## Release 9.1 Marketing/Communication Plan Template

The purpose of this Marketing/Communication Plan Template is to provide you with an outline of communications you should be thinking about as you launch Release 9.1 at your institution.

We have organized the document into the categories of **Who, What, How, and When** to help you easily identify the major categories of information you need to think about as you plan to market Release 9.1 and build excitement and momentum with your stakeholders. The guidance we provide here is just a sampling. You may need to add to or modify this information, but we hope that this will help you get started in creating an effective Marketing/Communication Plan for your institution.

**Who**: an example list of the audiences with whom you should be communicating

**What**: the messages you could be communicating to your different audiences

**How**: a checklist of ways in which you may be able to spread the news about Release 9.1 at your institution

**When**: an example timeline to help you plan effectively to best prepare everyone at your institution

*The* ***Who*** *of Your Plan*

You know best what the challenges, concerns, and interests of your stakeholders are and how best to communicate with them. The outline below is just a reminder of the stakeholders with whom you will want to communicate about Release 9.1. The value statements provided in the next section will help you address the concerns that these audience members will focus on when you introduce a new release at your institution.

* **Institution Leaders**
  + Sample Titles: Provost, President
  + Focus: Concerned with overall effectiveness of the LMS as it contributes to campus identity, student achievement, and obtaining institutional goals.
* **IT Leaders/Management**
  + Sample Titles: CIO, Director of Academic Technology
  + Focus: Concerned with resources required for transition, overall success of upgrade, ongoing improvements and support, training end users, and availability of training resources
* **Academic Department Leaders**
  + Sample Titles: Academic Deans, Instructional Designers, Faculty Members
  + Focus: Concerned with adoption rates, ease of use, creating engaging content, and minimizing non-teaching administrative tasks for faculty members
* **Faculty**
  + Sample Titles: Faculty, Teachers, Facilitators, Educators, Instructors, Lecturers
  + Focus: Concerned with content migration (for WebCT clients), quality, support, response to issues, and functionality
* **Students**
  + Focus: Concerned with faculty adoption, support, and functionality

*The* ***What*** *of Your Plan*

We hope you will find the following suggested value statements helpful. Please feel free to copy and paste the statements provided below into the communications you plan. We are attempting to make your job easier by providing you with high level statements about Release 9.1 quality and capabilities as well as statements to communicate the value of Blackboard and how you are addressing change management issues related to upgrading to a new release. You may want to consult the [Upgrade Center](http://www.blackboard.com/upgradecenter) for other documentation with more specific details to use in your communications with your stakeholders.

**Quality**

Quality is more than just bug counts. It is also how a company responds to issues that arise. Release 9.1 represents the first step in Blackboard’s commitment to being a responsive partner, to ensure our institution’s success. A few examples of how they are working to do this:

**Fix issues quickly** – Resolved over 450 8.0 and 9.0 issues in 9.1 and fixed 100% of BETA issues reported before Feb. 1.

**Fix issues that matter most** – Via the Blackboard Bug Squad 250+ clients participated in defining Service Packs for ANGEL, Xythos and NG in 2009.

**Shaping product roadmap** - Product Development Partnerships with clients for Release 9.1 to review designs for features still in development resulted in fundamental design changes to better meet our needs in areas such as mashups, learning modules, question pools, course files, and grading.

**Effectively communicating** – The Project NG Playground launched in December 2009 provides an exciting peek into potential future product direction that drives earlier client feedback.

**Why Blackboard?**

**Unmatched Experience and Know-How**: Working with a community of thousands of institutions and millions of people globally, Blackboard has unmatched experience and organizational know-how in harnessing technology to improve the learning experience for students of all ages.

**Proven, Flexible Technology for the Whole Experience**: Blackboard has constructed a unique technology foundation for multiple parts of the learner experience - a proven set of platforms that users widely adopt and reliably scales, but that’s also being extended and innovated upon constantly to fit evolving needs and technology ecosystems.

**Continuous Innovation and Stability**: Blackboard is a stable partner who's committed to education and has the resources to continuously innovate across the learner experience, while delivering the relationship simplicity and accountability of a single provider.

**Release 9.1 Capabilities**

Release 9.1 focuses on 4 main themes:

1. Fostering Student Engagement
2. Supporting Educator Efficiency
3. Delivering Open and extensible learning
4. Connecting student instruction with overall institutional improvement

The following value statements provide a high level explanation of the new capabilities in Release 9.1. See the Release 9.1 Capabilities Brochure ([Click here to get to the Blackboard Classic Brochure](http://www.blackboard.com/resources/learn/Bb_Learn_91_Datasheet_Classic.pdf) and [click here to get to the CE/Vista Brochure](http://www.blackboard.com/resources/learn/Bb_Learn_91_Datasheet_CEVista.pdf)) if you are looking for more details to provide instructors.

