

# M&A Communications

## A Freshfield guide



### **Navigating change**

A communications guide for  
mergers, acquisitions and  
company restructures



# Make your deal a success



**Simon Turner,**  
CEO, Freshfield

Mergers and acquisitions are an important part of a growing business journey. And as any business owner, director or adviser who has gone through a deal process will testify, such deals are resource heavy and emotionally intense. I have been involved in a few myself.

Even if the numbers add up and financial prospects look rosy, too many companies ignore the importance of PR and communications as part of their deal planning. Research from the Institute of Mergers, Acquisitions & Alliances (IMAA) indicates that up to 85% of M&A deals fail to deliver expected business benefits, often due to poor communication.

Freshfield is a specialist PR and communications consultancy and we have been helping businesses and advisers create the right M&A communications strategy to give their deal and investment the best possible chance to succeed.

We have seen countless examples where PR and communications strategy for a deal has been an afterthought. This can leave important employees anxious and worried, customers confused and business owners and directors scrambling to get their message across. This could be a bad start to what should be an exciting new era.

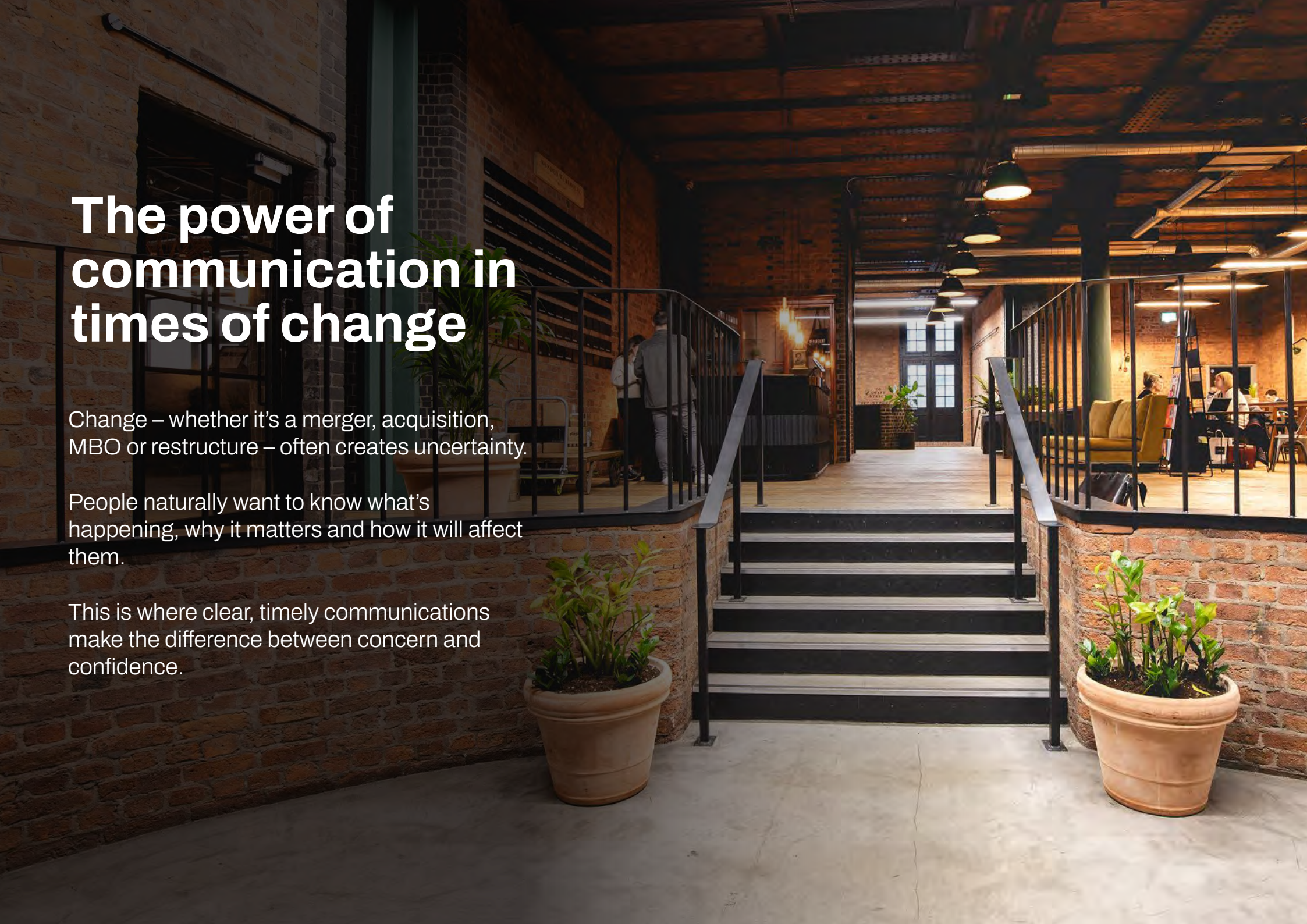
This guide is for business owners, investors, CEOs, directors, BD and marketing professionals, HR professionals and advisers, and has been prepared by our specialist team of senior PR and communications professionals and former business journalists.

