DWP has a well established and effective audience segmentation model, which categorises colleagues according to their channel preference. This model has worked well since it was implemented in 2009, particularly in helping target communications effectively so the right people receive and understand them. Yet, as their work focuses increasingly on driving changes in behaviour, the internal communications team felt that they needed to revisit their approach to segmentation to achieve this.

Bernice Allport, Senior Communications Manager at DWP said: ‘We have had some great results with our current model, and definitely don’t want to throw out the baby with the bath water! However, it’s a model that has been around for a while and we want to check it’s still valid. We also want a segmentation model that helps us to design and target communications on those people most likely to embrace the changes in behaviour we’re trying to achieve and to those who are likely to be most resistant’.

The team is working with in-house analysts to draw together a different data sources and insight gathered from focus groups and people engagement forums. They are also linking their People Engagement scores from recent People Surveys with other research to better understand the characteristics of the most engaged teams and offices.

‘We feel sure that by better understanding the barriers people have, or the things that really motivate them, we can talk to them in ways that will win their hearts as well as their minds,’ said Bernice. ‘The work has also helped to identify a link between great communication skills in a manager and improved people engagement and performance and we are really starting to see the evidence for this in DWP. So, we think if we can target our communications appropriately at the people who are least engaged, and give their managers the skills and confidence to talk to their teams effectively, we can start to improve engagement and change behaviour.’

In practice this approach is helping the team to develop better messages and to improve the communications support they give
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Case Study: Audience segmentation - taking a second look

to managers. ‘Clearly we can’t generalise about people all being of one mind in offices or areas of DWP. But we can develop messages for managers to use with their teams, based on a new behavioural’ segmentation model. Managers know what makes their teams tick and we just want to give them better tools to help achieve their business objectives.’ said Bernice,

The research used to develop the current channel preference segmentation is also being looked at again. ‘There are some great nuggets of insight in the earlier research so rather than starting from scratch we will be running focus groups to check they’re still valid. That’s been a good lesson - sometimes research is worth a revisit and a refresh rather than starting all over again..’