

# Communication Matrix

Open communication is important when introducing new technology and the new business processes that come with it. The ideas listed in this table are techniques that customers have used to make sure questions receive quick answers and encourage team discussions and troubleshooting.

Description	Purpose	Target Audience	Method	Timing/Frequency
<b>Morning Stand-Up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Led by an assistant coach to encourage and support workers to adopt the Northwoods solution during project rollout.</li> <li>The assistant coach reviews business processes affected by the Northwoods solution.</li> <li>Workers are encouraged to share best practices and success stories.</li> </ul>	Small groups of 4-5 workers	Stand-Up	15-20 minutes, each morning during the project
<b>Weekly Huddle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually led by an assistant coach or lead worker to encourage and support consistent use of the Northwoods solution.</li> <li>Information obtained during this brief meeting is collected and provided to the head coach.</li> <li>Workers share creative uses of the Northwoods solution.</li> </ul>	Small groups of 4-5 workers	Stand-Up	15-20 minutes, weekly, post project



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<p><b>Tech Talk</b></p>	<p>Serves two main purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information sharing session to identify what workers need to promote successful use of the Northwoods solution, what is going well, challenges experienced, and existing business practices to be examined.</li> <li>Training session provided by IT or system administrator specific to technical solutions, applications, updates, and so on. Workers identify topics for training.</li> </ul>	<p>Workers using the Northwoods solution, IT, coaches</p>	<p>Meeting</p>	<p>45-60 minutes, monthly</p>
<p><b>Supervision</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisors determine how frequently each of their assigned team members is using the Northwoods solution.</li> <li>Supervisors gather information regarding what is working well and where additional training is needed.</li> <li>Supervisors help identify existing policies and procedures for potential modification.</li> <li>Supervisors discover innovative strategies to explore.</li> </ul>	<p>Worker</p>	<p>One-on-one</p>	<p>Determined by agency (at least monthly)</p>

Description	Purpose	Target Audience	Method	Timing/Frequency
<b>Leadership/Management Meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm direction and planning.</li> <li>• Identify commonalities experienced between units.</li> <li>• Review progress updates and needs as provided by head coach.</li> <li>• Evaluate policies or procedures for modifications as necessary to support new business practices.</li> </ul>	Managers	Meeting	Determined by agency (at least monthly)
<b>All-Staff Meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-level overview of progress and future plans.</li> <li>• Individual staff members are selected to share their success stories or best practice strategies.</li> </ul>	All agency staff	Meeting	Determined by agency
<b>Agency Newsletter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustain excitement and maintain momentum.</li> <li>• Share success stories, key procedure changes, and creative use of the Northwoods solution in serving children and families.</li> </ul>	All staff and key stakeholders	Email	Monthly or as determined by agency
<b>Mass Communication</b>	Share key decisions, next steps, updates, and new procedures	All staff	Email	As needed
<b>Whiteboard/Dry Erase Board</b>	Strategically placed whiteboards can be used to identify helpful hints, tips, and guidance.	All staff	Display	Ongoing, updated weekly

Description	Purpose	Target Audience	Method	Timing/Frequency
<b>Coaches Meeting</b>	Head coach and assistant coaches assure training and support is consistent across the agency.	Head coach and assistant coaches	Meeting	Bi-Weekly for 90 days post implementation, monthly thereafter

## Best Practices and Examples

This section includes suggested agendas, best practices, and tips for successfully conducting several of the meetings listed in the Communication Matrix.

### Weekly Huddles

In child welfare, days are unpredictable. But staff often want a few minutes to connect with their colleagues, even if only to check in and see what lessons they can share with one another. That's where the weekly huddle plays a big role. While it is only a quick, 15-minute get together, it has a significant impact on your agency, especially in helping apply new technology like the Northwoods solution. Setting aside a few minutes at the beginning of one day a week offers several advantages to staff, administrators, and even the families and children being served. The goals of the weekly huddle are to:

1. Help start the day well
2. Support and acknowledge improvements as well as ongoing attempts at improvement
3. Reinforce focus on the "right" things
4. Recognize the strong sense of team
5. Encourage communication

In fact, some have referred to the weekly huddle as **G.I.F.T.S.** or **Good start, Improvement, Focus, Team, Status.** It is a great way for workers to start the day as they head out to difficult situations.

### How It Works

First, the head coach or assistant coach leading the weekly huddle informs all attendees of which mandatory weekly huddle team they will be attending. The composition of each team is an agency decision. It may be their existing team or unit or a different group each week. Also, be sure those participating in each weekly huddle are aware of the time and location. Try to hold your huddles near the workers' desk areas (for example, in the hallway or between rows of cubicles). If possible, avoid using a meeting room; this is not a meeting but rather a huddle about sharing information and teambuilding.

Next, determine what to discuss in the weekly huddle. The following three questions are a good place to start:

1. What have you done with the Northwoods solution over the last week?
2. What will you do in the upcoming week with the Northwoods solution?
3. Are there any impediments to using the Northwoods solution?

Now it's time to get creative and pick who will speak first (for example, the last one to arrive, random number, next birthday, oldest child/youngest child, and so on). Some organizations have even announced the beginning of the weekly huddle by playing music like "Start Me Up" by the Rolling Stones.