If you want to talk, in confidence, about a deal, we are here to help.

Regards,

*Simon*

# The power of communication in times of change



Change – whether it's a merger, acquisition, MBO or restructure – often creates uncertainty.

People naturally want to know what's happening, why it matters and how it will affect them.

This is where clear, timely communications make the difference between concern and confidence.

# Why getting your communications right matters

## Maintaining trust

When leaders communicate openly, acknowledge challenges and share updates consistently, employees, clients and key partners feel respected and informed.

That trust helps build confidence and loyalty, even during difficult moments.

## Protecting reputation

News of major change rarely stays contained. How you tell your story can shape how the market, media and influencers perceive the organisation.

Well-planned communications ensures the company is seen as proactive, strong and in control.

## Minimising internal unrest

Ownership changes and restructures can be unsettling for teams.

Considered communication, from regular updates to listening exercises, reduces rumour, reassures staff and helps them focus on doing the best possible job for your clients and business.

## Protecting your investment

Your communications strategy can have a direct impact on the value of your business investment. For example, even if you're a relatively small company going through an MBO, the last thing you need is for a large customer to be concerned because they heard second hand details of your deal.

Likewise, for a large entity, unrest may cause a senior employee to move to a competitor – and take a portfolio of clients with them. Effective communication can help prevent such situations and protect your investment.

# Putting people first

Company deals and restructures are fast-moving and complex. Negotiations, fund raising, financial modelling, team integrations and legal matters often dominate attention.

With so much focus on the mechanics, communications planning can end up as an afterthought, especially if you have a small or no in-house resource. Yet, how you engage people will often determine whether the deal succeeds or struggles.

As with all effective communication, people must sit at the heart of your strategy. Different groups have different needs, concerns and expectations, and one-size fits all messaging rarely works.

Taking time to map your stakeholders and plan tailored communications can help get your new era off to a good start.





Putting people first creates the foundations for a successful communications programme, building rapport with the right people while protecting your investment.

## Key considerations:

Identify your stakeholders

**Do you know everyone affected by the deal, internally and externally?**

Tailored communications

**Do you know who needs to know what, and in what order?**

Leadership briefings

**Are your leaders and managers briefed and confident in their ability to brief their teams?**

Two-way dialogue

**Do you have the channels for people to ask questions and be heard?**

Consistency

**Are your messages aligned across all leaders, content and channels?**

# Merging with a company



### Context

A merger brings together two businesses to create something stronger. For some, it's about market expansion and efficiency. For others, it's about accessing new markets or specialist skills. Whatever the goal, a merger should signal positive change for everyone connected to the business.

### Communications lens

Successful mergers are built on trust and relationships. Employees, clients, partners and the wider community all need to know what this means for them. Clear, timely communication helps build confidence, sets expectations and prevents a vacuum where rumours can grow arms and legs.

### Risks to manage

Keep messaging simple, human and consistent. Share the 'why' behind the merger and outline what will change (and what won't). Communication should be seen as ongoing – not a one off.

### Top tip

Poorly planned communications can heighten anxiety, trigger staff unrest and damage client relationships. Conflicting messages between the merging organisations can also create uncertainty and silos. Silence or leaving communications too late can create issues before the new entity even finds its feet, detracting from the focus of building the new organisation.

## Scenario planning

# Acquiring a company

### Context

Acquisitions are a way for businesses to grow quickly, expand market share, enter into new markets and add fresh capabilities. Unlike a merger, one organisation takes the lead and brings another under its umbrella. Such deals can be exciting, but it can also trigger uncertainty, especially for the stakeholders of the acquired company. Employees, clients and partners need to be reassured.

### Communications lens

Acquisition messages need to be communicated with clarity and empathy. Stakeholders want to understand not just the financial rationale but how the change will affect them directly. Communications plays a vital role in aligning the narrative between organisations, ensuring trust is maintained and relationships are built.

### Risks to manage

If messaging is inconsistent, it can create a 'them and us' dynamic. Employees may fear job losses, while clients may question whether the service will change. This could create opportunities for sharp thinking competitors who may look to exploit any uncertainty. Without a plan, the integration could be just as hard as the deal itself.

### Top tip

Frame the acquisition around opportunity. Show how the deal strengthens the organisation but also offer up opportunities to listen to staff and clients. The more stakeholders feel involved and respected, the smoother the integration journey will be.

# Management buyouts

### Context

A management buyout (MBO) happens when a company's existing leaders or managers purchase the business from its current owners. This often arises during succession planning when current owners step back but want continuity. For employees, clients and suppliers, it can be reassuring that familiar faces are taking the reins but questions around stability and future direction are common.

