



Government  
Communication  
Service

# The Government Communication Service The Future of Public Service Communications

## Report and Findings

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HM Government  
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**The Government Communication Service**

The Future of Public Service Communications | Report and Findings

# 1. Introduction



I want to thank all those who participated in the Communications Futures discussion. It's demonstrated that we've got a real challenge ahead to meet the social, economic and technological revolution, but it is one that we must, and will, meet.

The key finding of this report is that the future of communications is about supplying timely and relevant information to our audiences in a way that fits in with their lives. That means communicators must listen as well as broadcast, think about audiences not channels, master new digital technologies and constantly update skill sets in order to keep ahead of the extraordinary pace of change.

The purpose of the Government Communications Service (GCS) in response to this challenge is clear. We are here to deliver world-class communications that support the government's priorities and helps deliver its programmes. Excellent communications also protects and enhances the reputation of the UK at home and overseas. We achieve our objectives by **providing relevant information to people in the way they choose, to enable them to improve their lives.** This core duty to enable people to make informed choices will not change even as the world around us develops at an astonishing pace.

I am grateful to the external experts who have contributed to our thinking. A full list of all those we consulted formally is set out in the Acknowledgements chapter and I hope that more people who are part of the government communications family will take the opportunity to contribute to this critically important discussion.

**Alex Aiken**  
Executive Director of  
Government Communications

## 2. Executive Summary

### Key findings in this chapter:

- The pace of technological change will only quicken
  - Public service communications must adapt or become obsolete
  - Future communications will be about science, not art
- i. By 2025, there will be a world population of around 8 billion, compared to an estimated one trillion connected devices. It is not inconceivable that within a generation, every adult in the UK will be able to connect to everyone else and everyone to almost everything. Whilst predicting the future is very difficult, we must start preparing for it. **Unless public service communications in the UK changes profoundly, one thing that can be said for certain is that it will be left behind.**
  - ii. The response to this challenge means routinely applying data; developing new relationships with our audiences; building our understanding of behavioural science and building trust through two-way and open engagement with key audiences. It means creating responsive media centres which will produce ready-to-publish content, prioritising new technology and developing and retaining talent with a commitment from senior leaders across GCS.
  - iii. The work that has been done to date has given a clear direction for the approach that public service communications should take to deliver world class outputs and results. **Communicators will increasingly require different and more technical skill sets.** They need to be familiar with data analytics, content creation, behavioural change techniques and be adept at building alliances. They must also be confident in applying this in line with civil service values to speak authoritatively to ministers and officials to argue the best professional case. For example, we'll need to use data to evaluate communications in real time, requiring new levels of flexibility and agility to be able to respond to issues as they change right before us.
  - iv. The **speed of technological change is unrelenting** and will only quicken. This virtually unfettered and unprecedented sharing of knowledge and information is already causing significant and complex social change. The scale of this transformation will continue to quicken. As we were told by Google during this project: "Technology will never be as slow as it is today". Communications teams will have to accelerate their move to collaborate with partners, use insight to identify and nudge audiences and communicate across a range of platforms.
  - v. This report along with the **Digital Capability Review of Government Communications** has shown that while public service communications is improving, it must accelerate the pace of innovation, targeting and measurement to meet these new challenges. As part of this report we have identified 14 transformative technologies that we believe will be critical to the practice of communications in the future.

- vi. Evidence supplied to this report has conclusively shown that **communication must be built around the citizen**, delivering information to them in the way that they want, not broadcast at them in the traditional model. To quote one participant: “Go to where the audience is, because the audience, not the government chooses the communication tools.” Unless we can meet this key challenge, public service communications will fall behind the curve and risk further decline in the public’s trust with government and its institutions. In this sense future communications will be about the application of science, not artistic interpretation. This report recommends that government communicators adopt the Government Digital Service ‘Design Principles’ – particularly the focus on audience needs and gradually developing and testing communication interventions as a core canon of our profession.
- vii. The rise of more values-focused politics (e.g. the Greens and UKIP appealing to very specific and strongly opposed sets of values) means we need communications to be relevant to many different people holding very contradictory views. This requires communications segmentation to be more detailed and universally applicable as many of the insoluble ‘wicked problems’ we face will often feature clashes between very contradictory values, which public bodies, unlike the political parties, have to work with without fear or favour. We need to focus on the ‘software’ of communications such as segmentation and not just the hardware.
- viii. Government has an ethical role to play in its communications. For basic information, at times of crisis and in promoting Britain overseas, our agencies and departments are seen as valued and trusted public services. However it’s clear that government still has some way to go to be seen as the trusted voice in some fields and GCS needs to **build a network of third party groups to amplify messages**. Greater efforts are needed to become a trusted and authoritative voice among our audiences. Put simply, we must be more open and transparent to build this trust. We can also use civil servants who work on the frontline to help explain policies and services through traditional and social media. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) now regularly use over 100 job centre managers to help people into work and their Twitter Q&A, available on YouTube, is a good example of public servants helping the public. Building partnerships is essential. A mix of public and private providers working together will increase innovation and delivery capacity.
- ix. Measurement of impact is also vital and we need a wide range of metrics that go beyond short-term contractual commitments but also sustain long-term interventions. New work on the practice of communications evaluation, particularly the recommendations of the GCS Evaluation Council and the “Architecture of Listening” approach put forward by Professor Jim MacNamara, is critical to a communication approach that uses data and measurement to adapt tactics in the light of audience feedback.

