THE **NEXT LEVEL**

G L O B A L   R E P O R T

The Business Value of Good Internal Communication

IC
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INTRODUCTION

Internal communication (IC) is one of the fastest growing specializations in public relations.[1] In many companies, its value no longer needs to be proven at every juncture. However, its level of maturity varies greatly from one organization to another. While several communication professionals are successfully leading the way, for different reasons, others struggle to get the buy-in from their managers and business leaders that they need.

We repeatedly read and hear that practitioners themselves are often at fault for remaining in a passive/reactive role as order takers instead of trying to help business leaders understand IC and show them how it can truly add value. A contributor to this report, Nicholas Wardle, Global Internal Communications Lead at Alshaya Retail until recently, straight up told us: "IC can often be taken for granted. If all you do is send stuff out, then you deserve to be so! Modern internal communication teams need to elevate their status and be seen to be partnering with the business. A familiar gripe from IC pros is that they only hear about major projects at the last minute. This speaks volumes about the importance their business places on internal communication and the reputation of their team. If this happens to you, I would throw a quizzical look at your IC leader, as they've clearly not established the importance of internal communication in your business." This is certainly true for those who lack the knowledge and skills to do a proper job while believing they are doing the job right.

While tactics are definitely part of the equation, we know that internal communication encompasses much more. Its real impact ultimately lies in its contribution to business results. To achieve this, the practice must 'transcend tactics and contribute to strategic management.'[2] Some would argue that this is easier said than done and they are not completely wrong. There are organizations still led by people who are dinosaurs when it comes to internal communication. Even for the best of us, it is no small challenge to get their attention so that they

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understand what they are missing out on. This is one of the many reasons why the battle is so difficult for practitioners to win.

So, how to get there?

The Next Level examines the value and practice of internal communication from several angles around one central theme: the business value of internal communication. The report reviews how business leaders perceive internal communication, looks closely at the reality of the practice inside companies and explores how IC professionals can better position themselves as trusted advisors and key enablers for corporate success by providing insights and tangible resources to help them change the game.

The report is based on interviews with 33 in-house communication professionals and executives from 25 countries and representing 20 industries, contributions from several teachers and researchers, the results of a global open-question survey,

testimonials from C-suite members, and a review of published surveys and research reports.

In the eyes of leaders

Through recent findings and new testimonials, the first section examines whether and why CEOs value internal communication. The question is initially reviewed from the perspective of business leaders and in a second step, from the perspective of practitioners as to what extent they actually believe that their senior leaders value the practice and their work.

The reality on the ground

With candour and transparency, in-house practitioners and executives invited us inside their organization and talked openly about what IC looks like in their world. From the pressing issues they face to some of the mindsets, behaviours, and practices in place, practitioners explain how internal communication aims to support the corporate strategy, how they help business leaders understand the value of IC, and how they demonstrate its impact on organizational goals.

Blurred lines between internal and external communication is a challenge for many and contributors explain how they manage this. In addition, the report provides an analysis of the findings from our global open-question survey on this topic, taking into account the testimonials of our contributors.

The reality of IC in companies is next unveiled from a different angle, this time, via two commanding research projects, one conducted in Europe and a two-part study carried out in the USA. The first examines the current status and trends in internal communication in European companies. The second is a two-part research project identifying best-in-class practices for employee communication and the gap between the knowledge of what best-in-class global communication leaders reported is effective and what the majority of IC professionals reported to be practicing.

The contribution of IC

Building on these insights and results, the final section attempts to demonstrate how practitioners can go beyond trying to explain what they *do* and actually define their *contributions* that help their organization succeed. Senior communication professionals, C-suite members and teachers advocate business acumen from different perspectives as a prerequisite to be recognized as a trusted advisor by senior management. In line with this, the report expands on the new Global Capability Framework produced by the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management that helps further define the contribution of practitioners. The report also includes a number of new research-based resources that are useful and essential tools to help communication professionals make a real impact.

For practitioners at all levels…

The Next Level offers significant insights and resources for both practitioners who are already leading the way and to those still struggling for a license to operate and be perceived as strategic advisors. For those looking to shift or improve their approach to IC, this report provides a deep understanding of what contributes to IC effectiveness in ways that help organizations succeed.

…and beyond

As you'll read in the next pages, a growing number of senior leaders and managers at all levels understand that IC is an important competitive advantage for companies. Those who have yet to recognize that strategic internal communication matters can take note of why IC should be a priority for their own corporate agenda and what they should expect from their communication team. We encourage communication professionals to share the report with their management team and senior leaders.

Overall, I hope this report continues bringing the conversation on the practice of internal communication to the next level. For this, I want to thank all contributors, collaborators, partners and sponsors acknowledged on page III who have made this report possible.

I invite you to join the conversation at #ICKReport.

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[1,2] Verčič, Verčič, & Srirameshc, 2012. Full reference p.157.

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PERCEPTIONS

IN THE EYES OF BUSINESS LEADERS

How do business leaders perceive internal communication?

To what extent do practitioners believe that their business leaders value internal communication?

Views from both sides.

Internal Communication Through the Lens of Business Leaders

Research findings confirm that business leaders are paying more attention than ever before to internal communication. To what extent do they believe it is critical to business success and perhaps more importantly, why? We reviewed recent reports to identify results related to the perception of internal communication in the eyes of business leaders from their perspective and from those of practitioners.

Getting IC right

According to *The CEO Communications Audit*, the one area of corporate communication that CEOs are most concerned about getting right is internal communication. The study is based on one-on-one interviews with 33 Canadian CEOs. It reports that CEOs believe internal communication is tightly linked with core business objectives and they recognize that the chances of successfully implementing strategic initiatives are greatly diminished if employees do not understand or know how to help support key objectives. CEOs talked about how internal communication helps employees understand not only their responsibilities in project implementation but the vision guiding corporate initiatives. Many emphasized the importance of real dialogue in internal communication rather than a top-down approach.

IC is foundational to successful external communication

Most business leaders and researchers interviewed were reluctant to say whether any specific aspect of corporate communication was more or less important."However, business leaders tended to prioritize internal communication as the most important communication function. Even those company leaders that invest substantially in consumer-facing marketing communications still tended to say internal communications was the most critical piece," indicates the report.

The authors indicate that, "Many CEOs saw internal communications as foundational to successful external communications. Many who spoke of the strategic importance of "corporate brand" discussed how internal communication was important in establishing the values or culture that would help reinforce the brand and how it is perceived by external audiences. A few CEOs discussed the importance of employees as 'brand ambassadors' and how internal communication was therefore critical."

