

SECTION 4: POLICIES



4.12 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As a global organisation with many different partners, stakeholders, members, and supporters, it is essential that Virtus communications clear, effective, unambiguous, consistent and timely information to all parts of the organisation.
- 1.2 Good communication ensures that all parts of the organisation can actively participate by sharing information, knowledge and ideas, in pursuit of the Virtus vision and mission.
- 1.3 This policy outlines Virtus' internal and external communication policy. It encompasses all forms of communication whether verbal (phone calls or meetings), electronic (eg email, website, announcements (eg memo's or press releases), and more.
- 1.4 The policy acknowledges that due to the confidential nature of some business activities it is not possible to share all information with all parts of the organisations. Therefore, a balance must be struck between keeping people informed and protecting confidential and sensitive information.

2 SCOPE

- 2.1 The policy applies to all officers of the organisation including elected officials (Governing Board and sub-committee members), staff and volunteers.

3 OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Through effective communication, Virtus aims to
 - a) Ensure all parts of the organisation have the information they need to perform their role effectively, at the time that they need it.
 - b) Ensure all parts of the organisation have clear standards and expectations for how they communicate with those around them.
 - c) Help maintain a shared vision and a sense of ownership in the organisation.
 - d) Protect the organisations brand and reputation

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 All officers of the organisation should:
 - a) Pro-actively participate in internal communication by providing information to relevant stakeholders and other members of the organisation
 - b) Ensure communication is timely, relevant, accurate and consistent.
 - c) Ensure any matter that has the potential to cause reputational or other harm to the organisation is immediately brought to the attention of their line manager and – where relevant – the Executive Director.
 - d) Ensure they are fully briefed and received all relevant information before communicating information more widely or before representing the organisation externally (eg. in meetings).
- 4.2 Leaders (eg. subcommittee chairs, staff with line management responsibilities and Governing Board members have an additional responsibility to communicate effectively ensuring:

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- a) Their team is kept informed on all relevant issues and are empowered to perform their roles as well as possible
- b) that they respond to all questions from team members (whether immediately or after further investigation)
- c) that they raise any significant problems or issues of concern in their area (which they cannot resolve) with their line-manager and – where relevant – the Executive Director
- d) be as informed as they can be about the issues relevant to their area and their team members

5 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 5.1 When communicating with internal or external audiences, there are a number of principles to be aware of:
 - a) The official language of Virtus is English. However this will not be the first language for large parts of the organisation and therefore translations may be more effective to transfer information. It is important to ensure that translations are as accurate as possible. Virtus will generally issue organisation-wide communications in English, French and Spanish.
 - b) Officers of Virtus should only use their Virtus email address for official communications. Personal email addresses should not be used.
 - c) When communicating internally – and particularly externally – be aware of privacy rules and data protection information. It is important not to share confidential information without permission and personal information about Virtus officers (including email addresses) should not be disclosed in emails without permission.
- 5.2 Organisation-wide emails and messaging:
 - a) Only the Executive Director, or officers working with their specific authority, should normally issue organisation-wide communications (such as by email). This ensures that the information conveyed is accurate, timely and to ensure that recipients are not overwhelmed by the quantity of emails.
- 5.3 External communications and representing the organisation externally:
 - a) External communications (including press releases, statements, website posts and newsletters) should only be sent after they have been proof-read and approved by the appropriate line manager. Normally this will be the Executive Director however in the case of sensitive or higher-risk communications, then at least one Board member (normally the President) should give approval. In very sensitive cases, communications should be approved by a majority of the Governing Board members.
 - b) When representing the organisation externally (for example meeting requests, presenting to conferences and 3rd party organisations etc), the relevant line manager or the Executive Director should normally be informed in advance (or as soon as possible afterwards) to ensure transparency and a full copy of the presentation should be made available.

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Following the meeting, formal feedback should be given at the earliest opportunity to the relevant committee or to the Executive Director.

- c) Officers of the organisation should not be quoted internally or externally without their permission and approval.
- d) Virtus communications should only express organisational views, policies and positions. Personal opinions should not be expressed.

5.4 Media Requests

- a) All requests to make statements to the media, to give interviews or respond to questions should be referred to or discussed with the Communications Manager in the first instance. Officers should not agree to media requests unless approved by the Communications Manager who will check the purpose of the request, help prepare a response and liaise with the person making the request.
- b) When giving interviews, ensure that only organisational views and opinions are expressed and remember that it is acceptable to decline or even end an interview early if the interviewer moves away from the agreed topic.
- c) The Virtus Communications team can give further advice, training and support on giving media interviews.

5.5 Emergency Situations

- a) Emergencies might include a situation where an accident has occurred or a situation has arisen (or might arise) which might cause harm to the Virtus brand.
- b) The Executive Director should be informed immediately of any accident or incident of this nature and a communications plan will be initiated as part of the organisations response. If the Executive Director cannot be reached then a member of the staff team should be contacted.
- c) Officers of the organisation should not make any comment or make any internal or external communication about the situation except where directed by the Executive Director or their representative.