- x. There is still too much government marketing that uses TV and radio channels. We need to move more quickly to ‘digital by default’ marketing and combine campaigns to target specific audiences. We have identified 30 separate government campaigns aimed at businesses which could be combined and reduced. We believe that Armed Forces marketing could be delivered more effectively as a combined ‘UK Armed Forces’ brand than six separate Army, Navy, Airforce, Royal Marine, Reserve and Joint Operations strands. The GREAT campaign which unites trade, tourism and education marketing for the UK, and was recently endorsed by the National Audit Office, is a template for a modern campaigning approach.
- xi. Procurement needs to support risk and innovation in this changing environment and not just be safety first. Procurement also needs to be for the longer term so programmes and interventions run for at least three years rather than annual or shorter periods.
- xii. Reports looking at the current state or future of communications can often be a snapshot in time, reflecting the trends and viewpoints of the era in which they were commissioned and published. In order to maintain momentum and deliver continuous innovation and improvement, we need to be constantly challenging ourselves and our ways of working. That is why we are calling on everyone who contributed to this report to join us as we create the first ‘**UK communications futures laboratory**’ or ‘UK communications futures council’.

We don’t have all the answers, so we ask that everyone with an interest gets involved and helps to ensure that public service communications in the UK is world beating. We need to make sure we are continually evolving our skills, tools and knowledge to keep in step with the unrelenting advances in technology.

- xiii. In summary, this is not a one-time change programme. The dramatic speed of technological change will only quicken and to progress, we must overcome any obstacles that are in our path. Without embracing this fundamental change we risk making public service communications obsolete. But **with our collaborative approach and relentless focus on excellence**, together we can deliver world class communications on behalf of the people and communities we serve.

# 3. How Government communications is changing

## Key findings in this chapter:

- GCS delivers world class communications to support government priorities
  - The OASIS framework and the 4 'I's will adapt but remain the foundation
- i. The aim of GCS is to deliver world class communications that supports government priorities. It helps improve the lives of people and communities in the UK, supports the effective operation of our public services, and delivers responsive and informative communications 24 hours a day. It will achieve this by building a more skilled and unified profession and is, therefore, always looking forward, always seeking to innovate and adopt global best practice.
  - ii. The Government Communications Plan 2014/15 gave, for the first time, a cross-government view of priorities, with all departments working together to focus on agreed themes and, for the first time, quarterly reporting on progress. This identified that we achieved 75% of our campaign goals over the year.
  - iii. A competency framework has been structured around the four stages of a strategic communication planning process: Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact. This framework remains essential to delivering world class communications.

## The 4 'I's framework

- **Insight:** Gain an accurate and deep understanding of the issue(s). Use insight to identify target audiences and partners and to inform communication objectives, messages and solutions. Audience focused behavioural insights are the key to effective external and internal communications.
  - **Ideas:** Develop the communication strategy and plan. Select channels and develop key messages and content for target audiences. Identify evaluation criteria.
  - **Implementation:** Develop and implement effective communication strategies and plans. Work with stakeholders and partners to deliver communications.
  - **Impact:** Assess the impact and effectiveness of communications. Review achievement of objectives. Identify lessons learnt and share feedback.
- iv. A review of the effectiveness of GCS, published in December 2014, identified common characteristics that underpin successful activity:
    - Tightly-focused objectives and hard-wired evaluation: campaigns that have very clear objectives and structured evaluation built in are more likely to be successful.
    - Audience-focused *behavioural insights*: powerful audience insights are the key to effective external and internal communications.

- Integration and cross-government working: when policy, delivery and communications are fully integrated, the results can be very powerful.
  - *Partnerships* campaigning: the government can be a very effective convenor of like-minded partners who, by acting together, are far more effective and credible.
  - Cost-effective campaigning: many campaigns cost very little. Instead, they combine individual imagination with a wide range of owned and earned channels to deliver their messages effectively.
  - Digital delivery: innovative campaigns have digital and social media designed in from the start, rather than as an afterthought.
  - Consistency is the key: long running campaigns repay previous investment by remaining highly effective even when budgets are reduced.
- v. The embedded OASIS framework and campaign characteristics are the bedrock of the strategic approach that GCS takes to communications and will remain unchanged. But the ambition to deliver successful digital communications has always been at the forefront of the GCS drive to support communicators to have the right skills. The latest work of the Future of Public Service Communications group builds on the work of the independent Digital Capability Review of 2013.

**Findings from the 2013 review relevant to this report include:**

- vi. Much digital communication and engagement is still delivered in transmit mode, following the old ‘top-down’ one-way broadcasting of messages model, rather than delivering two-way ongoing conversations. Other findings included:
- There is an over-riding pre-occupation with risks and a resistance to change.
  - Skills deficiencies are mainly to do with confidence and judgement in using technology in a professional context.
  - There are some good examples of video, animation, still and digital tools; there is a lack of diversity in types of content. There is still an ethos of ‘build it and they will come’ and ‘sending out stuff’.
  - There is no clear leadership in developing digital communication and engagement.
- vii. A set of principles were agreed:
- *Without clear planning and objective-setting what we do is unlikely to be effective.* It is critical that the objectives for the use of digital communications are clearly aligned to departmental, policy or service objectives, in order to be efficient, effective, and get support from senior teams.
  - *Intelligent evaluation is essential.* Measurement criteria must be clearly aligned to the objective and intended outcomes.