Blackboard is delivering exciting new social learning and teaching tools which promote more active learning opportunities for students. Being connected is a driver for engagement, and Release 9.1 includes a number of enhancements to keep students connected to their educational experience outside of class time.See the Release 9.1 Capabilities Brochure ([Click here to get to the Blackboard Classic Brochure](http://www.blackboard.com/resources/learn/Bb_Learn_91_Datasheet_Classic.pdf) and [click here to get to the CE/Vista Brochure](http://www.blackboard.com/resources/learn/Bb_Learn_91_Datasheet_CEVista.pdf)) for more details.

Supporting instructors and making them effective and successful in an online learning environment is critical. In Release 9.1, Blackboard has made improvements by advancing the course workflow to help educators minimize the time they spend on administrative tasks, enabling them to focus on student success, achievement and retention.

**Change Management**

Blackboard has heavily invested in helping us to prepare and train our instructors. Free Preview Accounts hosted on Blackboard servers and Quick Tutorials in the On Demand Learning Center will ease the transition by facilitating training and familiarizing users with the new features.

For WebCT clients: content conversion tools are greatly enhanced to ensure educators can leverage existing courses.

You may want to use the outline below to help you plan which value statements are most appropriate for which audience members:

* Institution Leaders:
  + Why Blackboard
  + Quality
  + Release Capabilities
* IT Leaders
  + Quality
  + Change Management
  + Release Capabilities
* Academic Department Heads
  + Change Management
  + Release Capabilities
  + Quality
* Faculty
  + Release Capabilities
  + Change Management
  + Quality
* Students
  + Release Capabilities
  + Quality

*The* ***How*** *of your Plan*

Here is a checklist of the avenues you may want to consider as you build your communication plan.

* Websites – Place banners on key institution websites to promote the release.
* Knowledge warehouse/dept. wiki/blogs – Leverage internal knowledge repositories to share information.
* Letters/emails – Reach out to your stakeholders to share information and encourage them to engage.
* Faculty meetings/dept. meetings/Student Senate meetings – Meet with your stakeholders during their regularly schedule meetings to provide updates on the planning process.
* Faculty Lunch-and-Learns – Schedule events for faculty to share more about the new platform to get them excited. This is a great opportunity to have early-adopter faculty members talk about the new release in their own words.
* Listservs/Twitter/Facebook – Leverage popular social media tools at your institution to generate awareness.
* Posters – post around campus to raise awareness and build excitement for Release 9.1.
* Media/school newspaper/local news outlets – leverage as appropriate to raise awareness with end users (students and faculty).

As you develop the communications mentioned above, you will likely want to include a call to action. Some of the resources Blackboard is offering that may be helpful include the following:

* Release 9.1 Preview Accounts - [www.blackboard.com/bblearnpreview](http://www.blackboard.com/bblearnpreview)
* The On-Demand Learning Center - <http://ondemand.blackboard.com/>
* Release 9.1 Webinars - <http://www.blackboard.com/Company/Events-Center/Webinars-and-Demos.aspx>
* What’s New in 9.1 in Word – available at the [Upgrade Center in Step 3](http://www.blackboard.com/Sites/UpgradeCenter/buildplan.aspx#/files/3-3-01.html)
* What’s New in 9.1 Brochure – available at the [Upgrade Center in Step 3](http://www.blackboard.com/Sites/UpgradeCenter/buildplan.aspx#/files/3-3-01.html)

Other resources that may aid in the development of your communications include the following:

* Release 9.1 Graphics – available at the [Upgrade Center in Step 3](http://www.blackboard.com/Sites/UpgradeCenter/buildplan.aspx#/files/3-3-01.html)
* Release 9.1 Email Template – available at the [Upgrade Center in Step 3](http://www.blackboard.com/Sites/UpgradeCenter/buildplan.aspx#/files/3-3-01.html)

*The* ***When*** *of Your Plan*

Below is a sample outline of key progress points which you may want to document, plan for, and communicate to your various stakeholders.

1. Courses backed up
   1. To identify large courses that may be problematic
   2. As a precaution for cases where content may need to be restored
2. Remove old courses and users
   1. Define what old courses and users are
   2. Helps to reduce the amount of content to migrate
3. 9.1 Training
   1. Sneak peak
   2. Hands-on training
   3. Video lessons
4. Alpha testing
   1. Several instructors to teach live courses in R9.1
   2. Identify potential issues
5. Beta testing
   1. Larger group of instructors teach live courses in R9.1
   2. Identify potential issues
   3. Provide feedback to aid in training others
6. Release 9.1 goes live