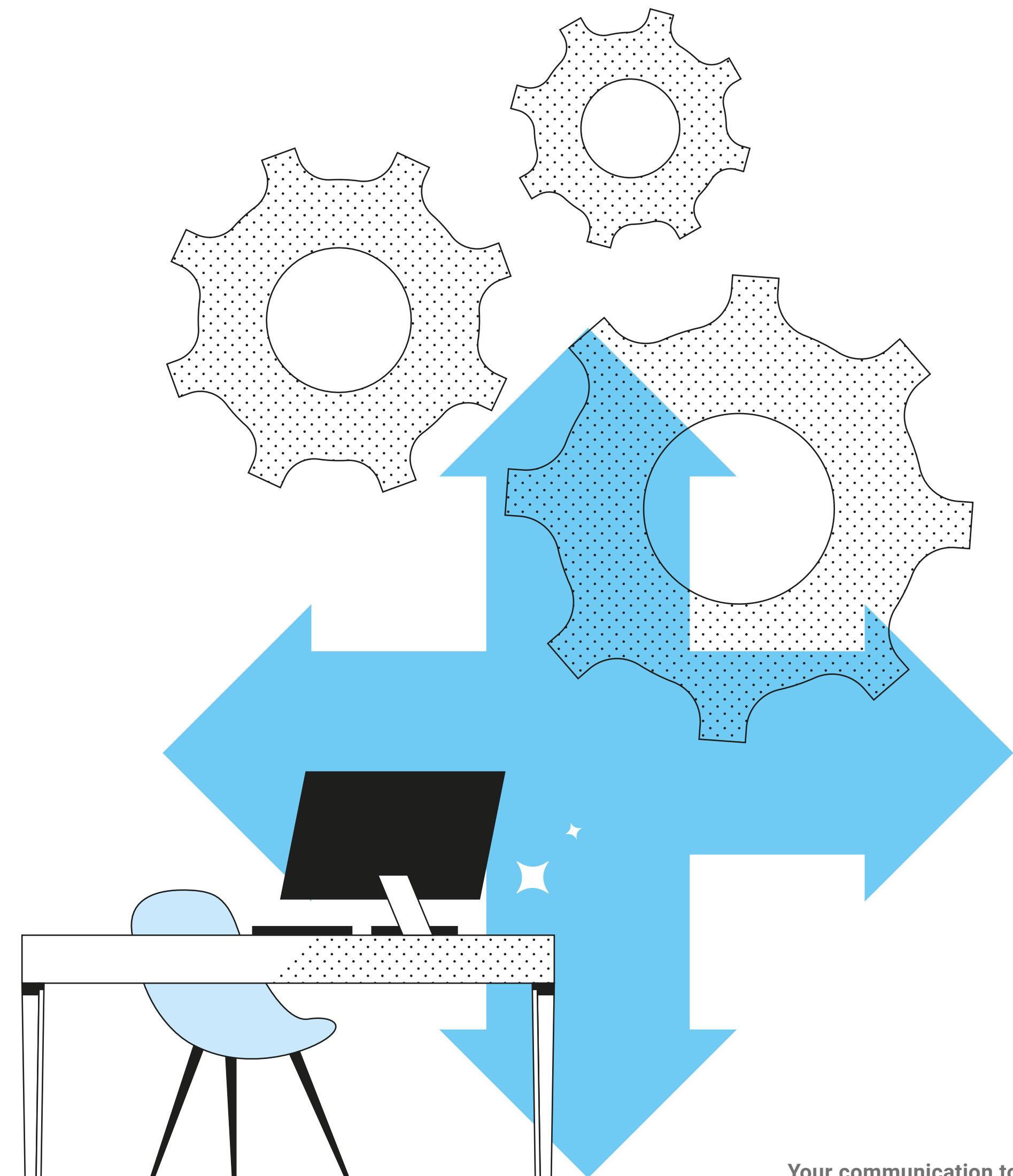
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Step 3: How do you get there?



