

# The Top 10 Questions in Strategic Communications

These are our best “In case of emergency break glass” questions to have in your back pocket. You can use them in a project meeting, at a discussion about an emerging issue, or as part of developing a strategic communications plan. Think of the Top 10 Questions as a resource that you can draw from as needed, since it’s not necessary to ask them as a set.

- 1 What does success look like?**  
This is the most useful question to ensure that you’re working in alignment with your clients.
- 2 Why this, why now?**  
Often, there is a trigger that prompts someone to call for communications help. Finding out what that is can be helpful.
- 3 What are the project or corporate objectives?**  
This question is probing for the “North Star” – where is the organization or project heading? You want to help it get there through communications.
- 4 What are the communications objectives?**  
As the communications person, it will be up to you to determine the communications objectives. Still, it’s materially useful to find out what your internal clients think the communications objectives are, so that you can deal with that context.
- 5 How can effective communications help advance the project or corporate objectives?**  
This is a bit of a stealthy question as we’re trying to get internal clients to see the value of communications themselves. The intent is that clients will see that they can’t achieve their objectives *without* communications.
- 6 What are the main risks and opportunities?**  
This question will help you navigate the communications issue using the compass markers of risks and opportunities. The extra value of the question is that the risk profile that emerges will help make the business case for investing commensurate communications resources.
- 7 Thinking back about past communications activities, what worked and what didn’t? Why?**  
Let’s learn from our mistakes and avoid reinventing the wheel, shall we?
- 8 Who are the key audiences and why are they important?**  
Internal clients are often closer to audiences so it’s useful to get their perspective, particularly on the “why.”
- 9 What are the project management parameters (time, budget and human resources)?**  
There is no sense over-building a communications strategy or response. You want to know what you’re dealing with in terms of project parameters so that you can recommend the best course of action within those constraints.
- 10 If we could change just one thing, what should it be?**  
This is a great question to ask senior executives – once you know their top concern you can be sure to aim in the direction that addresses it. The insight is helpful whether the answer is general in nature or if it addresses communications specifically.