"They're both critical, but internal deserves more attention – 60% to 40%. So, internal communication makes external communication easier. Every employee is a brand ambassador."

Taking their internal role seriously

The report outlines that CEOs believe they have an important role to play in IC. "The more frequent and seemingly more important engagement that CEOs feel they are involved with their boards, their membership (in the case of associations), senior leadership, middle management, and front-line personnel, the more important internal communication becomes. These are key audiences that CEOs must engage with on an ongoing basis and they take that role seriously."

Research conducted with 125 C-suite members in the UK by Censuswide on behalf of Hanover Communications also suggests that top management tends to give a high priority to their internal audiences. The results showed that they were more likely to prepare for an internal meeting and for a presentation to a wider internal audience than a media interview.

All employees are spokespeople

The notion of employees as brand ambassadors is expressed again in a report from Page (formerly known as the Arthur W. Page Society). *The CEO View: communications at the center of the enterprise*, is based on interviews with 24 CEOs. The report indicates that "all employees are spokespeople and are increasingly being viewed as potential brand ambassadors. To help accomplish this, CEOs expect that employees are at a minimum educated about the basics and in the case of a crisis, they are provided with well-vetted responses to questions they might face."

The Page's report states, "CEOs are clear that they want advanced methods to engage and understand employees. Whether it's gathering local intelligence, understanding what employees think about the enterprise, or ultimately encouraging employees to be brand ambassadors, CEOs want to be sure that systems are in place for employee engagement."

Value and purpose of the function

Findings from the study *Beyond Communications: A CEO Perspective of Reputation Leadership*, by VMA Group, demonstrated that when asked to outline the function's value and purpose, most CEOs instinctively confined their comments to the universe of external communication. Based on interviews with 40 CEOs across Europe, the report shows that reputation, brand, and media were top-of-mind. "Only when prompted did they acknowledge that internal communication was important, too. The exceptions were largely the CEOs in organizations currently going through major change. Here, the value of internal alignment and company culture arose much more naturally as value points in the conversation."

Convincing the business of their value is a critical need. "There is a nuanced difference between business leaders accepting the inherent value of good communication and them being confident that their own communication teams are delivering it, and that the case made internally was often unconvincing."

Indeed, research shows "that most board members and top managers recognize the critical importance of communication for their organization, but they are unclear what role communication practitioners have and frequently view them as channel producers or technicians."(Volk, S. C. and al. 2017)[1]

This uncertainty is expressed in *Making it Count*, produced by CIPR Inside. The report is based on interviews with 14 CEOs and 89 IC practitioners. It indicates that CEOs view IC practitioners as the custodians of translating strategy, company values and priorities.The report states, "While it is encouraging that CEOs seem to understand the support and impact internal communication has . . . there were still issues with their perception of the role. Many of their examples highlighted the fact that IC teams were mainly required to focus on the tactical job of broadcasting messages, rather than the strategic job of shaping those messages. CEOs commented that internal communication as a function was strategic. However, examples given were mainly tactical."

IC had to be defined for CEOs, leadership, and IC practitioners. Many communication professionals used the terms "internal communication" and "employee engagement" interchangeably, demonstrating a misunderstanding of the role of IC. The report proposes the need "for further discussion with CEOs and leadership teams to better promote what we do and the value we add and provide clarity on the importance of the function."

A clear line of sight is needed

While a number of studies suggest that CEOs and C-suite executives recognize that IC influences business outcomes and organizational change, some findings also show that top management often sees the value of internal communication first and foremost influencing the reputation and the brand of the organization. Challenges and opportunities lie ahead. Like most intangible assets, it is difficult to measure the impact of IC on business results when practitioners report volume, not changes in understanding, and behaviour. A clear line of sight between the communication and business results must be championed by IC professionals.
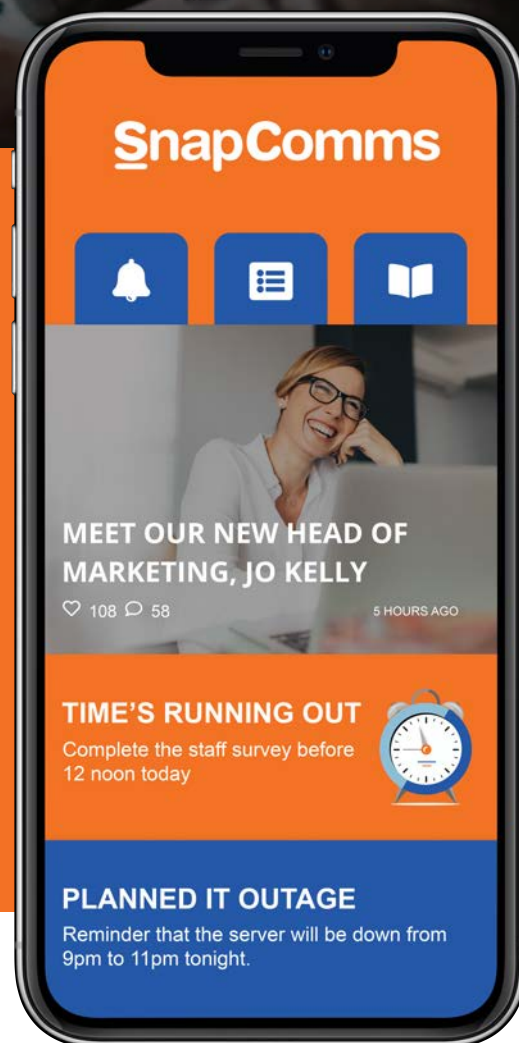
How Business Leaders Value IC From the Perspective of Practitioners

Findings from surveys and research also show to what extent practitioners believe that their business leaders value internal communication and some of the key challenges they see related to the function and its role.

Internal Communication in Europe: Key success factors and managerial, approaches,[2] reveals that although some 69.6 percent of respondent companies affirmed that their CEO values IC, advisory influence is low. Only 40 percent of respondents believe the IC team is viewed by senior management as very or extremely trusted advisers while only 37 percent think their recommendations are taken seriously/very seriously by executives and senior managers. Some "30 percent of respondents think there is limited or even non-existent capacity or opportunity to influence senior management with their recommendations."

The survey was conducted in 12 European countries where IC professionals from 448 companies, representing all the companies with at least 500 employees, were surveyed. The report indicates that "the perception of the role played by IC has a linear connection to the perception of the reliability and credibility the IC team enjoys with senior management and the effectiveness with which IC feels it is able to make senior managers and executives understand the communication aspects in any of their decisions and activities."