Step 3: How do you get there?

Carrying out a communication audit

It's important to carry out a communication audit before you develop a plan of action. Without an audit, you won't have the audience and channel information that will help your messages stick. An audit also helps avoid the one-size-fits-all method – an approach we know doesn't work.

Starting your audit

- **Identify your audience.**

Listening to your people on a regular basis, not just via a once-a-year satisfaction survey, is essential to the success of any communication programme.

- **Assess what is and isn't working about your benefits and wellbeing services.**

If you're introducing some benefits for the first time for example, these might be workplace protection benefits such as Life cover, Income protection and Critical illness cover find out what employees may know, like and dislike, about those benefits from previous jobs they've had or as individuals buying insurance.

- **Look at which of your existing communication channels are most used.** Who's using them, what for, and when?

Next we look at some of the practical ways you can gather the insights needed to inform these points. Looking into even just a couple of the techniques on the following page will give you valuable information to inform your communication strategy. Planning is key – but it doesn't have to be time and resource intensive.

Employee understanding of benefits

In a recent survey, 77% of medium-sized companies said they had a wellbeing strategy in place, but less than half (42%) of employees said they trusted their employer to look after their wellbeing. And only 12% considered their employer's benefit communication to be 'very effective'.⁷


The consequence of this is shown in discrepancies between benefit relevance and actual usage. For example, although 9


in 10 employers think Employee Assistance Programmes are relevant to their employees' health, wealth and happiness, only 2 in 10 think their employees actually make use of this benefit.⁷

In other words, it's probably safe to assume that employers are not helping their employees understand what's on offer and how it's relevant to them. This requires a more personalised approach.

Continue reading step 3 

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Step 3: How do you get there?

How to conduct a communication audit

1. Review MI and Data available

Find out what data currently exists, focusing on:

Employee insights

- Satisfaction surveys
- Engagement surveys
- Regular surveys
- Absence statistics

Benefits and wellbeing service use

- Claims statistics from your insurers
- Service usage data from wellbeing providers

Communication channels

- Benefits portal page views
- Lunch and learn attendance
- Email and newsletter opens

2. Stakeholder interviews

Based on the findings of the desk-based review, carry out a series of one-to-one phone or video interviews with senior leaders and other stakeholders. Consider:

- Who in the business is effective at delivering internal communications?
- What channels do you think are effective?
- Do you think employees understand the benefits on offer? And how important is it that they do?