- *Content is crucial. Thankfully, Government is not short of engaging material.* Be creative in developing it – be driven by what is most appropriate to the audience and what can be done to time and cost.
- *Delivering the content effectively is as important as developing it in the first place.* Communicators should decide who they want to reach and what the best way to reach them is while they develop the content, not after. This should include via third party platforms.
- *Digital is mainstream. It shouldn't be 'owned' by a particular team.* For the mainstream communicator, effective use of the essential digital tools to do your job should be supported and made mandatory as soon as possible.
- *Attitudes to risk need to be balanced, logical and informed by business need.*
- Change needs strong leadership, and an intelligent, *realistic approach to concerns about risk.*

## 4. The communications challenge of the changing society

### Key findings in this chapter:

- Four major areas for all communication teams to consider: use of digital; communications trends; building public trust; and strengthening our professional capability
  - All government departments must move to implement the findings of the Communications Futures improvement projects
  - The report findings are already informing GCS planning for 2015/16
- i. The ambition is that by 2018, GCS will be world leading. To be exceptional, we need to improve continuously and focus on horizon scanning – anticipating and responding to key communication trends.
  - ii. Communications Futures was one of 12 GCS projects to improve government communications in 2013/14. This sits alongside initiatives like IC Excellence - raising standards in internal communications, and shared services such as Design102 - which produces cost effective design work for many government departments.
  - iii. We've discussed the digital, personalised and mobile conversation that is already defining the way we practice mass communications; where we might be in 2025 and beyond; and what this means for public service communicators, and for government campaigns to improve people's lives. The foundations for this work were laid by the independent Digital Capability Review of 2013.
  - iv. This report outlines a way forward for every Whitehall department and agency, local authority and public body, to better engage with the needs of their audiences. It will also form the basis of GCS's planning for 2015/16 and beyond.
  - v. In order to prepare for the future, GCS commissioned the Future of Public Service Communications group and asked them to explore the following four themes with external experts and thorough research:
    - **Digital communications:** disruptor technologies, online audiences, content development, and algorithms that determine news streams.
    - **Communication trends:** big data, behavioural science and insight-led marketing, and demographic change.
    - **Public trust and engagement:** Trust in authorities (central and local), citizen apathy, and negative customer experiences.
    - **People and capability:** building communications capability, talent management and leadership, and cross-government delivery of communications.
  - vi. As a consequence we are better able to anticipate the direction that science and technology is likely to take in the years to come as society and demographics change. The findings of these group discussions and other research is combined in the body of this report.

## 5. Key trends identified by the project

### Key findings in this chapter:

- The web has already transformed almost every aspect of our lives
  - We must be mindful of the digital divide, now and for the future
  - The top down 'broadcast' mode of communications is over
- i. As the recently published digital inclusion report states about Britain today: "The web has transformed almost every aspect of public, private and work life. It has underpinned our new economy from changing the way every workplace communicates, to creating entire new industries. It is reshaping government through improved public services and improving transparency through open data." "And it has improved people's lives, whether through cutting household bills, finding a job or maintaining contact with distant friends and relatives. For business and voluntary organisations, going online can provide ways to reach more customers and reduce operating costs. The internet also provides broader benefits, by helping to address wider social and economic issues like reducing isolation and improving health."
- ii. Digital inclusion clearly includes engaging with older people and the disabled. The danger is that 'digital laggards' could see themselves as yet another stigmatised group. We welcome the public service developing digital friends' programmes, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/civil-service-digital-friends-to-help-get-the-uk-online>. We need to develop an ongoing culture and skills change programme with supportive training for staff.
- iii. The digital inclusion strategy adds: "Today, the web has 2.4 billion users worldwide. To put this incredible speed of adoption in some context, radio took 38 years to reach 50 million users, television took 13 years, web took 4 years and Facebook took just 10 months."
- iv. Technology does not stand still as the rise of the smartphone shows so it is not just about getting people online, but helping them keep up with changes to the online world. In 2013, 89% of young people used a smartphone or tablet to go online, up from 43% in 2010. Studies have shown that 26% of two-year-olds in Sweden are online "at least once a day".
- v. We know that people face increasing demands on their attention, facing up to three times as many messages as they did in 1986. (<http://www.daniellevitin.com/theorganizedmind/>)
- vi. The digital inclusion report adds: "However recent research has found that 21% of Britain's population lacks the basic digital skills and capabilities required to realise the benefits of the internet. Around a third of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) don't have a website, and when we include voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) this figure rises to 50%. Independent analysts Booz and Co. estimate full digital take up could add £63 billion value to the UK economy."

- vii. If there is a digital divide now it will still exist in 2020. The divide's existence will be magnified by the new killer apps – who has access and who does not, beneficiaries and those left out. Increased bandwidth and new compression technologies will allow for more of the same as we have today: more entertainment, more commercial activities, more and better communications. However, inequalities could creep in as we should not expect these bandwidth increases to be evenly distributed, and many who cannot afford access to increased bandwidth will be left with fewer options.
- viii. The implications of this demographic and technological change require us to think radically differently. By 2020, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) predicts that people over 50 will make up almost half (47%) the adult population. By 2025, the BBC says that most people in the UK are likely to get their television programmes over the internet and that “the aerial will have gone the way of the typewriter”.
- ix. It is understood that the demographic change and a more open society means the top down broadcast (one-way) mode of communication is over. We will also be more reliant on intermediaries to deliver our messages or to encourage communities to take a course of action.
- x. People's basic interactions and their ability to 'be together' and collaborate has the potential to revolutionise society for the better. The opportunities to meet in cyberspace will also mean that the boundary between being 'here' and being 'there' shrinks and people become more accepting of virtual presence.
- xi. The changes in capability (i.e. in bandwidth, computation, storage etc.) by several orders of magnitude are inevitable over the next ten years. “Moore's law” means that computer power doubles about every eighteen months. Such changes will produce completely new and exciting applications. Technology is continually changing and shaping how we can and need to communicate with our customers.
- xii. Augmented reality may extend people's sense and understanding of their real-life surroundings and virtual reality will make some spaces, such as gaming worlds and other simulated environments, even more compelling places to visit.
- xiii. The connection between humans and technology will grow ever stronger as we gather, assess, compare and display real-time personalised information in an 'always-on' environment. High-bandwidth and high-definition communication will allow the emergence of what will be called 'emotional computing'.
- xiv. We also know in contrast that whilst much communication will migrate to digital, to build deeper trust, authentic face-to-face communications is the most powerful way to get a message across (<http://www.susanpinker.com/the-village-effect/>).
- xv. Disruptive technology is a new technology that completely changes the way things are done and overturns a business model. Just-in-time learning will continue to expand, permitting people of all ages to find the information they need when they need it. It will permit communicators to focus on creativity and critical thinking.