The VMA Group surveyed 410 communication professionals and results were reported in *The View.* According to the study, respondents believe that senior leaders in their organization: are strong advocates of communications (35%), are 'on board' with communications (34%), understand the value of communications, but are not key advocates (22%),

and do not understand the importance of communications (9%). Some 75 percent feel their CEO/MD truly values the importance of communications within their organization.

The results on the same aspects were a bit different in *Inside Insight 2018,* also produced by VMA Group. Some 670 IC practitioners answered the question "Overall, how is internal communications viewed by senior leaders in your organization?" Some 20 percent believe they are advocates of IC, 40 percent believe they are 'on board' with IC, 28 percent think they understand IC but are not key advocates, and 12 percent feel their senior leaders do not understand the importance of IC. Some 77 percent of respondents think their CEOs and senior leaders recognize the importance of the function within their organization.

A similar result is reflected in the *European Communication Monitor 2018* (ECM) that shows 76.5 percent of respondents claim that the CEO or top leader of their organization understands the value of PR/communication. The ECM is based on responses from 3,096 communication professionals across 48 European countries.

The *State of the Sector 2018* reported that around one-third of respondents don't believe leaders understand the value of internal communication while 71 percent believe that the IC team is viewed by senior leaders as trusted advisors. More than 650 practitioners took part in the survey conducted by Gatehouse.

IC undervalued by some communication directors

Another interesting finding in *Inside Insight 2018* is in regard to the perception of the value of internal and external communication in the eyes of communication directors. Some 59 percent of the respondents feel their communications director undervalues IC compared to other communications disciplines in their organization, while only 41 percent feel that their communication director values IC just the same as external communications. The report outlines that this "may reflect that IC is still fighting to find its strategic place alongside the external communications discipline."

Reputation, role, and effectiveness of the function

In *The View*, when asked to share the most important challenges facing their communications team within the next 12 months, demonstrating the strategic value of the function was among the top three. Respondents say that some of the biggest challenges for the communication profession over the next five years is to improve the function's reputation, justify its role, and demonstrate its effectiveness.

The *European Communication Monitor 2018* also shares the most important strategic issues for communication management identified until 2021: 37.7 percent indicated linking business strategy and communication, 29.2 percent stated strengthening the role of the communication function in supporting top management decision making, and 16.1 percent claimed implementing advanced measurement and evaluation routines.

The Institute for Public Relations (IPR) conducted a research among 156 communication professionals in the USA. According to *What Does Good Look Like? A Quantitative Perspective on Best-In-Class Practices in Employee Communication,* only 25 percent of respondents said that their company implicitly believes that the value of internal communications need not be proven at every juncture, leaving a high level of practitioners with this challenge. The results of this research are presented on page 106.

As noted in other reports, *European Internal Communications[3]* shows that the value of IC remains a concern. Answering the question ''how important will each of the following issues be for IC in the next three years?'' 61 percent and 69 percent respectively said explaining the value of IC to top executives and strengthening the role of the communication function in supporting top management decision-making. More on this research on page 94.

Gaps between perceptions

The jury is out on the perceived value of internal communication within companies. Comparing the results across all recent surveys, we see gaps between what communication professionals believe and what senior executives believe. Until there is a strong line of sight between internal communication and business results, internal communication will continue to be primarily seen as a support function not a management function.

How Business Leaders Value IC: Views From Our Contributors

Based on the testimonials of all in-house communication professionals who contributed to this report, we sense that IC is valued in their own organizations. Without being prompted to speak about whether their senior leaders value IC[4], several of them spontaneously addressed the subject. This section reflects some of their comments.

"To start, the importance of communication is something that's vociferously driven by the company CEO who innately understands how non-negotiable communication is to get exemplary business results. The communications team is increasingly being brought to the table to contribute business-relevant perspectives far earlier than traditionally was the case," said Antonia Ashton, Vice-president Communications at SAP EMEA South, South Africa.

"The importance of communication is something that's vociferously driven by the company CEO who innately understands how non-negotiable communication is to get exemplary business results."

Iwona Burzyńska, Director of Communications and External Relations at Lafarge Poland, reported, "The Head of Communications is a member of the senior leadership team that meets monthly to discuss strategic topics. Thanks to that, communications is up-to-date with what's cooking in business and we can also consult and advise immediately on how to approach certain topics." Aniisu K Verghese, Senior

Manager, Corporate Communications, indicated that communication is often on the agenda at Tesco Bengaluru. He believes this helps reinforce the importance of the function and gain support for initiatives that impact business teams.

Patrick Humphris, Head of Communications for Asia Pacific at The Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited in Hong Kong, admitted that, "While we must ensure that we continue to demonstrate our worth, we have found that our leaders greatly value the partnership we bring as they focus on achieving the organisation's priorities, influencing its culture, and enhancing its reputation. We enjoy a position where we are brought in early to understand business challenges and create appropriate communications strategies, rather than being used simply as a post box to issue messages from the business."

"Leaders understand the value of IC and they are convinced of the strategic aspect of internal communications to achieve business results."

Jean-François Berthet, Alliance Internal Communications Manager at Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi in Japan, noted that their "leaders understand the value of IC" and they are "convinced of the strategic aspect of internal communications to achieve business results."

"As a strategic partner to the business," said Kerrie McVicker, Internal Communications and Employee Insights Manager at Nestlé Oceania in Australia, "leaders look to IC to share expertise on employees and the employee experience for decision-making and managing change."

Nataliya Ratushinskaya, Head of Corporate Communications at Megapolis Group of Companies (FMCG logistics and distribution) in Russia, had this comment:, "My team has full support from business leaders and we do not really have to prove the importance of IC. Communication is one of our top management's priorities. With this support, we are changing the way, feel, and the look of our corporate communications. I have always stressed the importance of visibility and access at all organizational levels to the IC team. Any member of my team can approach any member of the top management team. This might not be a big deal for some cultures, but for big, Russian companies with hierarchical cultures, it can be a real issue."

The strategic approach linked to business goals adopted by several practitioners is revealing in itself. Selva Carbajal, Internal Communication Manager at General Motors in Argentina, remarked that IC is "considered a business variable inside the company. It is evaluated and measured and plans are drawn up so that it becomes increasingly effective." Alicia Martínez Venero, Head of Communications Peru at Enel Peru said, "Internal communication is only considered valuable to leaders when it shows measurable results. Our objectives are not communications objectives. They are based on the objectives of the company. We determine how to contribute to those objectives based on internal communication competences." At Tim Group, "Our managers recognize that it's crucial to have a deep understanding of people and cultural factors that influence people at work and then transform this active listening into a consistent, creative action plan that matches company goals and people needs," said Paola Foglia, Head of Internal Communication based in Italy.