3. Quantitative surveys

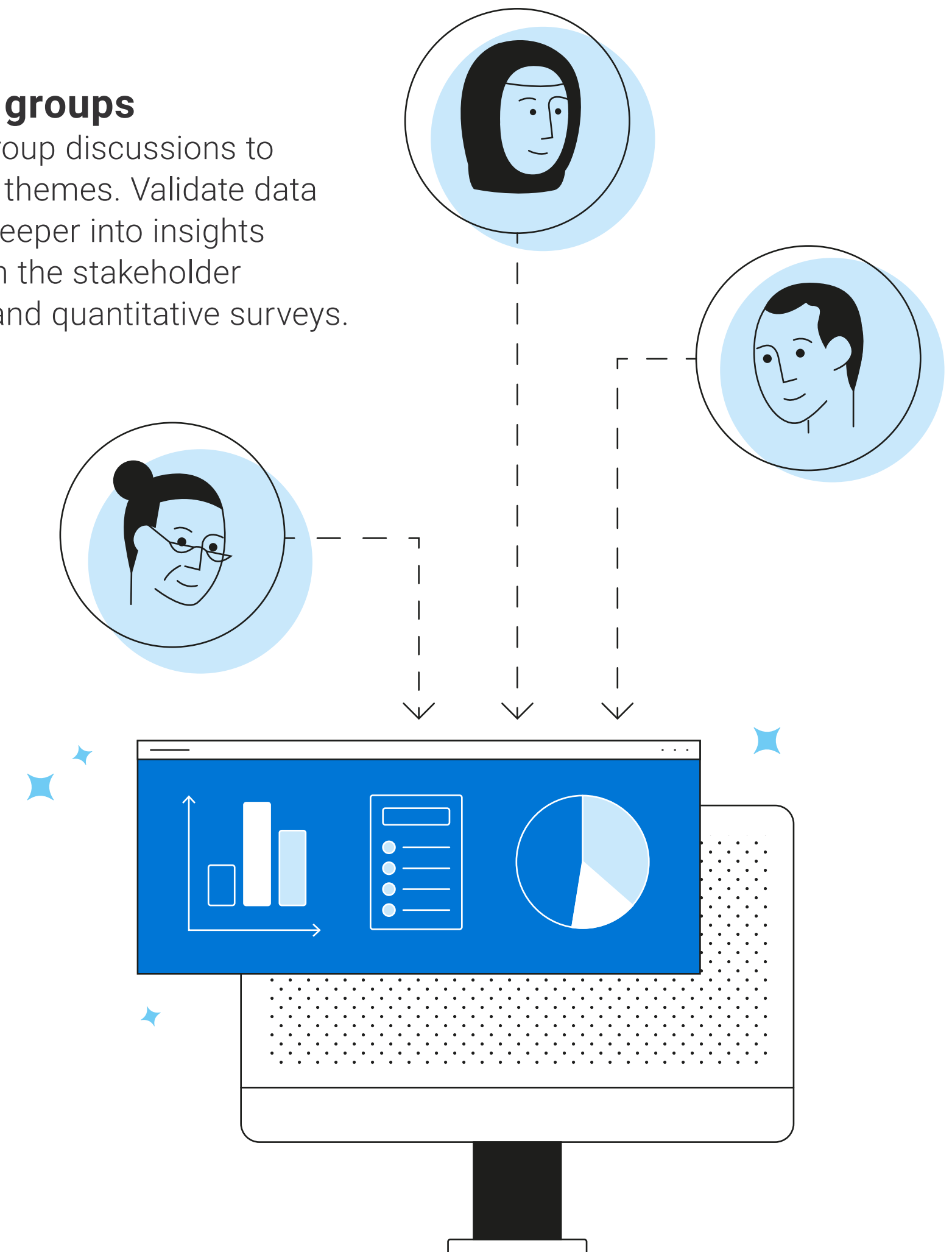
Send an online survey across the organisation or audience sample. For instance, to line managers and employees.

Think about how you can build on the information you've already gathered to assess how your communication channels are being used, and how to expand the understanding of and interest in key messages around benefits and wellbeing.


Include questions that will allow you to assess trust and reputation. There are a number of useful free tools available that meet the requirements of IT security and data management. These include SurveyMonkey, Typeform, SoGoSurvey and Google Forms.


4. Focus groups

Facilitate group discussions to explore key themes. Validate data and delve deeper into insights gained from the stakeholder interviews and quantitative surveys.



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Step 4: Who are you talking to?

Segmenting your audience

To ensure you get the right message to the right people at the right time, you need to group – or segment – your audience. This can be done in many ways, but here are 4 of the most popular methods:

1. Organisational geography

- Physical location (office/home/hybrid/country)
- Business unit, function or department
- Hierarchy (grade/level)

2. Channel access/usage

- Access to technology
- Work patterns
- Time pressures

3. Attitude and disposition

- How employees feel about the benefits and wellbeing programme
- Advocates and blockers
- How to vary your message and tone to appeal to each employee group

4. Outcome

For example, to accompany a change – from something big such as a merger or an acquisition to a whole of workforce new product or service launch / or to target a particular segment