## 6. ‘The big 14’ game changers

### Key findings in this chapter:

- Future communicators to have data, algorithm and coding skills, not writing
  - Communicators should address ‘The Big 14’ game changers
  - Technological change will dramatically change public service communications
- i. Previously, successful communicators would have had to be able to write and brief well and be proficient at working a fax and, more recently, a mobile or smartphone and tablet. The next generation of communications practitioners will require a radically different skillset. They’ll need to be experts at utilising data, algorithms and coding.
  - ii. The Future Communications work has identified 14 hardware and software technologies that we feel will dramatically shape the future of public service communications – in other words, game changers. They are split into three broad categories: landscape (the broad context), technology (the platforms) and software applications (how things will be delivered). We propose this list is the starting point for a discussion about the trends and options that are likely to create the biggest shift in the way communicators will work since the advent of the mass media. We would urge all practitioners to read this section closely and join the discussion as to what we will need to apply to our communications activities in order to meet the anticipated expectations of our audiences.

### The Big 14 – Landscape

- iii. **Quantum Computing (QC)** though in its infancy, will revolutionize crucial areas such as computer vision and pattern recognition. QC makes it possible to efficiently analyse and intelligently apply vast amounts of data, and translate into meaningful actions. It will enable artificial intelligence, the ability to learn and evolve in an intuitive way, and deliver communications that are increasingly appropriate, relevant and timely – even making decisions on the user’s behalf based on their preferences, emotions and beliefs.
- iv. **The Open Intellectual Property (IP)** and open source movement. Currently the term “open source” refers mostly to software and open access publishing that is distributed along with a licence for others to use and develop. This is now a permanent fixture in society. This movement will accelerate innovation and the diffusion of technology and open access to new advancements. Open Intellectual Property (IP) is now rapidly expanding into areas where property was traditionally proprietary, such as hardware design. This continued growth of the open IP movement will continue to generate significant benefits to society as innovations are crowd sourced and distributed widely.
- v. **Serve the customer in their world**  
Users will have greater control of the communications and content they receive, how and when. The ability to filter unwanted messages will reduce message redundancy but will also reduce the mass market approach of ‘opportunity to see’. Though the number of channels is proliferating, the contradiction is that the number of doors

the user has 'open' for communicating is reducing. We're already seeing (with the early stages of programmatic buying), that consumers are starting to turn off when advertising doesn't feel entirely personalised. We need to serve the customer in their world.

- vi. **Highly accessible online courses** have the potential to significantly transform the higher educational landscape, in the same way as the Open University has opened up education for many. Open online courses will provide opportunities through increasing access, building capability to innovate, and using new technology to raise expectations and bring these new ways into the mainstream.

## The Big 14 – Technology

- vii. **Universal Memory** refers to a computer storage that successfully combines cost, speed and non-volatility with infinite durability, freeing up the computer to do more.
- viii. While the availability of the **multi-core (many-cores)** embedded marketplace is nothing new, there are now a variety of devices to achieve high levels of multicore integration. These offer many benefits, including smaller, lower-cost, lower-power, and higher-performing end products for use in medical imaging, industrial automation, mission-critical systems, communications infrastructure, and high-performance computing. The next stage is to embed multicore technology in lower end user devices such as wearable devices, cameras and smartphones to service a mobile society with 'always-on' communications,

reception and user interaction. The impact on communications will be, for example, 24/7 offices to cope with 'always on' marketing and news to deliver to the 'always on' and 'always expecting' society.

- ix. **'The Internet of Things'**. This will enable businesses to reduce costs through automation, improve loss/wastage, and have shorter durations for supply chains. It will enable users to engage and interact with content in a mobile, immediate and self-controlled manner.
- x. **Silicon photonics** is the study and application of photonic systems which use silicon as an optical medium. This technology will address the bandwidth, latency, and energy challenges in the fabric of high-end systems. It will lead to flatter, more accessible networks and the ability to rapidly process and deliver on the outcomes of the analysis of big data across these networks.
- xi. **Cloud computing**. The real promise of cloud computing is the way that it allows the creation of true virtual data centre infrastructures, fully enabling mobile activity.
- xii. **Software-Defined Networks (open flow)**. Open Flow enables networks to evolve, by giving a remote controller the power to modify the behaviour of network devices, through a well-defined "forwarding instruction set". The growing system of products includes routers, switches, virtual switches, and access points from a range of vendors. This will facilitate the control of information sent and received and the timing and placement of content, enabling remote control of customer relationship management (CRM) based on real-time data.

## The Big 14 – Applications

xiii. **High-Performance Computing** is still leading the advances in computing, but it is also being commoditised. Power bottlenecks are becoming the biggest challenge for advancing state-of-the-art computing that can deliver user-led innovation. However, new advances in quantum computing and silicon photonics has the potential to overcome these barriers.

xiv. **Platforms.** They will be a variety of expanding platforms to deliver messages enabled by new technologies. Government communication needs to stay on the leading edge of technology, enabling customers and staff to access services, and use new technologies and platforms to communicate with the public. Communicators will need new skills such as coding, as digital channels become the most important way in which we communicate.

xv. **Natural User Interfaces** (NUIs) are interactions between humans and machines that are becoming more natural and intuitive as people can increasingly use touch, gesture, and speech to interact with their computing devices. Sensors, extreme processing power, and connectivity are already with us.

xvi. **Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition** unlocks information in pictures, video, ranger data, and allied signals. Current research and use is focussing on face and pattern recognition to improve computer security and automate routine operations. The future potential is huge, from computer learning and motion

analysis through to brain imaging and response mechanism. This opens the door to artificial intelligence and thought processing. How users interact with communications will change dramatically through the ability for technology to truly learn how the content is delivered, automated and processed, and for users to interact with this technology, at a higher intellectual and cognitive level.