"IC is considered a business variable inside the company."

Susan Blundell stressed that at the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA), "Our culture has reached a point where a project team will ask what strategic goal does this project support? Should we be doing it?" The Director, Internal Communications and Communication Services added, "Employees recognize what the goals of the organization are and they can align work in a way that is effective in pushing us closer to reaching our goals."

"Building a strong relationship as a trusted business partner is essential." Tali Dulin, Head of Corporate Internal Communications at Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. in Israel, added, "Our leaders and other key internal partners understand the value that we bring and we are included throughout the process. We bring insights about where the audience is and how to create the change desired to affect business outcomes."

Terhi Kivinen, Senior Director Internal Communications at Royal DSM in the Netherlands, underlined that "Leadership already understands the value of professional internal communications and change management. The new leaders who join DSM are already well-versed in the value of communications and many are excellent communicators. It is increasingly rare to be in a situation where you have to explain the value to an executive level person. We don't really have to fight to sit at the table. Internal communications has a strategic advisor role in all our major change initiatives."

"It is increasingly rare to be in a situation where you have to explain the value to an executive level person. We don't really have to fight to sit at the table."

Sobha Varghese, Head, Internal Communications, Continental Europe at Tata Consultancy Services, said, "IC is an important enabler for all the key business metrics of our business." This is confirmed by the CEO at Tata Consultancy Services Europe, Amit Bajaj,[5] "Our employees engage with our customers on a regular basis and represent our brand wherever they are. They are major stakeholders in our business and the most valuable asset we have. Considering this, having a well-informed workforce is clearly advantageous and one of our priorities in Europe. Through effective internal communication, we can build awareness of the company, shape perceptions, and motivate employees towards our goals. Another aspect that we stress through internal communications is collaboration. Within a large organization like ours, it is important for people to understand, share, talk to each other, and align with business directions. Employees should also be aware of how their work contributes to the overall success of the organization. Internal communication puts us all on the same page, helping us to move forward towards shared goals and objectives."

Several have mentioned how IC is recognized as a shared responsibility across the organization. A few examples: Rachana Panda, Chief Communications Officer, GE South Asia, outlined that they "believe IC is ultimately the responsibility of the CEO and business leaders." The Global Head of Internal Communication at IKEA Group, Guy Britt, also indicated that IC "is not owned by one function at IKEA. It's integrated throughout the organization."

Maggie Tan emphasized that "Leaders understand the importance of IC, take responsibility for it, and are very supportive." The Head of Corporate Communications, Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand for Henkel Singapore added, "Leadership communication is a key pillar of our internal communications program."

Another positive sign is that some companies with no or some support in internal communication have invested in the function in recent years. Nataliya Ratushinskaya, the Head of Corporate Communications at Megapolis Group of Companies in Russia, explains on p. 20 how she built the IC function from scratch when she joined the company of 15,000 employees in 2015. As she noted (p.10), "My team has full support from business leaders and we do not really have to prove the importance of IC."

Shel Holtz joined Webcor, a construction company in the USA, after the IC position was elevated to director-level. He indicated, "We're lucky because leaders already understand the value of internal communication. It's why they created the position at the recommendation of the head of human resources, to whom I report." His point is supported by Jes Pedersen, President/CEO at Webcor, who told us[6], "IC is the bridge to mutual understanding within a company. Without the ability to understand a company's vision, goals or strategies, people remain unaware of what's important and what to strive for. They then disconnect because the deeper reason for belonging to a company gets lost or forgotten. IC helps to build community, spread culture, and provide a sense of belonging. It reinforces the reasons for working with us as we grow beyond our ability to communicate primarily through one-on-one contact."

There is a light at the end of the tunnel. Many communication leads representing the collective contributors of this report are asking the right questions, managing strategically, and doing the heavy lifting needed to educate senior management about the business value of good internal communication. What will it take for internal communication to earn its place as a business imperative across all companies? A critical mass who understands and has the knowledge and expertise to champion the function.

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References and notes p. 157.

INSIDE
COMPANIES

THE REALITY ON THE GROUND

What does the practice of internal communication looks like from the inside? Some 33 in-house communication professionals from 25 countries answered the following questions :

▪ What are the main challenges and opportunities facing your team at your company?

▪ Blurred lines between internal and external communication are here to stay. How does your organization deal with this reality in its approach to internal communication? Can you share how your organization ensures internal and external communications are aligned together and also specify if both functions are integrated or not?

▪ What are some of the key mindsets, behaviours, and practices helping your organization to be effective at internal communication?

▪ Which proven strategies do you and your team use to help business leaders understand the value of internal communication?

▪ How do you demonstrate the impact of internal communication on organizational goals to business leaders?

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Rick Phillips

Communicating in an accelerated environment

As a Fortune 100 company with 33,000 employees, Nationwide is a complex organization that is constantly changing. Until 2014, the company consisted of 15 separate brands in various businesses in the insurance and financial services industries. In 2014, we merged those into one brand (Nationwide), and although steadily improving, the company still has moments where it occasionally thinks or acts in silos. That sometimes causes internal communications confusion. In addition, our primary businesses are in very competitive industries. Not only are we dealing with intense competition, but expense pressures are causing the team to prioritize who we serve, how we serve them, and force ongoing prioritization. When combined with other distribution and technological challenges, we end up juggling many significant issues and communications needs all in an accelerated environment. My communications team needs to be agile to successfully support the enterprise.

The agency model

We are aligned as one corporate communications group at Nationwide and embrace internal/external communications as integrated entities. I've never had a leader express interest in just one solution. They want to make sure that internal and external communications are tightly aligned on any given issue. I structure my team like an agency. Our internal and external teams have "beats" and serve specific business and staff areas. That way, in an issues management scenario, I have internal and external communicators that can deliver aligned results in both areas in minimal time.

We also recognize that there is no such thing as an "internal only" message, and on occasion, we've had internal messaging in hands of reporters in minutes. That doesn't mean that we don't prioritize audiences. We always share messaging with internal audiences first, unless there is simply no alternative, in which

Rick Phillips is based in the USA. He has recently retired as the Chief Communications Officer at Nationwide where he was responsible for C-suite communications, media relations and issues management, internal communications, editorial functions of the intranet, executive positioning and company brand communications. Nationwide has 33,000 employees and operates in the USA.

case we will aim for simultaneous timing. But, by and large, our employees remain the top priority for messaging.