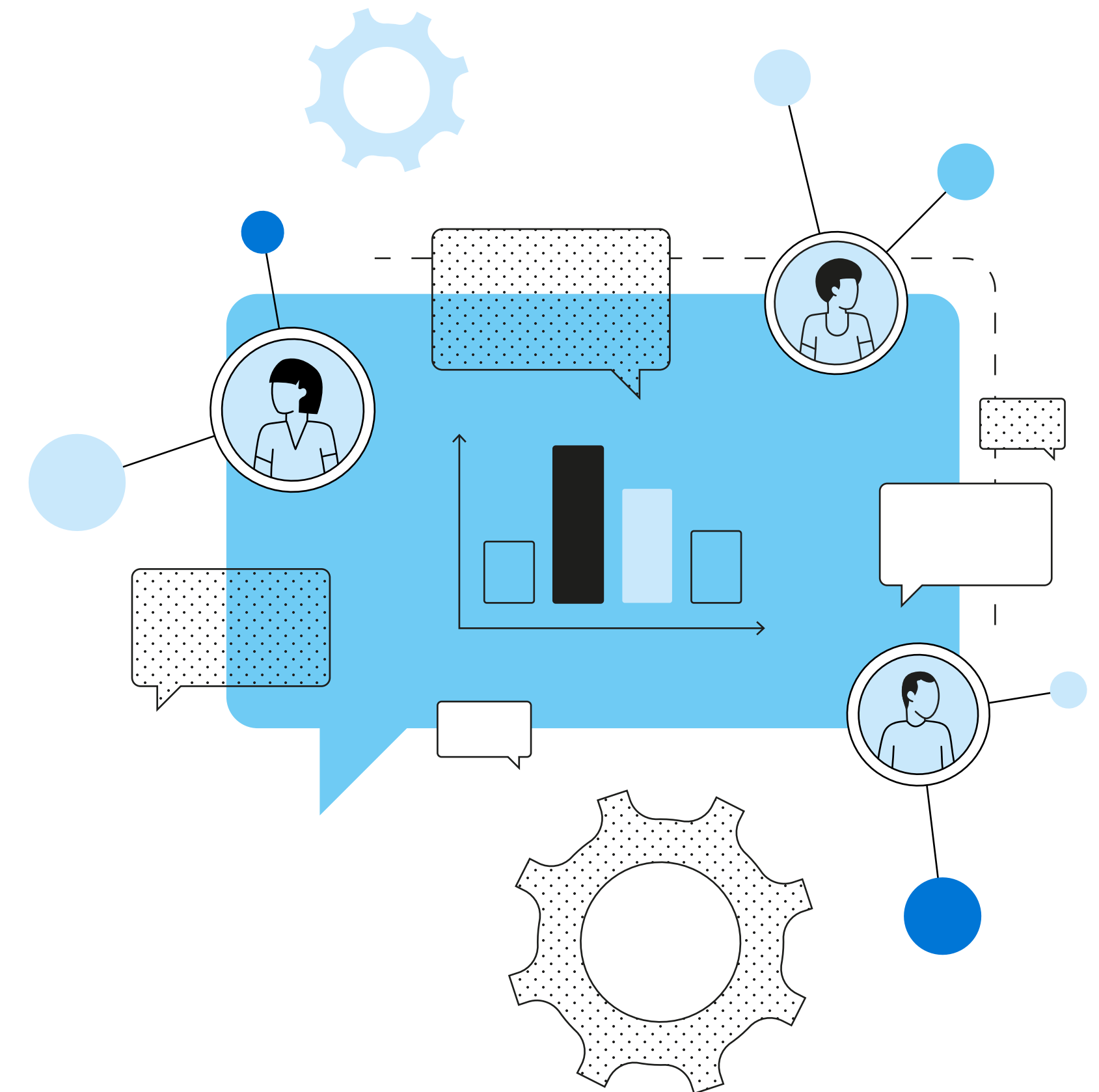
- Which audience group will be most impacted and why?