# 7. Communications futures project findings

## Key findings in this chapter:

- The three key communications skills of the future will be data utilisation, marketing, and behaviour change communications

### The practice of communications

- i. We create 2.5 trillion bytes of data every year, which means that 90% of the data in the world today has been created in the last two years alone. Today less than 2% of information is non-digital.
- ii. Government has some of the largest datasets in the UK, put at approximately 30-45 million individual records. This data is of great value to government and partners, if used correctly. We could use it to help us predict what will happen: through using non-linear and multi-dimensional causal (behavioural) and inter-relationships analysis, we should be able to predict the effects of our campaigns.
- iii. Big data has changed the way knowledge is developed and transferred within society. We need to be open to other organisations outside of government, and other 'actors' with an interest in local data sources, who can work in collaboration with government.
- iv. The emergence of new channels (and the reinvention of old channels) is fundamentally an opportunity to enhance and deliver sustainable communications. New tools are required to harness the complexity and opportunity of multi-channels, namely:
  - agile marketing – the use of big data in real time allows our marketing activity to be adapted to changing customer feedback and context. Through historical and predictive modelling, we can calculate the attribution of activity and optimise our campaigns to maximum efficiency. Big data provides the capability to adapt live campaigns;
  - cloud development platforms could allow experiment in a 'rapid test and learn' methodology with the insights derived from analysis. This is similar to Formula 1 where real-time data is collected at every stage of each lap, built on the insight gained during practice and qualifying rounds. We could use big data for testing and benchmarking (quality and confidence limits), automating what works and focusing resources on what makes the difference; and
  - better co-ordination to create a single version of our insight. Insight teams could work alongside PR/marketing teams asking the right questions. We could turn big data into actionable insight that delivers sustainable solutions.
- v. Behaviour change is linked to big data transformation. The shift from an 'Age of Deference' (where 'Authority' is at the top of the pyramid and 'Peers' are at the bottom) - to an 'Age of Reference' (where 'Authority' and 'Peers' roles are reversed), is significant. Social movements can also use free data and open source programmes to grow their influence.

- vi. Behaviour change can be difficult to attain because it requires skills in, and an understanding of applied social policy, social psychology, traditional economics and behavioural economics. This is in addition to skills such as PR and marketing. Using this science in a creative, innovative, calculative and risk tolerant way is proven to deliver results and save money.
- vii. We need to think about how to achieve the ‘right nudge’, identifying what is the most cost effective intervention. This could relate to what people are thinking, their interaction with physical affordances, regulation or social pressures. Communicators should consider applying action research, using small scale experiments and mixed design teams, working with local stakeholders and then scaling up.
- viii. It is vital for communicators to spend time ‘on the front line’ to build insights and have the credibility to say “we understand our audiences”. We also need to get the balance right between providing information to help people make informed choices and creating a ‘tyranny of choice’ where people are manipulated simply because of the weight of information provided.
- ix. The marketing function (public and private) has to rigorously justify every penny it spends and communicators need data to make smarter decisions to save costs. In the past, accountability meant that the agency just had to take a picture to prove the billboard was there. Now accountability is about ‘who responded to that advert? Where did they go? Where did we reach them? When are they most alert? When are they happiest?’
- x. Too much government marketing still focuses on TV and radio channels. We need to move quickly to ‘digital by default’ marketing and combine campaigns to target specific audiences. We have identified 30 separate government campaigns aimed at businesses which could be combined and reduced. We believe that Armed Forces marketing could be delivered more effectively as a combined ‘UK Armed Forces’ brand than six separate Army, Navy, Airforce, Royal Marine, Reserve and Joint Operations strands. The GREAT campaign which unites trade, tourism and education marketing for the UK, and was recently endorsed by the National Audit Office, is a template for a modern campaigning approach.
- xi. Data allows (partnership) content to be delivered in a timely manner at the point of need, automating activity, customising the routine, and allowing resources to focus on what makes a sustainable difference. New customer interfaces across all channels and big data will enable rational and emotional targeting of relevant content based on data profiling and behaviours.
- xii. There is huge value in the government own ‘brands’, as well as data. This value could be realised if GCS can leverage partnership marketing (financial and in-kind) from private sector firms keen to work with the public sector, for either competitive advantage, corporate social responsibility or both. It will require us using private sector tools to estimate the value of brands such as Change for Life, the Great campaign, and Disability Confident.

xiii. The ever increasing number of customer touch-points and enabling technologies has had a drastic impact on how we interact with our customers. It is allowing genuine flexibility and individualism in content delivery. Customers want their own online content on their own platforms and expect varied content from many sources. We need to join up and be a part of this. We need the level and diversity of content to make an effective and efficient impact.

xiv. Given constraints on public finances, partnership marketing is likely to be a significant part of the GCS approach for the vast majority of marketing campaigns going forward.

xv. In a world where a significant minority of the public act like ‘journalists’ in seeking to monitor and hold public bodies to account, government communications will come under much greater challenge – especially in the early stages of a campaign seeking to promote pro-social behaviour change.

xvi. Low-entry cost online activity will enable members of the public, who hold opposing views, to be much more organised than the past.