Connecting the dots

I've always believed that there are key skill sets and behaviors necessary to be a good communicator.

First, writing is key. My belief is that if you can't write and present yourself in a certain way, you can't think. It's a harsh statement, but in my experience, it's always been accurate. Organizing your thoughts in a logical and intuitive manner is foundational for being a good communicator.

"Honesty is a critical component for a good communicator. The ability to deliver difficult counsel, even while others are in "yes" mode, is a critical skillset, which helps build credibility and trust. Without trust, we offer very limited value to our leaders and the business."

Second, in many business areas, indeed in many businesses themselves, entire organizations see only what they're working on or what their team is doing without connecting it to a higher framework. In an organization the size of ours, communicators must show employees how all parts of the business connect. So being "dot connectors" is a critical skill. This also means that communicators must understand the world around them and how that connects to our business. I've also found that curiosity is a critical attribute for a communicator. The ability to look at things and issues in different ways than others allows us to sometimes see opportunities that others might miss.

Finally, honesty is a critical component for a good communicator. The ability to deliver difficult counsel, even while others are in "yes" mode, is a critical skillset which helps build credibility and trust. Without trust, we offer very limited value to our leaders and the business.

Demonstrating results

We use a variety of methods to keep our leaders up-to-speed on the value of strategic communications. Like many organizations, we have a quarterly scorecard that tracks a host of key metrics important to the business and important to show our value. While a number of these show trends such as readership, click-throughs, and the like, we strive to show how our associates are understanding key messaging and applying it to their daily work.

One of our advantages is that our company has a long history of supporting internal communications. In fact, while my team supports many of the corporate and strategic communications elements of the business, local communicators, individuals we call embedded communicators, are sprinkled around the enterprise and collectively larger in size than my team. As a result, we've created a Communicators Community, where we gather multiple times a year for training, sharing strategic information, and we have a conference where we learn from external speakers and each other once a year.

Tracking outcomes and outputs

Wherever possible, we attempt to track outcomes, not just activity. Some activity is worth tracking and we do our share of it in communications scorecards. Where we're able to track and show behavioral change is where communicators truly earn their salary. Do strategic words and phrases start working their way into common language and presentation decks? Do we see discussion on internal chat boards by individuals who are motivated to discuss these issues? Can we trace employee engagement score increases, and increased open rates and click-throughs of key messages on some of our internal tools? These are a few ways we attempt to help leaders understand our impact.

Leslie Quinton

Going global with balance and consistency

One of the opportunities I see in our organization is to transform the communications function into a truly international one with the right models and processes that this scope requires to build our brand internally and externally. From my experience in other organizations, this challenge seems to be a universal one. How do we create the right balance of structure and autonomy throughout a global company with an appropriate number of guidelines to create consistency but also flexibility to account for cultural differences? Whether it is internal or external stakeholders, companies like ours need to be ever more responsive and adept at keeping in touch with all those we need to reach, even if getting the buy-in for the right tools, processes and technologies sometimes take longer and more persuasion than we would like.

Audience segmentation is still in vogue

I have heard some people state that internal and external communications are now essentially the same thing. While often true, this is not entirely the case and there are almost always reasons to target your communications differently according to the audience. The old belief is still valid. You need to communicate to your publics not only in the tone and language that will be most appreciated by them but also through the means that will have the most impact on influencing the kind of behaviour you want to impact. Thus the argument for different approaches to internal and external communications.

The single biggest game changer in narrowing the divide between external and internal communications is obviously social media. Your employees can read about what is happening to the company in real time and can reinterpret the message faster than and far beyond the official communications channels, depending on the issue. This makes rapidity of response from the external team, who need to alert and keep the internal team

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in the loop, more important than ever. The two teams work in tandem with one another. While they are separate, they are tightly connected and frequently work on projects that integrate members of both teams seamlessly.

It's all about the relationships we build

The internal communications function is largely one of relationships. If it is seen as an opportunity to further the strategic goals of the organization through well-planned and thoughtful initiatives, it becomes the gateway to influencing behaviour as change management at the highest level. Successful internal communication professionals must be seen as facilitators, strategic leaders, and creative partners, not simply fact-checkers and proofreaders. I have

seen a number of internal communications teams go through a syndrome where they are considered simply as a means to an end, channels used to share information but without the authority to actually add value to the content being produced. The last-minute nature of a lot of internal communication makes it difficult to add this strategic element to certain announcements but if the relationships are good with the internal clients, more and more IC teams can leverage their knowledge and best practices to serve the company's ultimate goals.

We're all in this together

Internal communications is one of the roles that is sometimes underestimated in organizations, especially where it is seen strictly as a channel or tool as opposed to a strategic partner. By demonstrating the impact on employee engagement and strengthened culture on the bottom line, it is easier to convince business leaders of the ROI in investing in strong employee communications. Organizations that have let their internal communications programs become completely reactive have lost sight of the positive impact that can happen to productivity and on retention and attraction statistics when you have a well-organized, thought-out internal communications plan. The single most important key stakeholder internally is Human Resources. Without the buy-in of the human resources team and complete coordination of the two groups to achieve the respective objectives, neither team can succeed. Good internal communications can be the canary in the coal mine, an early warning system that allows the communications team to take the pulse of the organization and react accordingly, which can also have an impact on external stakeholders. Communicators can't be shy about sharing their successes and highlighting instances when strong IC strategies ended up contributing to CSR programs, risk management plans or other critical success related to the bottom line.

How to show them your stuff

There are three ways to show the influence and impact of internal communication on the realization of corporate objectives. The first and least intuitive is to show what happens when IC is not involved. This is counter to much of our thinking as problem-solvers but I have sometimes recommended to my team in previous situations as a last resort that rather than

"Organizations that have let their internal communications programs become completely reactive have lost sight of the positive impact that can happen to productivity and on retention and attraction statistics when you have a well-organized, thought-out internal communications plan."

impose ourselves, let something fail to demonstrate the value of the internal communication presence. This is a bit radical and not the preferred method to show the usefulness of the function, but it is sometimes a powerful last recourse.

The most common way of linking IC outcomes to organizational strategies is to correlate the objectives of the IC plan directly to those of the organization and talk about it. Good internal communications programs ultimately have exactly the same objectives and pillars as the overall global corporate strategy for the business, but unless the links are explicitly made to the management team, that may or may not be perceived and appreciated.