- What do you need each employee group to know, think, feel and do?
- How much effort will it take to get them to change?
- Which segments of the audience are most influential? For example, line managers/wellbeing champions/mental health first aiders

Here are some useful templates to guide you through the communication audit process:

↓ From business goals to communication objectives: Key questions to ask along the way

↓ Audience planning tool.



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Step 5: Develop your plan

Developing messages, finding stories, and choosing channels

You've got your objectives and timelines figured out, you know more about your audience and the most effective communication channels. Now it's time to draft a basic communication plan. Here's a template to help:



Communication plan template

As part of this, think about which employee group you're focused on, what outcomes you're looking for and what messages are going to work best.

Here's where you can get creative. It's worth considering using stories based on the experiences of your own people wherever possible. Stories are attention grabbing.

They can prompt a response or action, and change the way people think. They're also easy to understand and can bring what might be considered dull information to life.

When talking about insurance, it's easy to miss the human connection and to forget there's a human behind the benefits and services.

How to get stories

It's rare for good stories to fall into your lap – you have to proactively seek them out:

- Speak to your wellbeing champions and/or mental health first aiders.
- Ask line managers for their thoughts.
- Speak to employees about when

they had to make a claim or use their workplace benefits, to find out whether they'd be willing to share with colleagues how they and their families were supported. These are invariably sensitive issues, but people are often surprisingly willing to share their experiences if approached in the right way.

- Speak to anyone taking part in a fitness or endurance challenge – for charity or otherwise.
- Run a storytelling competition, perhaps to support a mental health initiative. For example, how 2020/21 touched my life, or how I've been keeping healthy in body and mind while remote working.

- Host anecdote circles / storytelling sessions (virtually or otherwise).

For example, get half the group to tell a story about how they were supported with a (physical or psychological) health issue at work / ask the other half of the group to tell a story about how they supported someone else with a health issue at work.

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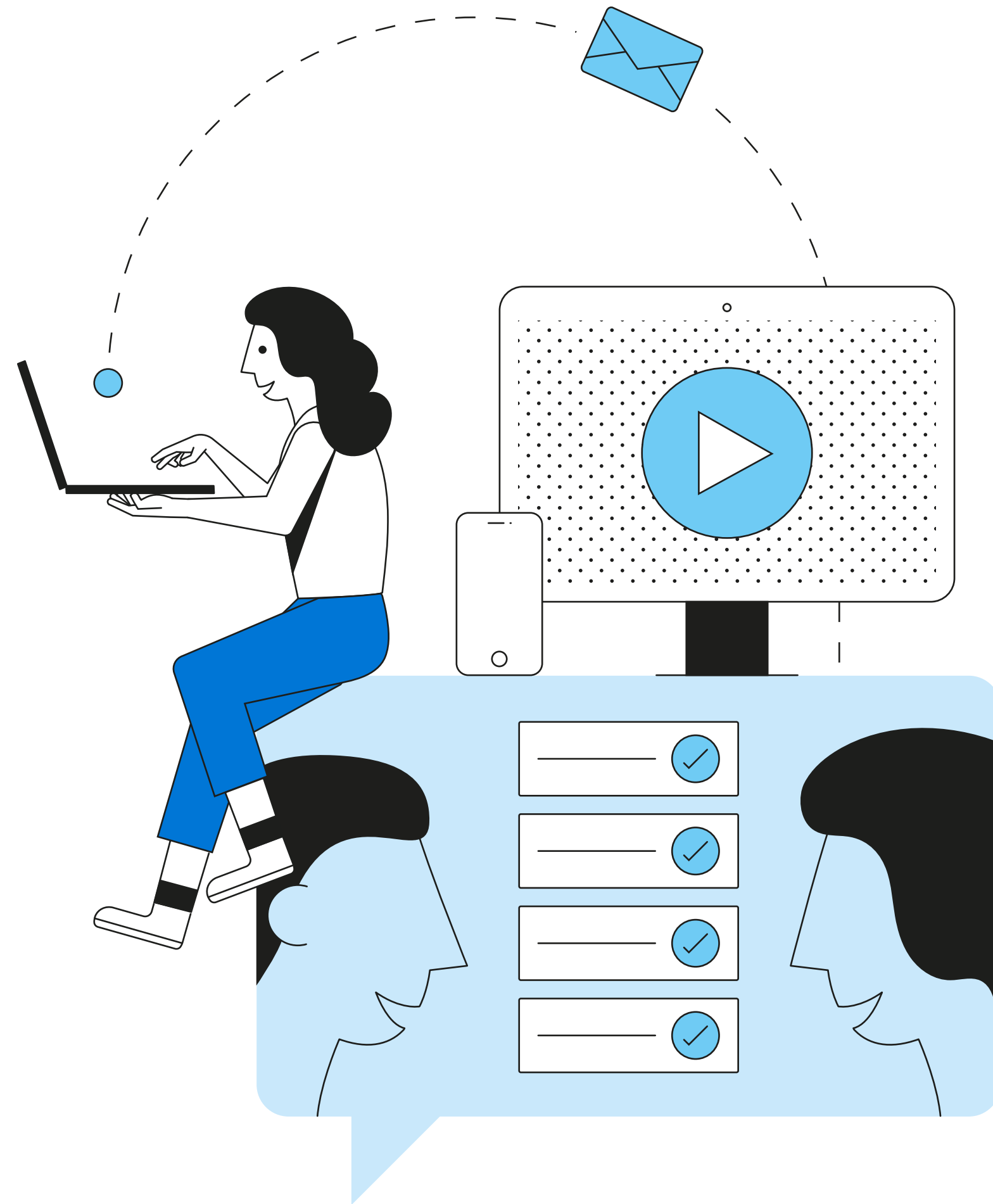
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Step 5: Develop your plan

