

Corporate Communications



The New Roadmap for High-Performing Cultures

Communicating About Inclusion in a New Legal Landscape

Introduction

Federal policy changes in early 2025 are forcing employers to rethink their approach to workplace inclusion. From new executive actions to shifting priorities at the EEOC, the legal landscape is evolving fast, creating confusion, scrutiny, and risk for corporate DEI efforts.

One of the biggest shifts? The public conversation has quieted. Organizations are increasingly staying silent unless they're taking a loud stance in one direction: either dismantling programs or doubling down on support.

Seramount research confirms this quieting of DEI: In a recent survey of inclusion leaders, the top area they said is most negatively impacted by the Trump administration's policies is public statements about DEI.

But this uncertainty affects internal communication too. Only 38 percent of leaders in our study share DEI updates with all employees. Most choose to communicate only with impacted groups, a tactic that often leads to confusion, fear, or mistrust among others.



There's no question: Leaders are under pressure to say less. But silence, inconsistency, and misalignment carry just as much risk. Communicating about inclusion today requires more care, cross-functional input, and transparency than ever before.

Purpose of This Workbook



This guide will walk you through five essential steps to help you assess when to speak, how to align your team, and how to communicate with integrity—both internally and externally.

The advice in this guide should be considered advisory only. Please consult your legal counsel and communications team to determine the best course of action for your own organization.

Some of the strategies and recommendations in this guide were also discussed in a recent Seramount partner webinar, [Today's Crisis Communications: What Can You Say Internally and Externally](#), featuring experts from Trident DMG, a leading crisis communications firm.

1) Assess the Need to Communicate

The recent political and legal shifts have created considerable confusion for private organizations. When outcomes and impacts remain unclear, it can be difficult to determine when, how, and what to communicate to employees or external stakeholders.

It's tempting to respond immediately, but not every moment calls for a statement. Your first job is to determine whether communication is necessary, and if so, what kind.

There are three routes organizations can take:

1

Send a message to everyone

2

Send a message to select groups

3

Do not send out a message

In today's environment, "telling a select group" is often a false middle ground. As we'll discuss later, internal messages can easily leak and, when shared without context, can confuse or even mislead, which means you're essentially choosing between two options: communicate with full awareness that your message may become public, or say nothing (yet).

Let's walk through two clear-cut examples: one where communication is essential, and one where holding off is likely the smarter move. These help illustrate how different circumstances call for different approaches.

When you should probably speak:

You're doubling down on your inclusion efforts, expanding ERGs, reinforcing commitments, or launching new programs. Transparency in these moments builds trust and anchors your message in values.

When you may want to wait:

You're still evaluating changes, such as reconsidering your supplier diversity program or restructuring ERGs. Speaking too soon can create confusion or force commitments before you're ready.

But most real-world situations aren't so black and white, which is what makes this so difficult. The most effective organizations pause long enough to make a thoughtful decision rooted in purpose, values, and timing.

Facing an urgent communications decision? Check out Seramount's [crisis comms decision-making tool](#) to help guide you in this process.