The third way to share the impact of IC on corporate objectives and the one that tends to be the most effective in my experience (rightly or not) is the case study and statistical approach. Don't forget that communications tends to exist in areas that are more experiential and qualitative than most business leaders are comfortable with. If you can share third-party data and analysis that shows ROI and quantitative impact on business, it is sometimes the best tool for convincing management of the need and utility for robust, well-equipped internal communications teams, which is another reason for IC to keep excellent KPIs and internal results tracking to justify their programs and tactics.

Guy Britt

Communicating across cultures

Like many global organizations, the main challenge for our internal communication team is working with the different workplace cultures while trying to hold onto the shared voice, norms, and values that impact the overall morale of our workforce.

At IKEA, my team sees this as an opportunity to be embraced. While we certainly have a very strong Scandinavian 'umbrella' culture across our workforce, we find ways to integrate, embrace, and enhance this by combining it with the best of our local co-worker's cultures.

By ensuring that we celebrate the unique cultural ways of our co-workers across the globe and simultaneously welcoming them into our Scandinavian ways of working, we are able to ensure that our communications are always locally and culturally relevant and achieve their desired outcomes.

The key is to generate a connection rather than to produce information. Using the organization as a platform for socialisation permits co-workers to connect with one another more broadly, supports their horizontal development, and reinforces their feeling of belonging to the company.

Full transparency between internal and external communication

At a global level, communication functions are 100 percent integrated. I personally believe that the days of internal and external communications silos are over. By embracing the concept of co-worker communications rather than internal communications and assuming everything will go external, we are able to maintain strict standards in terms of communications quality control and relevancy.

The rise of social media also means that internal

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communications don't always remain internal. Almost every employee has a personal network of thousands at their fingertips and they're sharing news, stories, and opinions about their personal life and workplace.

Many companies are embracing their employees as external ambassadors of their brand, to communicate about the company in an authentic way. Just as we would with journalists, we want to tell our story and we can equip employees with unique and exciting content for them to share externally.

At IKEA, we also accept that more often than not, our co-workers will read about IKEA in the news and wonder what is really happening. Whether it's positive or negative, we have a dedicated space on our intranet with links to articles and statements about the article and its content and present the facts

and full story for co-workers. Through this method of transparency and openness, we can not only arm our co-workers with facts, we can also motivate them to go out there and do some myth busting for us within their own networks.

Empowering the employee voice

The number one mindset for us at IKEA is empowerment. We empower our co-workers to be our communicators and best ambassadors both internally and externally. We know that a top-down, hierarchal approach to communications doesn't work. Rather than drip feed or cascade communications down the chain, we empower our co-workers to discover it, share it, engage with it, and communicate it. This adds to a culture of engagement, sharing, and transparency which at the end of the day, builds openness and trust.

By providing an overview of what is currently being written about IKEA in the media, including the possibility to include a statement or comment if needed, we build trust and empower co-workers by making them feel informed. Co-workers are then more confident in answering questions from customers, friends, and family. They can and do ask questions about what is written in the external media, opening up internal dialogue and discussion.

Keeping measurement simple

Data, data, and data. Business leaders do not have time for fluffy statements about team engagement, level of trust, and share of voice. I have found throughout my career that if you can quantify engagement in a simple format such as 78 percent of employees completed a survey, clicked on a video, or downloaded the annual report, it helps leaders pass information that they need up the chain to demonstrate true effectiveness and value. If you can put a dollar value on internal communication, all the better.

When I talk about measurement, it must be about taking an action. Did the co-worker taken an action or not? This question needs to be raised at the start of the process.

Examples include:

- Create awareness of the organization's strategic direction, measured via awareness surveys
- Generate visitation to an online space or digital hub, measured via online visitation
- Engender positive word of mouth among audiences and stakeholders, measured via user-generated content, proactive social and digital engagement
- Empower participants and co-workers to accept that they can have an influential and impactful role in achieving the organization's strategy, measured via attitudinal research

Shared ownership of communication

It is critical that communication leaders demonstrate that organizations should no longer rely on top-down communication. The importance of informal network communication is increasing. News travels fast through internal and external social networks. Each person is responsible for the success of their own communication no matter what position that person may hold in the company. By committing to building strong, respectful communication with co-workers, they're one step closer to making it happen. Taking personal responsibility for effective communication means being open-minded and willing to change behavior and communication habits.

This means internal communication is not owned by one function. Instead, it's integrated throughout the organization.

When you communicate with your teams, empower them and engage them, you will see a lift. A lift in posture, the way they carry themselves, communicate with each other, and of course, communicate with customers. They will take pride in both their work and their organisation and truly feel like they are ambassadors and the face and the voice of the organisation. If they do all of that, it will have a direct effect on organisational performance and the company's bottom line.

That is perhaps the most important metric to focus on. When you cut through all the fluff, whether we sold more units than before needs to be the number one metric measured.

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Nataliya Ratushinskaya

The right people for the job

The main challenge facing my team is their need to constantly develop their level of expertise and soft skills under the constant pressure of multi-tasking and very short deadlines. The company had no internal communications at all when I joined the company in 2015. There was a small team called the 'corporate culture group', and the scope of this team was far from what internal communications should do. My first challenge was the staff. People were mostly inexperienced in IC and some of them were not the people I would have had recruited for an IC team. I talked with each of them to find out their level of expertise, motivation, and career expectations. Some people left and I replaced them with specialists. Some people who were not up to the level I expected but expressed a willingness to learn and develop and had the necessary competencies, stayed. That situation, while challenging, provided a great opportunity to try and implement best practices in internal communications. This is the first time I had to start from scratch building my 'dream IC team' and introduce corporate communications to the company in a way that would serve the company's benefits. After two-and-a-half years, the team expertise is still a little below my personal benchmark, but my people are great. They took a giant step forward and are constantly developing.

An integrated reality

We are lucky to have both external and internal communication in one department, so they are integrated. I have a PR manager reporting to me as well as the head of IC. My management strategy is to have strong co-operation and continuity in my team so that colleagues could substitute each other during absences and tasks can be redistributed if necessary. This makes my team flexible and responsive.