Developing messages, finding stories, and choosing channels

Choose your channels carefully

(By channels we mean email, letters home, intranet articles for example)

Consider which channels will help you achieve your goals.

There are countless other ways to communicate, in addition to those listed in the template. For example, breakfast meetings, drop-in surgeries, team meetings, one-to-ones and line manager (and leadership) behaviour.

Here's a template to help you assess the pros and cons of the channels available to you.

 [Channel template](#)

Finally, in developing and delivering your communication plan, consider working with various professionals across the business who have the skills and expertise to help out. As mentioned earlier, this shouldn't be a solo HR effort.

Speak with line managers, professionals in internal communications, marketing and IT. Getting internal stakeholders on board is vital – they must understand and buy-in to the project.

Step 6: How did you do?

Analysis, reporting and evaluation

This is where the 'Know, think, feel, do' outcomes document you completed in Step 1 ties in again.

The below summarises some of the tools and strategies you could use to gather data on each outcome.

Know

- (Knowledge) - Test, quiz, survey.

Feel (mood, emotion) and **Think** (Views, opinions) - Sentiment analysis, comments, survey, pulse check, interview, focus group, employee opinion survey, rating. Keep it simple. For example, ask employees what they thought of a leadership town hall using either a happy or a sad face.

Do

- (Behaviour, action) – Analytics, such as email open rates, click-throughs, viewing time or downloads, event attendance. Or a specific action, such as, training completion, survey response rate, safety and compliance levels, 360-degree pulse surveys etc.