### Building Our Capacity

xvii. The GCS should support people through this change, upskilling our teams with the capability to meet the changing environment and to respond in real-time to what customers want. This should form part of the wider leadership challenge for the civil service – supported by the new Civil Service Leadership Statement. This states that, as

civil service leaders, we take responsibility for the effective delivery of the government’s programme and ministers’ priorities, living the civil service’s values and serving the public. The Leadership Statement focuses on three themes: **‘Inspiring** - about our work and its future; **Confident** – in our engagement; and **Empowering** – our teams to deliver.

xviii. Our research found that companies which manage talent well have seven features in common. These are:

1. Talent management is identified as vital to the success of the business
2. Identifying successors is an integral part of senior people’s jobs
3. The quality of talent management is high
4. The careers of top performers are planned with a long term view
5. There is a shared idea of what ‘talent’ looks like
6. The needs of the business override individual departments functions
7. Talent management happens within the context of a clear business strategy.

xix. The progress that GCS has made so far is impressive, and the quality of raw talent in the civil service is high. Continuing to raise the bar on standards is crucial – even if doing so makes it harder to recruit.

xx. Communication capability reviews across Whitehall and some Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) have given us evidence of where we need to focus on improving skills and performance.

xxi. Alongside this, some important – primarily tactical – steps have been taken to improve standards and standardisation. These include: launching a profession-wide set of core competencies; introducing a talent management programme for senior staff; developing plans for the profession’s first fast stream programme; and increasing by more than 800% the number of learning and development opportunities for people working in government communications.

xxii. While we are beginning to feel more like a single profession, we do not share people and skills widely, efficiently or even generously. And whilst we have identified capability gaps, we are not yet recruiting for skills we are likely to need in three, five and even ten years’ time.

xxiii. Careful thought needs to be given to the GCS offer for employees. Why would people want to come and work for the GCS? What development opportunities are available? Why is GCS a great place to develop a career? The sense of being part of a single profession is a very positive ‘sell’, in terms of attracting, developing and retaining talent. The offer should clearly set out the considerable opportunities offered by GCS, including a range of issues of national and international importance, and a focus on career development, learning, support and flexible working.

xxiv. Encouraging flexibility of resource across GCS was discussed and the following areas have been identified as being important to

help build a flexible workforce:

- recruiting and developing people in accordance with values and assessing attitude and commitment as well as specific experience.
- promoting leadership development at all levels, reinforcing positive behaviour through recognition, and challenging poor behaviour.
- career counselling at regular intervals.
- a strong performance management and an emphasis on building capability.
- bringing cohorts together from different organisations across GCS so that people can learn from each other’s experiences.
- the use of secondments outside of the civil service to develop and motivate people, raise standards, keep ideas fresh, nurture creativity and introduce different perspectives.

## 8. What we will do next and do differently

### Key findings in this chapter:

- GCS will quickly adopt the report findings and seven themes
- GCS will equip people with the skills they need and develop talent
- GCS will keep pace with technological change with a comms futures 'laboratory'

- As a result of the discussion groups and research we have undertaken for this project, we are proposing to make the following changes to allow us to adapt as quickly as the technology changes.
- GCS will continuously improve itself and its people, and become a crucible for innovation. However, this strategy must encourage others - whether that is business or the voluntary sector or individuals - to become more involved in delivering government communications or pressing for different types of campaigns.
- A challenging programme of improvements from 2015 will support this continuous innovation. Government has historically been at least one step behind digital advances but simply adopting the latest digital channels will not meet our ambitions. We must position GCS at the forefront of digital communications and become one of the innovators. Government communications must become 'digital by default' and apply data and science to reshape communications practice. This means adopting an approach based on

seven themes that have emerged through this work:

- 1. Apply Big Data to predict the effects of our campaigns.**
  - Respond to data so content is delivered in a timely manner at the point of need via insight-led marketing, automating activity, and allowing resources to concentrate on what makes a measurable difference.
  - Create a central insight hub to identify and analyse key data sources from across government and beyond, bringing data to life in partnership with industry analysts and data experts.

*GCS will create a single repository for communications insight for all government departments and ALBs*

- 2. Develop a new relationship with our audiences in response to demographic change, adapt our content, and drive behaviour change.**
  - Have one collective view of engagement with trusted voices, channels and intermediaries, setting a clear strategy to develop networks and partnership opportunities to benefit all departments.
  - Tackle apathy by making change tangible. Engagement needs to focus on visible service issues that make a genuine difference.
  - Make an emotional connection with those we wish to inform or influence.

- Co-produce communications with individuals and organisations the public can relate to and trust.
- Identify and model effective and innovative engagement with digital audiences through the GCS Virtual Digital Centre of Expertise.

*GCS will create audience, not policy, led communications as the basis for cross-Whitehall campaigns.*

*GCS will develop and implement a model for government communications that is insight-led, customer centric and focused on behaviour change and digital marketing.*

### 3. **Build our understanding of behavioural science theory** to apply to communications in a systematic way to all campaigns.

- Pilot 'action-based research' and develop guidance for GCS communicators on nudge theory.
- Make understanding and adoption of behavioural science techniques an essential tool for any government communicator.

*GCS will adopt action-based research and behavioural change as a default to all government communications campaigns.*

### 4. **Create a structure and content for messages** that builds trust

- Develop proposals on citizen consent and public trust in government communications, focusing on the use of new technology, big data and

online personal boundaries for future government campaigns.

- Learn from the best examples of building trust and engagement in the public sector, focusing on open policy making and redesigning services.
- Trial and showcase new ways of communicating with people on issues that matter.
- Report back on engagement to make it a two-way process.
- Audit skills and experience across GCS to ensure we are harnessing existing resources to their full potential.
- Showcase the talent and performance within GCS across the wider communications network.
- Gaining the consent of citizens is likely to require increasing numbers of independent accreditation processes. Communications will need to be accredited for fairness and independence, as with the Bank of England and Offices of Budget Responsibility.