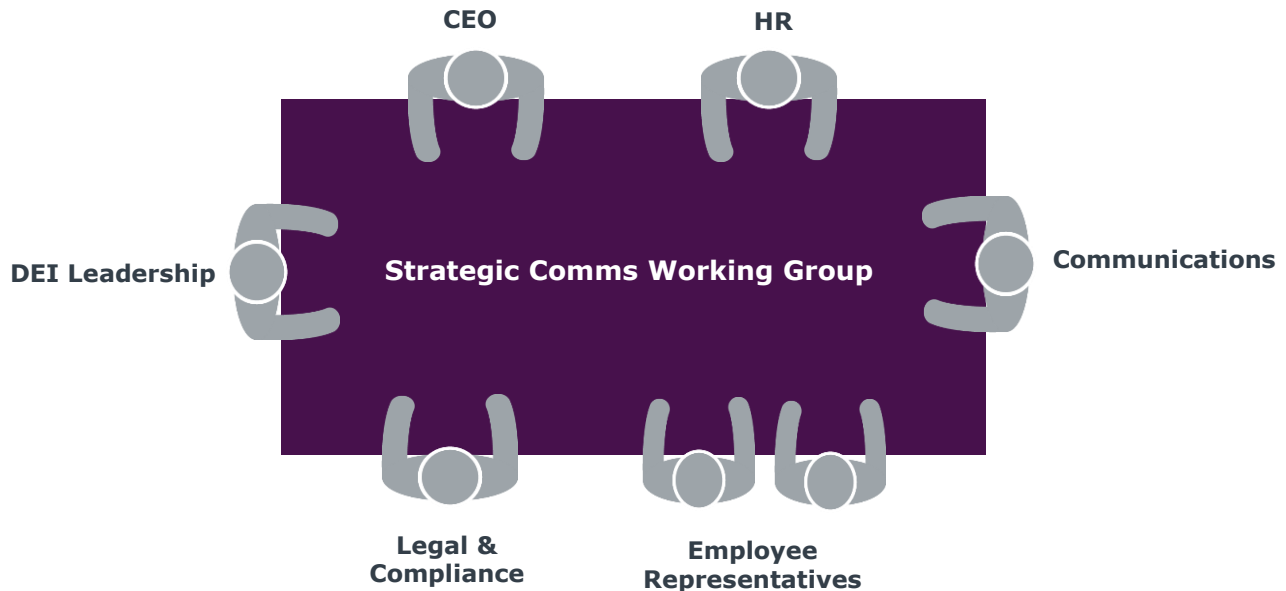
Mistake to Avoid: Staying Silent

Silence can be interpreted as compliance or indifference. While it's wise to pause before responding, avoid the trap of not speaking at all, or risk losing control of the narrative.

2) Assemble a Cross-Functional Team

Before you draft a message, before you even schedule a meeting, make sure the right people are at the table. Missteps often happen not because the message was poorly written but because it was shaped without full context or the right perspectives in the room.

At minimum, your team should include:



Each representative plays a critical role:

- **CEO:** Acts as organizational authority
- **HR:** Understands employee sentiment and morale
- **DEI Leadership:** Aligns message with inclusion
- **Communications:** Prepares message and anticipates backlash
- **Legal & Compliance:** Flags legal risks and implications
- **ERG/Employee Voice:** Surfaces ground truth and employee impact

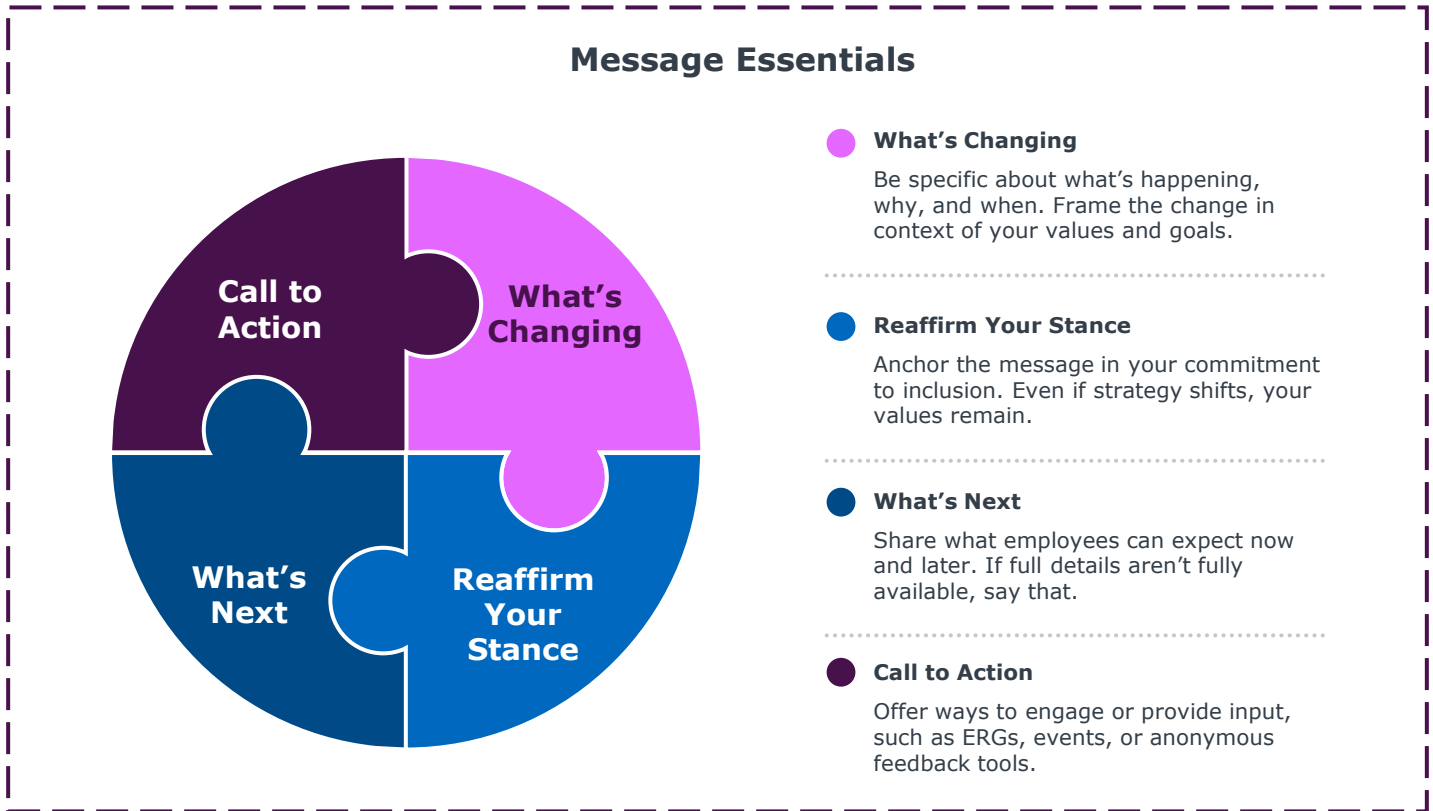
Seramount's experts can join you in the room, sharing peer examples, reviewing messaging, and helping you navigate these conversations with insight and precision.