### Communications lens

An MBO is as much about reassurance as it is about strategy. Communications should highlight continuity while signalling a fresh chapter. The internal audience is particularly important. Staff will look for signs of stability, leadership acumen and a clear vision from people they already know.

### Risks to manage

If taking over from a high profile and highly respected owner, a poorly managed communications effort may create uncertainty among staff and clients. Externally, competitors may try to exploit the situation if there is a void in communications.

### Top tip

Emphasise evolution not revolution. Demonstrate that while the ownership is changing, the core values and relationships remain. Then layer in your forward-thinking plan to build on the successful foundations.



Scenario planning

# Company restructures

## Context

Restructures are often driven by a need to adapt, whether to market shifts, a new strategy or financial pressures. They can range from subtle team changes, hiving off a division or significant organisational restructures. While often essential for long-term sustainability, restructures can feel unsettling for those affected.

## Communications lens

How leaders communicate during a restructure is critical. People need to understand the reasons behind the change, how decisions are made and what support is available. Clarity and transparency are key to helping clients, employees and partners understand and accept the changes.

## Risks to manage

A lack of clear communication can lead to speculation, low morale and client unrest. If clients or partners hear about changes second-hand, you have lost control of the narrative and this can lead to major problems. You could end up scrambling to get your message across and in some cases, it could be too late.

## Top tip

Don't be afraid to communicate what might appear to be negative news. While it is stressful, you won't be the first or last business to have to go through a change and communicate it. If you set out the reasons, most people will understand. Explain the rationale and communicate how the changes will have a positive impact on the business long-term. Also offer up the opportunity for people to talk to you. Open, two-way communication can help during difficult times.

# Merger and acquisition communications check list



## 1 Preparation

- Audience mapping completed
- Leadership aligned on key messages
- Holding statement prepared and approved
- Communications timetable agreed and senior team and advisers briefed on approach
- Post-deal communications plan created

## 2 Internal communications

- Employee briefing plan created (timing, format responsibilities)
- Leadership prepared for employee Q&A

## 3 External communications

- Launch timetable confirmed across earned, owned and paid channels
- News release written, reviewed and approved  
Media Q&A drafted and approved
- Launch photo booked and taken
- Distribution lists finalised (media, stakeholders and partners)

## 4 Launch

- Communication assets scheduled and deployed
- GO LIVE
- Monitoring plan in place (media, employee sentiment, stakeholder feedback)

## 5 Post-launch

- Coverage tracked and sentiment analysed
- Stakeholder feedback gathered
- Lessons learned documented for future deals
- Post-deal communications plan launched

# Brand communications check list

(not all may be required)

- Brand narrative reviewed and updated
- Logo and visual identity reviewed and updated
- Marketing collateral reviewed and updated
- Website content reviewed and updated
- Digital footprint (social channels, directories, partner sites) reviewed and updated
- Stakeholders informed of any brand identity changes



# How Freshfield can support you



Freshfield is a specialist PR and communications consultancy and has been advising businesses on mergers and acquisitions communications for over 20 years, as well as supporting advisers such as corporate finance teams, law firms and funders.

Our senior team of PR and communications consultants and former business journalists can help shape and implement a M&A communications strategy or even support on one-off deal announcements.

## How we can help

- M&A communications strategy and planning
- Brand narrative and messaging
- Employee communications
- Content strategy and writing
- Announcements and media relations
- Post-deal communications programmes

## We also work with trusted partners who support clients in the following areas:

- Brand identity development and marketing collateral
- Website design and development
- Digital marketing and SEO

# Testimonials



“Oriel Chambers merged with Atlantic Chambers to create Hundred Court Chambers in 2025. We appointed Freshfield to develop and deliver a strategy to communicate with clients and stakeholders, while managing the launch of the new brand and era. It was a complex project with many moving parts but Freshfield guided us throughout with clarity and confidence. We were consistently impressed by their professionalism and expertise, and the internal and external feedback on the announcement has been overwhelmingly positive.”

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**Nicholas O’Neill**  
Chambers Director



“Acquisitions have been a key part of MHA’s growth strategy and Freshfield has been with us throughout. Their advice is thoughtful, thorough and seamlessly executed, giving our people, clients and partners confidence at every stage of the journey.”

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**Danny Houghton**  
Partner, MHA  
(formerly Moore and Smalley)



“Freshfield’s communications work has helped to ensure that key acquisitions made as part of our growth strategy are communicated effectively to our stakeholders through the media, helping us tell a consistent and positive story and in turn supporting the message that we’re open to further acquisition opportunities.”

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**Matthew Palmer,**  
Managing Director, Palletower

# Speak to our M&A communications specialists



**Simon Turner**  
CEO / Group Client  
Director



**Andrew Taylor**  
PR and Communications  
Director



**Joel Durkin**  
PR and Communications  
Director

If you're planning a merger, acquisition, MBO or restructure and need to chat, in confidence, about your PR and communications strategy, contact our trusted team on [hello@freshfield.com](mailto:hello@freshfield.com).

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