*GCS will focus on the core communications elements that will build trust: leadership, brand and strategy. **Leadership** is having clarity about what you stand for and making sure it is understood by the whole organisation. **Brand** is having a clear sense of purpose and believing and living your values. **Strategic communications** is having the right skills to improve your reputation.*

**5. Build responsive media centres** *which will produce ready-to-publish content*

- These media centres will produce ready-to-publish content for external editorial outlets on all platforms and address breaking issues in real-time. These media centres also need to continue to be able to respond to the demands of content creators outside Whitehall – in other words, everyone from the local newspaper to Mumsnet. This will be especially important in crisis communications and where change is contested. The commercial and quasi-state [BBC] media are also adopting digital products and services; their reach and total influence may decline, but they are not going away.
- Design centres to produce word, video, and sound for a range of media.
- Create engine rooms from which specific tailored content can be pulled into the most relevant context, using for example, proximity marketing.
- Encourage a wider use of analytics as engineering, protocols driven by algorithms are likely to make the majority of editorial decisions in the future.

*GCS will develop a modern communications operating model – which will have media and digital at its heart – and will be the standard approach for government communications.*

**6. Prioritise new technology** *making all communications fit for current and future environments.*

- Create a ‘futures laboratory’ with industry leaders to scope digital-focused futures activity and shape government communications strategies.
- Explore recognition software which, in an always-on environment, will make digital marketing part of a ‘real’ world. It can be accessed when ‘right’ for the user, assisted by the push CRM algorithms and marketing techniques. The channel of choice will be defined and ‘opened’ by the user.

*GCS will create a Communications Futures Council or Laboratory with public and private analysts, to ensure that public service communications stays ahead of emerging trends.*

*GCS will expand the role of the Evaluation Council to test major departmental campaign proposals ahead of formal Professional Assurance Assessment – to ensure that objectives, digital components and opportunities to reach audiences have been fully considered.*

**7. Identify, develop and retain talent** *with a commitment from senior leaders across GCS. Government communicators will have a career in communications and GCS standards should encompass all public service communications. In addition:*

- Our people will be recruited and developed in accordance with public sector values and assessed for attitude and commitment to

government communications as well as specific experience.

- A Senior Talent Forum will identify, manage and develop the existing talent within the GCS. The aim is to meet our critical business needs whilst also stretching our best people so they are capable of taking up the most senior GCS roles in the future.
- Two new talent programmes for ‘early’ and ‘emerging’ talent will give our people exposure to different types of work and leadership development to help them take the next steps in their careers.
- We will use interchange secondments to organisations outside the civil service, and offer GCS roles in return – to develop and motivate people, raise standards, nurture creativity and introduce different perspectives.
- We will make clear the behaviours we expect leaders to demonstrate and will reinforce this through the promotion of leadership development at all levels, recognising and rewarding positive behaviour. We will develop the communications skills of the future e.g. analysis, behavioural science and digital.
- We will help equip our people with the skills they need to do their jobs now and in the future, led by external experts.
- We will offer mentoring to all government communicators.

*GCS has launched a Fast Stream programme and offered 1500 Aspire training places.*

*GCS will ensure that government communicators undertake four pieces of Continuous Professional Development, including digital development.*

*GCS will have a People and Talent Team, including directors of communications and external representatives to nurture and train our colleagues to become future leaders.*

## 9. Conclusion

### Key findings in this chapter:

- We need to build public trust through our communications
  - Communications will be about science, not art
  - Public service communications must keep pace with technology change
- i. The world is changing and government communications is operating in a much more complex environment and needs to respond in a way that retains and builds public trust. Public service communications of the future will be about science, not art. What we must achieve is the convenient and timely delivery of information that allows people to live their lives well.
  - ii. Since its launch in January 2014, GCS has been driving professional and effective communications, improving the delivery of government campaigns and the capability of its communicators. We need to do more. By using the findings of this report, we will shape our planning for 2015/16 and beyond, creating a modern communications operating model that is fit for purpose. We will seize the unprecedented opportunity that technology and new social networks offer, so that we deliver reliable information to citizens in the way that they choose.
  - iii. With so many competing voices and opinions, greater efforts are needed to become a highly trusted and authoritative voice among our audiences. This means that we will need to build new alliances and partnerships with individuals, organisations and other public bodies. This will be a key objective of our evolving approach. We know that we must adopt digital practices and always be ahead of trends, using the right data to shape and evaluate what we do.
  - iv. We also need to recognise that a gap could emerge between online conversations and what happens in spaces less frequented by public policy professionals, both online and offline. We should always adopt an inclusive strategy and never see one element as a panacea.
  - v. Our previous Digital Capability Review found that whilst improving, GCS is not keeping pace at the same speed as society is changing. Through adopting the recommendations in this report, we are confident we can secure a bright future for public service communications.

