

Communications Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Communications Manager roles usually mix questions about past campaign work with scenario-based questions on handling media pressure or a messaging misstep, since the role sits close to organisational reputation and often reports directly to senior leadership.

- **Behavioural:** Questions about past campaigns, stakeholder conflicts or media relationships, asked to gauge how you've actually operated under real conditions.
- **Scenario/crisis judgement:** Hypothetical situations, often a breaking story or internal messaging failure, testing how you'd think and act under time pressure.
- **Process and technical:** Questions on how you build a messaging framework, run a campaign, or measure communication effectiveness, testing method rather than memory.
- **Stakeholder and client-facing:** Questions on managing competing demands from marketing, HR, operations or executive leadership.

Most processes start with a phone screen covering experience and availability, followed by a panel interview with the hiring manager and a senior leader or HR representative. Some organisations add a short writing or case exercise, such as drafting a statement or messaging outline, before a final conversation.

1. Tell me about a time you managed a communication campaign from strategy through to execution.

Why they ask

This checks whether you can own a campaign end to end rather than just execute pieces of someone else's plan.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation and communication objective, the strategy you set (task), the channels and content you produced (action), and how you measured the outcome (result).

Example answer

"In a previous role, leadership wanted to lift engagement with a new internal initiative that staff were largely ignoring. I set the objective of raising awareness and buy-in within a set window. I built a messaging framework, then produced a mix of newsletter content, an internal announcement and short leader-led video updates, coordinating timing through Microsoft Teams so managers had talking points before staff saw the announcement. I tracked open rates and follow-up survey feedback afterwards, which showed a clear lift in staff awareness compared with the previous internal campaign, and I used that feedback to simplify the next round of messaging."

2. A negative story is about to break in the media the same day as a major planned announcement. What do you do?

Why they ask

Tests judgement under pressure and whether you protect organisational reputation without overreacting or under-communicating.

How to structure your answer

Talk through your decision process step by step: what you'd check first, who you'd loop in, how you'd sequence the two messages, and how you'd decide whether to delay, combine or separate them.

Example answer

"First I'd confirm the facts of the negative story and who's asking questions, rather than react to rumour. I'd brief senior leadership immediately and get a clear read on legal or HR sensitivities. Then I'd assess whether running the planned announcement alongside the negative story creates confusion or looks tone-deaf. In most cases I'd push to hold the announcement briefly, prepare a short factual statement on the negative story for media inquiries, and brief the spokesperson before any interviews go ahead. Once the immediate inquiry is handled, I'd reschedule the announcement rather than cancel it, since burying good news usually causes more reputational damage than a short delay."

3. Walk me through how you'd build a messaging framework for a new organisational initiative.

Why they ask

This is core to the role and shows whether you have an actual method rather than starting from a blank page each time.

How to structure your answer

Give a step-by-step process walkthrough: research and audience input, drafting key messages, testing them with stakeholders, then rolling them out across channels.

Example answer

"I'd start by talking to the people leading the initiative to understand the real objective, then check with a few frontline staff or customers to see how the change might land. From there I'd draft two or three core messages that stay consistent regardless of audience, then adapt tone and detail for internal versus external channels. Before wide distribution, I'd test the messaging with a small group, usually a couple of team leads, to catch anything that reads badly or raises questions I hadn't considered. Once it's locked in, I'd brief spokespeople and managers so everyone's using the same language before anything goes out publicly."

4. Describe a time you had to manage competing priorities between marketing, HR and executive leadership.

Why they ask

Communications sits between multiple teams with different agendas, so this checks stakeholder management under real friction.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: set out the conflicting priorities, what was at stake, the approach you took to reconcile them, and the outcome.

Example answer

"Marketing wanted a campaign launched on a fixed date to align with a broader push, while HR was mid-way through a sensitive restructure and worried the campaign would land badly with staff. I set up a short meeting with both teams to lay out the actual constraints rather than letting it play out over email. We agreed to delay the external campaign by a short period and run internal messaging first, so staff heard about changes directly before seeing external material. Both teams got what they needed, and the delay was small enough that marketing's broader timeline wasn't affected."

5. How do you measure whether a communication campaign actually worked?

Why they ask

Tests whether you go beyond intuition and can report results back to leadership in a way they'll trust.

How to structure your answer

Explain your method: what metrics you track, which tools you use, and how you turn the data into a decision or recommendation.

Example answer

"I look at a mix of reach and engagement data, things like open rates, click-throughs and social engagement through tools like Hootsuite, alongside qualitative feedback from stakeholder surveys or direct conversations with staff. Numbers alone can be misleading, so I usually pair analytics with a short debrief with the teams affected by the campaign. I then put together a short report for leadership that focuses on what worked, what didn't, and one or two changes I'd make next time, rather than just listing metrics."

6. Tell me about a time you built a relationship with a journalist or media contact that benefited your organisation.

Why they ask

Media relations is a core task for this role, and this checks whether you can build trust with press rather than just send releases into the void.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: the context of the relationship, what you did to build trust with the contact, and the result when it mattered.

Example answer

"I made a point of reaching out to a journalist who regularly covered our sector, even when I didn't need coverage, sometimes with useful background context or a heads-up on something relevant to their beat. When we later had a story we wanted covered accurately, that journalist gave us a fair hearing and ran it with the framing we'd hoped for, rather than a more sensational angle another outlet might have taken. That relationship also meant that when a difficult story came up later, they came to us directly for comment before publishing, which gave us the chance to respond properly."