Mistake to Avoid: Skipping the Right Voices

Leaving out DEI, ERGs, or impacted stakeholders can result in messages that miss the mark or cause harm. Inclusion starts in the room, not in the statement.

3) Craft One Holistic Message

Think of every message as part of a larger story. Whether it's an email to a single ERG or a media statement from the CEO, it all adds up and must hold up as one coherent narrative. Even if you're starting small, such as sending a note to a select group, remember: Messages can spread quickly, and confusion spreads even faster. Craft with the bigger picture in mind.



Language Recommendations

- 1 Use inclusive language; no one group should feel targeted, but each person should feel included.
- 2 Thank all employees for their efforts and contributions to inclusion initiatives so far, highlighting that it takes everyone to make this work.
- 3 Replace polarizing terms (e.g., "white privilege") with accessible alternatives (e.g., "dominant culture norms").
- 4 Frame around care and culture, not activism or blame.

Mistake to Avoid: Assuming Internal Is Private

Every internal message is now a potential external one. Assume it will leak, even if you are communicating only to select groups. Make sure any comms align with your broader narrative.

4) Set Guardrails and Channels

Once your message is ready, make sure it's delivered with consistency across all channels. That means identifying messengers, agreeing on timing, and providing aligned materials for every group, from ERG leaders to frontline managers.

Keep in mind these key considerations:



Create aligned messaging.

Develop talking points and FAQs that reflect the organization's stance. Avoid leaving space for interpretation or improvisation.



Equip your messengers.

Managers and ERG leads are often the first line of communication. Ensure they're briefed, confident, and ready to speak with transparency and empathy.



Choose the right tools.

Email, Slack, town halls, 1:1s—each tool carries a different tone and level of permanence. Think strategically about what's shared, where, and how it might be captured or reshared.



Be realistic about leaks.

There's no "safe" channel. Assume everything can be screenshot, forwarded, or quoted. Focus less on controlling the channel and more on standing by the message.

Mistake to Avoid: Neglecting ERGs

ERGs have real-time insight into how employees are feeling and often set the tone for how messages are received. To ensure they feel empowered and aligned, share messaging early and encourage feedback.

5) Make Good on Commitments

If you promise change or action, you must act on it.

In the wake of 2020's racial and social reckoning, DEI became a corporate imperative, an untouchable standard embraced by most major employers. But trust has eroded. A staggering [75 percent of American adults](#) believe companies failed to follow through on their DEI promises.