Start analysing your data

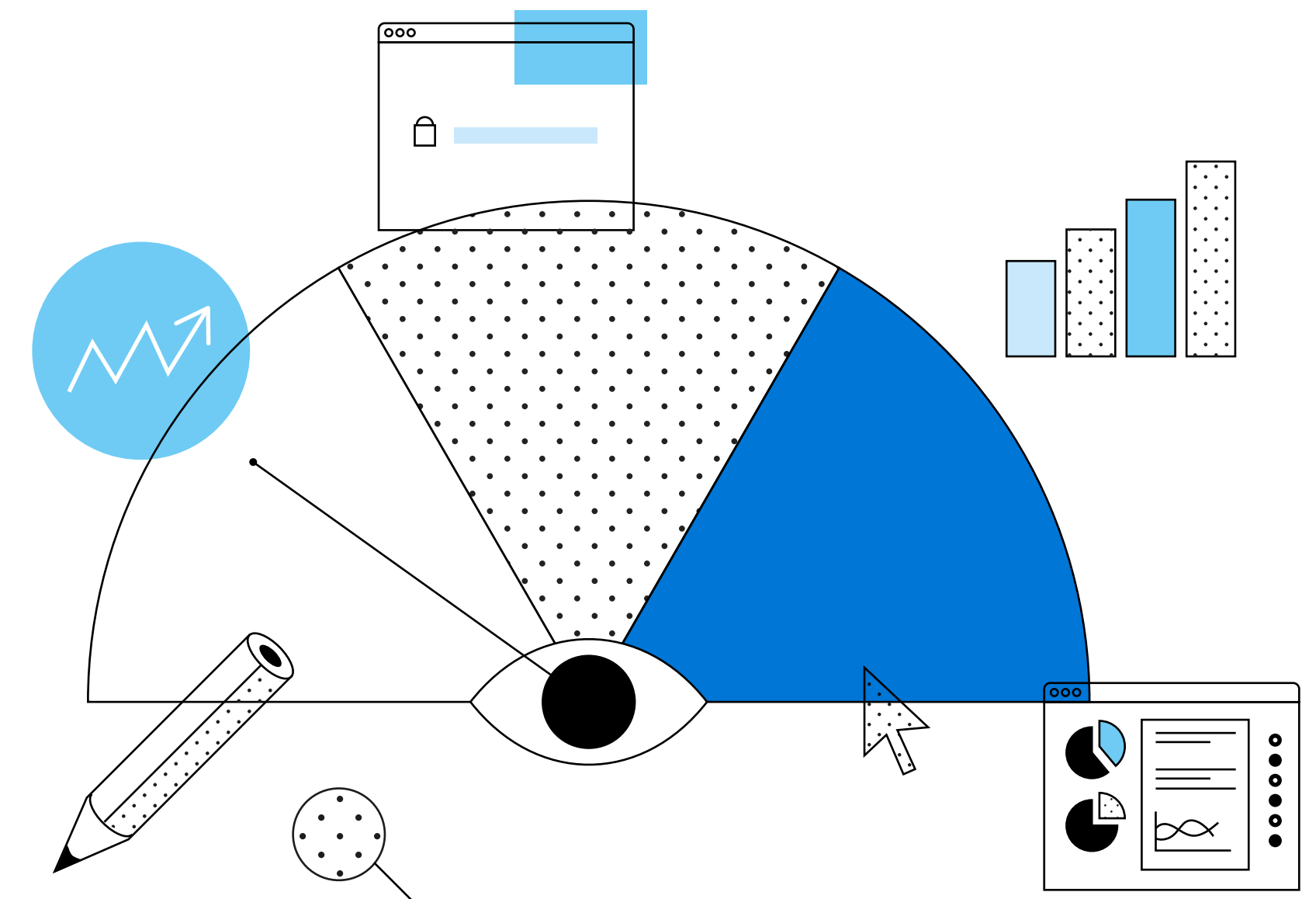
Ask yourself:

- What does the data mean in relation to outcomes?
- What's the context behind the data gathered?
- What alternative perspectives might the data be showing?
- How might others interpret the data?

Use this analysis to report back to leadership on the success of the campaign against business goals. You can use the analysis to determine where, when and how the communication programme needs to be tweaked and improved over time.

Communication is a living, breathing process, not a one-hit wonder.

 Your checklist.



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