## Helpful Hints and Tips

- Employ the “nostueso” rule (No One Speaks Twice Until Everyone Speaks Once). If you run out of time, be sure to provide those who didn’t have a chance to speak with an opportunity to speak first at the next weekly huddle.
- The weekly huddle is not a time to air grievances and attempt to solve every obstacle. It is a time to share and learn from one another.
- Keep the energy level high by keeping everyone standing. Physically form a huddle if possible.
- Keep it to 15 minutes or less. Show appreciation for everyone’s time by starting and ending on time.
- End the meeting with expressing appreciation for each member’s time and show excitement for the next meeting.

## Other Tips

- Rotate who leads the meeting, whose role is to basically help maintain order of speakers.
- Break eye contact with the person speaking so they don’t feel as though they are being evaluated.
- Avoid the following pitfalls: not starting on time, socializing and not sharing information, storytelling, low energy, only obstacles are raised, or no obstacles are shared.
- Most importantly, remember it’s about standing together and encouraging each other’s desire to advance such important work.
- Organize the session so the leader can take notes (perhaps on a whiteboard or easel pad), highlighting the points discussed during the weekly huddle. The leader passes along the highlights to the head coach, who is responsible for determining action items (if any) that need to be taken and for sharing information with all staff.

Dedicating just a few minutes once a week allows workers to focus on what was accomplished yesterday and what can be accomplished today. Through the weekly huddle, staff gain an instant understanding of how to be as successful as possible at what they enjoy doing—working with children, adults, and families.

## Tech Talk Suggested Agenda

Feel free to amend this agenda as needed to meet the needs of your staff.

Topic	Leader	Description	Suggested Time Allotment
<b>Announcements</b>	Head Coach	Brief overview of important organizational updates significant to the Northwoods solution.	5 minutes

Topic	Leader	Description	Suggested Time Allotment
<b>Time with IT</b>	IT Liaison	IT administrator or designee provides technology training, demonstrates proper use of tools, and fields questions specific to software and hardware.	20-30 minutes as designated by IT staff
<b>Roundtable</b>	Delegated Assistant Coach	Coach encourages discussion among meeting participants by asking: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What features do you use the most/least? Why are those favorite/least favorite?</li> <li>2. What features would you like to use more? What is preventing it?</li> <li>3. How have you used the software in unique ways?</li> <li>4. Are there things you would like to do with the Northwoods solution but haven't?</li> <li>5. If you are experiencing challenges, what are they? What have you tried and when?</li> <li>6. Are there ideas for enhancements to the software that we can provide Northwoods that would encourage the use of the Northwoods solution?</li> </ol>	20 minutes
<b>Next Steps</b>	Head Coach	To help staff adopt new business practices: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be prepared to provide suggestions on how to increase use of the Northwoods solution.</li> <li>2. Confirm statements made during Roundtable and any required follow up.</li> </ol>	5 minutes
<b>Follow Up</b>	Head Coach	Collect notes from meetings and email meeting highlights to all staff. Notes will inform all staff of discussions and helps them monitor progress from meeting to meeting.	

## Coaches Meeting

The head coach and assistant coaches hold a critical role in implementing the Northwoods solution because they are focused on helping staff to better understand and adopt newly designed and reengineered business processes. While the head coach oversees all agency staff who are using the new tools and processes, the



assistant coaches focus on a designated subset of workers. The head coach and assistant coaches are responsible for the following:

- Facilitating morning stand-up meetings
- Preparing for, participating in, and debriefing each worker concerning their scheduled field visit
- Building and reinforcing worker confidence in new processes
- Evaluating business processes to be considered for review and possible reengineering
- Ensuring workers don't fall back into old habits
- Helping to train newly hired workers in the Northwoods solution and business processes

A coaches meeting is recommended for sharing information among the head coach and assistant coaches. This meeting should follow an agenda with time designated to areas of focus.

Items to be placed on a coaches meeting agenda can include:

- **Follow up on previous action items:** If there were action items from the previous meeting, the head coach and assistant coaches should review them and report their status.
- **Monitor concerns/issues with the Northwoods solution:** As workers use the Northwoods solution within their newly designed business processes, issues and concerns may arise during morning stand-ups. During the coaches meeting, coaches can evaluate the items that are being discussed during the morning stand-ups and receive clarification on any issues that are currently unresolved.
- **Monitor new process/solution adoption:** Each assistant coach is responsible for gauging and evaluating the use of the Northwoods solution on the ground among their assigned workers. As a team, the assistant coaches provide feedback to the head coach, who begins to evaluate overall regression and pinpoint whether workers are pushing back against business processes that have been reengineered and whether those processes need to be reevaluated.
- **Evaluate business processes:** As state and federal governments provide new mandates, the head coach and assistant coaches can evaluate how the Northwoods solution can be incorporated to best fit into new processes. The head coach and assistant coaches can use this time to begin mapping out the process steps and designating a pilot team to test the new process.
- **Determine new action items:** Each assistant coach may be assigned a task to complete leading up to the next coaches meeting. These tasks can include piloting a new process that is being evaluated, conducting one-on-one meetings with their assigned workers, meeting with supervisors to discuss newly designed business processes, reviewing functionality of the Northwoods solution, and so on.
- **Highlight best practices:** To end each meeting, each assistant coach is responsible for highlighting a best practice or success from their team of workers, which ends the meeting on a positive note.





Coaches meetings work best when held for 30 minutes on the following schedule:

- During implementation of the Northwoods solution: weekly
- Implementation evaluation period (6 months): biweekly
- Post-implementation evaluation period: monthly