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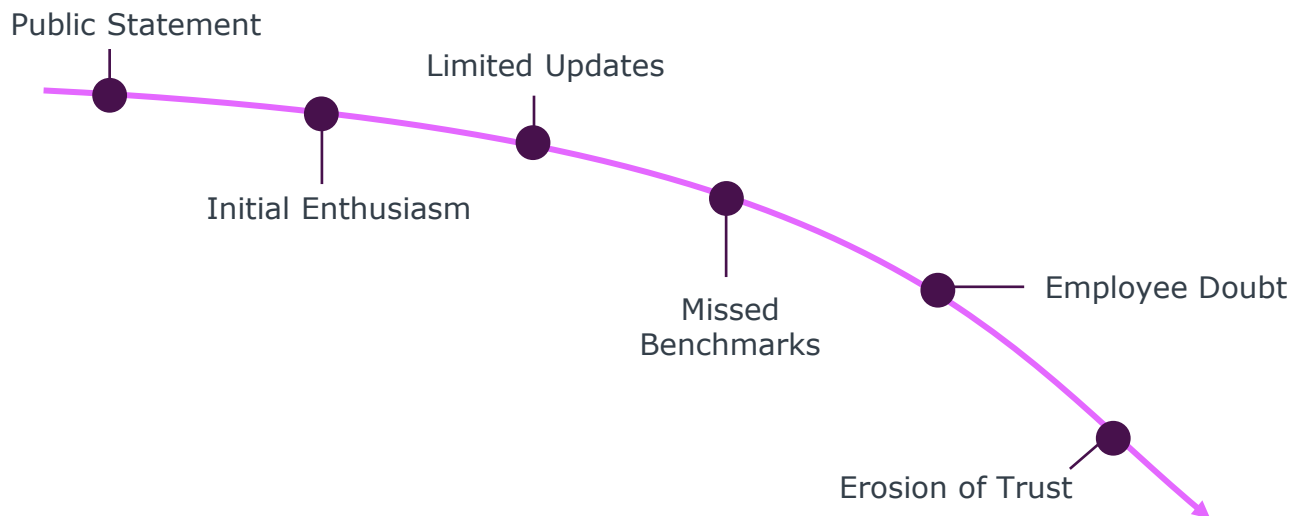
That skepticism lingers—and it shapes how today's messages are received.

Which is why in this moment, words aren't enough. If you make a promise—to double down on inclusion, protect ERGs, reevaluate a program, etc.—it must be visible and followed by action.

Employees are watching. Critics are too. Delivering on your message builds trust, but leaving it unresolved does more harm than staying silent.

This doesn't mean you need all the answers before you speak, but it does mean you should commit only to what you're prepared to do.

The Decline from Statement to Skepticism



Mistake to Avoid: Overpromising in the Moment

It's tempting to say what sounds right now, but before making a promise, consider what aligns with your long-term values and what you can realistically deliver to ensure you can meet your commitments.

Bringing It All Together

Turning Complexity into Clear, Values-Aligned Communication

As legal and cultural shifts continue to evolve, the work doesn't stop with messaging. Sustain credibility and trust by approaching communication with these core principles in mind:

- **Determine Impact:** Partner with legal and risk teams to understand how new policies affect your organization.
- **Amend Policies:** Update internal practices to ensure compliance with evolving legal standards.
- **Be Transparent:** Build trust by clearly communicating what is—and isn't—changing.
- **Remember Your Values:** Anchor decisions in your core beliefs, even when adjustments are needed.
- **Be Succinct:** Keep messages focused so teams can absorb the message and return to their work with clarity.

Explore More Resources

Crisis Comms Decision-Making Tool



Quickly deciding when and how to respond in a crisis

[Get the tool](#)

ERGs in Times of Crisis



Key strategies to partner with ERGs during uncertainty.

[Download the checklist](#)

Is Your Inclusion Strategy Ready for 2025's Biggest Risks?



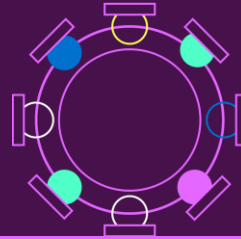
How top companies advance inclusion in a high-risk climate

[Read the blog](#)

Need additional support?

Seramount's experts are guiding partners through these exact conversations daily. We offer tailored insights, peer strategies, and hands-on guidance to help you communicate effectively across audiences.

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