# A. Four case studies

## In order to supplement our work, we have looked at four case studies

### CASE STUDY 1

**According to the Kjaer Global, a trend forecasting consultancy, the following global key trends have been identified:**

- ‘The internet of things’ is here already and by 2020, over 30 billion devices will be connected. We will see ‘deep learning’ inspired by artificial neural networks and evolved ‘augmented reality’. The internet will soon be connected to everything – including people.
- ‘Crowdfunding platforms’ are set to explode. Increasingly, people will want to ‘own a share’ in the start-ups they buy from – being respected partners rather than just consumers.
- Authenticity and craftsmanship are in demand as we return to local sourcing and manufacturing. Businesses and individuals will join forces to make a positive impact for the greater good of all. Agility and scalability is said to be key.
- Active monitoring and real-time health diagnostics will help people to live healthier lives and play a key role in prevention. Healthcare professionals will increasingly drive change.
- The current generation of data driven journalists who say they can predict the future will be joined by the general population who will merge big data with their social content. Using crowd sourcing, it will be easier than ever to gather information so everyone will be able to participate. Organisations will use new tools to predict behaviours and buying attitudes.
- A mobile workforce of over 1bn is said to already be in existence. They will be looking for ‘affinity networks’ and familiar touch points that let them learn and share across conventional borders.
- The growth of disruptive technologies is already redefining learning and will result in major educational transformation.
- Happiness is not necessarily dependent upon consumption. We might look elsewhere for new ideals to define a fulfilled life. It is said to be inevitable that future economic models will consider data measuring happiness and that business leaders will be influenced by this.

Source: [www.kjaer-global.com](http://www.kjaer-global.com)

## CASE STUDY 2

### The 'digital tabloid'

Emily Bell, Columbia University's Director of the Tow Centre for Digital Journalism, recently delivered the 2015 Hugh Cudlipp lecture, providing insight into the media's response to becoming part of "one continuous global information loop".

- The demands of web scale economics have torpedoed the local news model. Attaining size means surrendering control to the systems that deliver.
- The numbers suggest that the super platforms are the 'free press'. You Tube has 1bn visitors a month. 30% in the USA say Facebook is a key way to get news. The platforms might change but the behaviours will not – these numbers will only increase.
- The paths that stories must travel down are being shaped by technologies beyond our control – a vast new global tapestry of conversation and information.
- Aggregation and authentication is the central function of a newsroom. No matter where a journalist's work is published, it is now discussed in a digital environment.

## CASE STUDY 3

**The recent Future of News document published by the BBC has some very interesting findings.**

- The basic principle of broadcasting – transmitting and receiving – is transformed by social media.
- People in power can speak directly to the public.
- It's easier than ever to get news – but what does it all mean? Make better use of data to satisfy people's news needs. The task is to deliver good information.
- The world is dividing – those who seek news and those that skim it.
- Connections will get faster, cheaper and more widespread. Devices will be smaller and more powerful. This will allow people to create and consume high quality content more easily.
- There will be vast amounts of data – storing, filtering and analysing that data will be a big challenge for individuals, companies and the State.
- Computers will develop artificial intelligence. Automation sees code turning structured data into words.
- It will be important to find new ways to connect with individuals, serving their specific needs with the relevant data and giving people the information they need, delivered to fit into their lives.
- Social media allows people to surround themselves with stories that corroborate their world view.
- One of the responses should be to go local – where people live and work.
- Show authenticity as much as authority – produce 'news you can use'.
- 'Long form' TV and radio news bulletins and programmes will endure.

## CASE STUDY 4

### The 'digital tabloid'

The recent new State Pension campaign was delivered through big data, the application of behavioural science, insight-led marketing, and the creation of a new relationship to effectively communicate to individual customer needs.

- The application of big data allowed the prediction of outcomes and to engage different audiences with the right messages, bringing them on the right customer journey and having the right call to action.
- Through insight-led marketing, acting on feedback, data analysis and customer segmentation content, the structure of how and when to communicate was evolved and appropriate. This has resulted in self-identifiers and engagement tools that delivered a customer experience that was designed for them, almost personally.
- People knew that the messages and outcomes were for them – and them only.
- Applying data analysis ensured relevance of content and message; the campaign dispelled negative associations and persuaded individuals to engage with the personal impact of the changes and planning for later life.
- The launch of our PensionTube channel on YouTube gave us a focal point for the campaign and a platform to build a new relationship with our audiences.
- Through making an enduring first impression, the new relationship with the audience was embedded; ongoing collaboration and trusted dialogue continues to engage customers with their responsibility to take appropriate action for themselves.
- Real time data analysis and insight-led marketing optimised the campaign as it unfolded to ensure the on-going delivery of an appropriate, relevant and timely campaign.
- We served our customers effectively and efficiently, saving money by diverting traffic away from more costly telephone calls.

## B. Acknowledgments

### **Communication Futures Seminars**

#### **Communication trends seminar, hosted by LSE**

External contributors:

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#### **Public trust and engagement seminar, hosted by Westminster City Council**

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## C. Glossary

We acknowledge that there are differences in the terminology used within the Communications community. For the purposes of this document, the following terminology will apply.

**Arm's Length Body (ALB)** – non-departmental public body.

**Augmented reality** – technology that superimposes a computer-generated image onto a user's view of the real world.

**Big data** – data sets too large and complex to process using standard data processing tools.

**Disruptor technologies** – technology that helps to create a new market through eventually disrupting existing markets to displace earlier technology.

**Freemium** – pricing strategy where a digital product is provided free of charge with users charged for access to some features.

**Organic content** – organic search results appear because of how closely their content matches the search terms as opposed to being paid-for listings.

**Photonics** – photonic devices use silicon as an optical medium to provide faster data transfer between microchips.

**Proximity marketing** – localised wireless distribution of advertising content.

**Real time insight** – the ability to gain data instantly to inform communications activity.

**RFID** – Radio Frequency Identification; wireless method of tracking goods by means of tags which transmit a radio signal.

**RSS** – Rich Site Summary; system for distributing frequently updated content from online publishers to internet users in a web feed format.

**The Internet of Things** – offers advanced connectivity of devices through interconnected uniquely identifiable embedded computing devices within the existing internet infrastructure.

**Universal memory** – hypothetical computer storage device with infinite durability which would transform computing and enable computers to do more.

**Unstructured data** – information that is not organised in a pre-defined manner which can make it difficult to understand using computer programmes (e.g. social media sentiment, behaviour change outcomes).

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