The PR manager has full access to IC resources and

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knows important business-related facts and some interesting facts about our employees and company affiliates in other regions that can grab media attention and add value to the company's image-building campaigns. The PR manager alerts IC managers when something important happens in the market and regularly provides them with business-related information. Together they decide whether this is of interest to the employees. We have a strong rule in our company that 'the internal customer is served first' in terms of information. This means that our employees should not learn about company business from mass media or web resources. They should read it on the internal website, receive an email or hear from their line manager. The best way to achieve this is to have both external and internal functions integrated like we do in our company.

Access to senior management

Communication is one of our top management's priorities. With this support, we are changing the way, feel and the look of our corporate communications. We can play with different IC tools, testing the best ways to reach the target audiences to increase awareness, encourage management outreach, and promote dialogue. In one simple example, we offered our people several ways to send questions to top management, analyzed what they preferred to use and kept that tool. A 'Feedback to Top Management' button is on the intranet.

Some things do not change. A big challenge is gathering quick responses from leaders. My team can easily approach the managers to get answers from them.

I have always stressed the importance of visibility and access at all organizational levels to the IC team. Any member of my team can approach any member of the top management team. This might not be a big deal for some cultures, but for big, Russian companies with hierarchical cultures, it can be a real issue.

One of the first things I learned from my team was that they could not even write emails to the managers of certain levels. This is not the case in our company now.

Engaging leaders and employees

Pro-activity and expertise are the cornerstones of our strategic approach. We are the experts in IC and act as consultants for the business. There are business leaders who are great communicators. They understand and value IC, enjoy public speaking, and have a lot to say. It's a blessing when you have such a leader.

My team has full support from business leaders, and we do not really have to prove the importance of IC. However, business leaders appreciate us offering interesting and innovative IC tools or activities that can raise awareness, increase engagement, and promote company image internally. For example, my team introduced a 'thank you' function in the intranet where employees can thank their colleagues, and everyone can see the 'thank you' notes. Every month, there is a rating of the best client-oriented employees and departments. This tool has quickly become very popular. Business leaders like this tool a lot and use it often.

This is also the case with scribbling on the office walls, creating a bank of ideas, and other projects proposed by my team. We have also established our team as experts in knowing the best ways to present business information to the employees. We know how to do it the best possible way: market challenges, business results and priorities, sensitive new appointment announcements, compliance issues, change management projects, and seasonal greetings. All business leaders know that we can pack any content into attractive, high-quality packaging adapted to the target audience.

Does IC directly influence market share?

There are a lot of references to how an engagement index that also reflects IC status in the organization, influences business results. Frankly, when I used these figures in presentations to business leaders, they were not really impressed. They were impressed when the engagement index, one of the corporate goals, significantly increased after a successful communication campaign from one employee opinion survey to another. This is the most evident example.

I don't know how to prove in numbers that IC has an impact on EBITDA, market share or cash flow. However, I constantly tell our business leaders that effective IC will build trust and that IC is not the sole responsibility of the IC team. We are expert consultants and packagers. Internal communications works, and will have a real impact on business results when all line managers communicate with their people, receive and provide feedback, and inform them in a timely and understandable manner about business issues related to the employees. The IC team can invent and implement any number of innovative and beautiful tools, but without the commitment of management, these tools are fancy toys.

Luis Ramos

Change is constant

The biggest challenge for any internal communications team is dealing with the many fluctuations within the larger organization, such as corrections in strategy, adjustments in tactics, changes in management, modifications in the markets, and so forth. That said, this challenge is a constant and predictable one. Trying to hit a moving target is just part of the job!

And, of course, the larger the organization, the more complex that challenge becomes. The external communication professionals more often work with clear KPIs and tangible targets, such as the need to launch a new product at a certain time and assess the impact of that launch. Meanwhile, the people in internal communications need to gather, analyze, and balance the needs and desires of a much larger and more diverse group of stakeholders on a daily basis.

The internal communications team also has the opportunity to support change management and business transformation within the company at a far more profound level. In a world where permanent transformation is everything, being able to support that kind of process from within the corporation can be highly rewarding for the internal communications practitioner as his/her contribution can really make the difference between achieving overall success and suffering failure.

Internal communications is in a privileged position to connect all the dots, help various functions and departments bridge the sense of loss created by any change, and see the logic, necessity, and an advantage for those affected by something new.

Aligning internal and external communication

There is no longer a clear separation between internal and external communications in terms of content. Think about it. Most of us share what

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happens in our personal and professional lives on social media. Messages circulate through the social channels and mix with traditional and digital mass media. Employees consume that mixture, which contributes significantly to how they feel about their work.

No company can ignore this! It is utterly imperative that the company's internal communication content complements and perfectly aligns with what the company is publishing externally. In our organization, internal and external communications belong to the same department. That makes content sharing much easier, alignment more precise, and communications a lot more effective.

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On a related note, I'm a strong believer that the news channel shapes and defines how the content or message is received and understood by the recipient. For example, if a person is known for being aggressive, any non-aggressive words that come from that person will still be understood as sounding aggressive to the listener. I'm not defending that: it's just the way people receive and process a message.

The same thing happens with publications. Their specific connotation influences the tone of the message they carry, at least to the inner ear of the reader. For instance, when an employee reads a news item in the external media, he/she will tend to give it more credibility and importance than the same information published on an internal company news channel, which is understood to be a biased opinion.

Strategic partners

The most important factor in our success is the good connection that our IC practitioners maintain with the company leaders, especially those charged with driving change in the organization. The more involved the internal communications expert is with the business process, the better he/she can identify the messages that need to be communicated and find opportunities for doing so more effectively.

Business leaders need to think of their communications people as partners, even as sparring partners! That is, not to simply think of them as people you contact at the last minute to produce an internal memo, but as people who can help you develop your idea for easy understanding and widespread acceptance from the start.

Leaders who ignore the importance of internal communications are often shocked when they realize that no one else in the organization seems to understand that marvelous, game-changing, multi-layered transformation plan they worked on for weeks in the isolated privacy of their office. Unfortunately, that's still far too common an occurrence!

To be effective, true visionary leadership needs to turn the vision into a story that everyone involved can easily understand. Understanding is the first step in acceptance. Without acceptance, the vision dies. That means trusting the communications expertise.

Putting the house in order

Internal communication as a support function has a provocative strength. We have the ability – the duty even – to generate and attract attention. This makes us a powerful partner because we can dramatically increase the visibility of projects and people through our internal networks and channels. This is particularly so when there is a robustly integrated global communications network that can be fully exploited.

Business leaders need to be regularly reminded of this! One of the ways we do that is making sure that our own house is in order. We develop and constantly update our own well-ordered and detailed strategy for how we deal with and balance diverse, sometimes conflicting demands of the internal stakeholders.

