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Title: Policies

Communications policy

This policy outlines in a single document the framework for the Acorn's internal and external communications

The objective of the Communications policy is to help Acorn communicate effectively and transparently by:

- achieving a better understanding of what Acorn offers, its values and identity.
- providing clear and well-judged information appropriate for the needs of the user; and
- arranging its work as efficiently as possible.

Recommendation

Directors and staff are asked for comments and approval.

Acorn Communications Policy

1) Introduction

Acorn recognises that consistent, effective, and appropriate communication – external and internal - is important in achieving its aims, objectives, and policies and to its credibility as an accountable organisation. This document outlines the principles for managing communications, including a summary of key strands of communications, and the responsibilities of staff in relation to communications. The policy can be found on the staff network.

2) Scope

The directors should be familiar with this policy and all other Staff should be aware of it. The aim of the policy is to reduce the risk to the Acorn of damaging or ineffective communication, and to ensure that staff are aware of how communication is best conveyed externally and internally, and who has responsibility for which aspects.

3) Definitions

External communications include all the messages and information that the Acorn presents to different audiences, whether directly (through the website, telephone calls, letters, e-mails, newsletters, marketing materials and press releases) or indirectly through the press and word of mouth.

Internal Communications include all the messages and information (whether verbal or written) passed within Acorn, principally between members of staff, but also between Directors and staff, and to and from management and staff. They include the messages given to those working in franchise companies, in companies helping

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the Acorn on projects.

4) Statement of Principles

The objective of the Communications policy is to help Acorn communicate more effectively by achieving a better understanding of what it offers to clients and by arranging its work as efficiently as possible, and to:

- improve the clarity with which the values and identity of Acorn are understood;
- promote transparent and open communication;
- provide clear and well-judged information at the most appropriate level of detail in relation to the needs of Acorn, Clients and interested parties.
- The improvements and benefits which good communications should provide are:
 - a greater likelihood of achieving the Acorn's aims, objectives and priorities;
 - a more effective and purposeful 'face' to the world
 - providing everyone with the skills to be confident communicators.

General Principles

- All communication is important and needs to be considered carefully.
- External and internal communications will form part of strategic and business planning as well as project and team appraisal (including working with other organisations). Communication between Employees and Clients is accepted as the normal working day between 7:30am and 5pm. However, in some instances such as emergencies etc. clients may contact employees outside these hours on rare occasions.
- Good communications play a very positive role in the day-to-day operations of the company, through the consideration of the content and the audience for any particular message or information to be disseminated.
- Directors and staff will have a responsibility to foster good communications internally and externally
- The Company will foster a culture which encourages transparency of communication, clarity of style and the sharing of best practice and expertise across Acorn.

Principles for managing external communications

Corporate and marketing communications should be considered as part of the wider field of advocacy in which Acorn wishes to:

- reach out to target clients, those in partner organisations and potential participants, where the Acorn is building key clients.
- offer background and corporate information – principally through the website - as a reference source as well as increasing the availability of the services provided, with associated and research information, for a wide range of users.

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- ensure that the visual identity of Acorn, as shown through all its print and digital communications, is clear, coherent and expresses of Acorn's key values.

Principles for managing internal communications

Internal communications are based on active management across Acorn such that:

- staff are informed of the most important information relating to the good management of Acorn such as Business Plan priorities and results on key performance indicators.
- regular exchanges through e-mail, meetings and telephone calls are thoughtful, respectful, efficient, and well disciplined.
- an informal exchange of information is encouraged through the staff notice-boards and staff development events.
- Staff consultation meetings are conducted by the Directors every 4 months.
- **Health & safety information is communicated at 3 monthly H&S meetings, Toolbox talks and newsletters.**
- Toolbox talks are conducted on site by the Project Engineer for that site.

5) Responsibilities

Director

- The Directors are responsible for the overall clarity and coherence of the Acorn's external communications.
- The Directors seek opportunities for good advocacy in order to promote the interests of Acorn.
- The Director works to create an internal culture of open, honest, efficient, and transparent communications.
- Staff

All staff have a responsibility for maintaining good internal and external communications, for suggesting improvements wherever possible and for reporting breaches of the policy.

6) Breach of the Policy

Actions taken by staff in contravention of the Communications Policy will be dealt with by a director. If, in either case, it is a matter which threatens the reputation of Acorn or creates severe disruption then the Acorn's Disciplinary procedure will be followed.

7) Review

The Communications Policy will be reviewed every five years as part of the cycle of reviewing policies and procedures.

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8) Date of Approval

This Communications Policy was reviewed and approved by the Directors annually.

Signed:



Andrew Johnson BEng (Hons)

Position: Joint Managing Director

Date: 4th January 2022

Review Date: 4th January 2023