



6-Point Checklist for BETTER INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Internal Communications used to be thought of as just ‘sending out stuff’. But these days, smart organizations are realizing the true value this business function brings.

Staff retention, improved employee engagement, and increased performance and productivity are just a few of the benefits.

To ‘do’ internal communications well requires rethinking how you reach out to colleagues. Mass emails to ‘All Staff’ no longer have the impact they once had. Today’s employees deserve better than just an email.

Follow this 6-Point Checklist to boost the impact of your internal communications and raise awareness of important company topics.



1. PRIORITIZE YOUR TOPICS

It's an easy mistake to overwhelm employees with too much information, too frequently.

Employees quickly lose interest if they're being bombarded with messages.

Start by determining what needs to be said, when and how. First, include all the 'known communications' – such as financial results, big picture messages - plus general operational and regulatory updates into a one-year plan.

Then slot in your training awareness comms – such as compliance, health and safety, cyber security topics and others. These usually require a multi-channel, multi-touch drip strategy over a defined period of time.

Culture-related content has also become a comms priority. In your plan, recognize this is a 'slow-burn', and calls for a variety of formats and approaches to successfully build an organizational culture.

Reach out to other departments to see if they have any comms requirements (such as IT for software upgrades; marketing for new product launches, etc.).



2. SOLICIT FEEDBACK

It may sound obvious, but check with staff how they want to be communicated with. Do they prefer video, intranet, short-burst, email? How and when they see company news will influence their thinking. Is it while they're commuting? Or on a mobile with a small display screen? Or working in a noisy open plan office, or a quiet corporate space?

Start tracking employee engagement. For this type of qualitative data, introduce mechanisms (such as [surveys](#), [quizzes](#) and forums) to capture staff feedback and opinions. These allow you to input data for measuring engagement scores, and how well employees understand your communications.

Seek out the views of your C-Suite too; not only will it raise their awareness, but their responses are likely to elicit more support (and budget) for your endeavours.

When it comes to analysing the data, don't be tempted to cherry-pick the best results. Be prepared for some rises and falls – after all, internal communications is a dynamic, often reactive function, with influences outside your control.



3. CAMPAIGN CREATION

Reach out to your in-house experts, such as marketing, when devising internal communication campaigns. They can offer up ideas on how to get your message across effectively; the optimal times to communicate; and tips on communicating with different audiences (i.e. millennials and baby-boomers). They'll ensure your message is in keeping with corporate guidelines too.

Don't worry if you haven't got a humorous cartoon series or professionally-shot video to explain your message. A well-written piece of content delivered in a high impact manner can be equally effective. (Having said that, employee engagement tends to be greater with content that is visually eye-catching and entertaining, but you need to start somewhere ...)

Use common scenarios that staff can relate to. This style of teaching is a powerful method for changing human behavior as staff literally visualize themselves 'wearing that hat'.



4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

Today, with information overload a real problem, organizations need to go beyond email and company intranet for internal communications. Explore the growing range of employee software and decide what's right for your company.

It's unrealistic to expect staff to read and understand every communication. The best campaigns are those that are repeated and sustained over time, using multi-touch, short burst content.

Your channel is as important as your message.

The nature of the message should influence your channel choice. Some messages will be urgent (such as a weather warning, outage notification or unexpected crisis); some may be sensitive (such as a restructure or benefits review); others may be purely informational (such as a system upgrade or new hours for the staff canteen). It's a good idea to create a matrix and plan your preferred channel according to message type.

But which channel? There's been a mini revolution recently with a surge of new employee communication tools surfacing. Most of these focus on employee

collaboration (such as Slack, Workplace by Facebook and Microsoft Teams). These newcomers play a different role to, say, 'push' channels (also known as top-down messaging), such as email, desktop alerts, tickers and screensavers.

Each tool has different attributes, and is designed to meet a specific need. For example, full-screen desktop alerts are hard to beat for urgent notifications; whereas an entertaining video with engaging presenters is effective for emphasizing 'big picture', strategic content.

Create a list of anticipated IC scenarios, the desired outcome, and the preferences in the way staff want to receive your content, then align that to the ideal channel as previously mentioned.



5. ESTABLISH METRICS

Performance metrics can help you learn, shape and evolve your internal communications best practice. They should be linked to the overall company objectives so you can report on the progress being made.

There are many ways to measure the impact of IC. For example, most employee software allows you to track open, click-through and download rates. You can monitor the number of unique visits to your intranet stories, and participation rates on collaboration sites.

You can also monitor physical attendance at briefings; training sessions; and other company events.



6. EMBRACE THE EVOLUTION

IC is one of the fastest changing functions within organizations. Creating best practice IC comes with experience, measurement and knowing when to use the right channels.

Not every message will get the cut-through you need, or the desired outcome straight away. Be flexible and open-minded in how your message could be improved.

The best results are often achieved using humour, eye-catching visuals, storytelling, employee-generated content and rich media, such as animations and video.

Remember, to inspire the ideal behavior from staff, focus on the 'why' this is happening/being explained, and not just the 'what'. If people understand the reason behind what you're asking them to do (behavioral change) or what you're telling them about, they are more inclined to give their support.

USEFUL RESOURCES

commstools.snapcomms.com – an online directory listing more than a hundred internal communication tactics

www.iabc.com – International Association of Business Communicators

[Checklist for Mistake-Free Internal Communications](#) – A 30-point checklist to help avoid embarrassing IC blunders

[Internal Communications Best Practice](#) – Linked In Group for public and private sector professionals

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