Only with a clearly communicated strategy in line with the company's goals and initiatives will internal communication receive the recognition it so richly deserves.

An objective approach

Everyone probably agrees that internal communication is somewhat limited in how much direct and measurable business relevance it can create and develop. Our mission is to make employees better informed, more involved, and more inspired by the company and its goals.

We describe and explain strategic topics in an appealing form via different communication channels and through our globally-operating communication team. The goal is to better integrate employees into the company's overarching narrative and help them feel like the major characters they really are, heroes even, in the larger story of great people creating great solutions with great success.

The fundamental advantage of these measures is that they are designed to be visible, simple to present and easy to comprehend. However, measuring their effect can be a bit tricky and finding proof that a uniform, centrally-generated message has accomplished what it intended to do is still all too often a subjective matter. Therefore, it is of crucial importance to use modern communication tools and analytics to track and measure messaging success making it objectively concrete.

Tom Murphy

Experiment. Measure. Adapt.

Microsoft Digital, Services, and Success is an organization of 23,000 people in 140 countries. Employees work across a range of disciplines from professional services and consulting to service and support and customer success. We create digital solutions to help our customers achieve more. For the past three years, our group has been on its own transformation journey changing our organization to better serve the needs of our customers in a rapidly changing world.

Internal communications plays a critical role in landing those new business priorities. While managing organizational change is a fundamental element of our work, today we live in a world where change is not an isolated event but a constant. This creates challenges for internal communications and also creates some compelling opportunities.

Communications teams must provide clarity on vision, strategy, and direction. To do so we must meet our audiences and stakeholders where they are, reflecting the changes in how people work, and how they search, find, and share information differently.

We shouldn't forget that the basic tenets of effective communications remain unchanged, however, we have an opportunity to better measure progress, gather actionable insights, and engage people in new ways, delivering the information and resources they need, when and where they need it.

We have an incredible opportunity to learn and experiment. There's no longer one way to approach communications, rather you must measure the effectiveness of your programs and combine that with insights into your organization. How well do people understand your organization's priorities? Are people able to find and use the resources they need to get their job done successfully? How engaged are they?

One of the major areas of change for internal communications is how we leverage technology to

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drive better business outcomes. This ranges from utilizing social channels to gathering insights from machine learning and artificial intelligence, and how that impacts our traditional execution. For example, can we use bots to not only supplement traditional intranets but help people find the information they need more quickly? How can we apply machine learning to gather valuable insights from the increasing volume of information we're getting from our people?

It's exciting, but it requires agility and flexibility. Experiment, measure, adapt. I can think of no better rallying call for internal communications.

Alignment is critical

Since the advent of the internet, the reality is that information is fluid and there's little or no friction between information moving inside or outside the organization. I'm sure most, if not all internal communicators start with that in mind, although in reality the vast majority of content never makes it beyond the firewall.

Today, the alignment between internal and external communications is critical. At Microsoft, all our external communications are managed centrally by our Corporate Communications team. Part of their remit is also driving top-level internal communications initiatives across the company. Most major divisions across Microsoft have their own internal communications function. In our case, we have someone on our team who works in lockstep with the corporate communications team and ensures that they're aware of any important or critical issues and the correct steps are taken ahead of any communication. We also partner closely to address ad hoc issues as they arise.

Embrace uncertainty. Take risks. Learn from mistakes.

The starting point for any internal communications function is understanding the business and being clear about how we can contribute to its success. At Microsoft, adopting a growth mindset is a core tenet of our culture. It is a belief that everyone can grow and develop, and that we need to always be learning and curious. We need to be willing to embrace uncertainty, take risks, learn from mistakes, and be open to the ideas of others. Robust measurement and analysis open great opportunities to try new things, evaluate existing tactics and programs, earn, and get better. All these qualities are essential for modern communications, both internal and external.

Customer obsession is at the heart of what we do. From products to services, we're helping our people deliver better outcomes for our customers. Invest time in understanding how the communications team makes a difference. Connect your work to outcomes.

Think big. Make time to pause, move away from the crazy day-to-day routine and think about big, bold, ambitious goals. Think beyond existing tactics and programs. Consider where is the future going and how we evolve communications to get there.

Keep it simple. When we're involved with a complex, global project, we put a premium on thinking through how we can simplify it or think differently. Internal communications should aim to bring clarity to the complex.

We're a people business. In a world of condensed news cycles and constant change, communicators need to invest time in their work-life balance. What I've learned from all the teams I've worked with is that everyone's view of work-life balance is different. If you want to perform at a high standard, understanding what works for you and committing to owning your right balance is vital.

Creativity isn't just about tactics. Creative thinking has a positive impact across the entire plan from how you're mapping your objectives to business priorities, to how you're creating effective strategies. Technology can't replace creative thinking combined with insight and experience.

One last thought. Internal communications has a critical role in helping organizations create a more diverse and inclusive environment for everybody. That is top of mind in everything we do.

Anchor IC to business priorities

To help business leaders understand the value of internal communication, we start by understanding the business. Where is the business today? What are the external market challenges we face? What internal barriers are holding us back? What are the key investment decisions that need to be made? Becoming a trusted advisor and demonstrating the value of communications starts with understanding the business and bringing communications insights to business discussions.

At the planning stage, anchor your communications objectives around the core business priorities. Where can communications help? Great communications is grounded on what's important to the business. It makes demonstrating value far easier.

Demonstrate the value that internal communications is delivering through a balanced scorecard grounded in business priorities. Don't just track and demonstrate performance. Become a proactive early warning system for identifying issues or problems. Put communications on the agenda and be prepared to discuss how things are performing whether it's good and bad, what you've learned, what you're seeing, and how it accrues to the business.

The balanced scorecard for IC

Demonstrating the impact of internal communications starts with communications having a seat at the table. You must understand the business and participate in the discussions, especially around where communications can and can't contribute to addressing business opportunities or challenges. Be ready to share your insights on what's going well and where there are challenges.

We have a balanced scorecard bringing a set of qualitative and quantitative measures together. These measures provide actionable insights. This could include annual and monthly employee surveys, insights from employee engagement activities, other surveys, reports on email effectiveness, intranet usage, and enterprise social engagement. By bringing these measures together and using them to inform action, you can have a rich, constructive conversation about the value of communications.

Alicia Martínez Venero

Bringing technology into the internal environment

We have challenges at many different levels. One of the biggest challenges is learning how to use the technology that connects people outside of the company and implementing these dynamics in internal communication to build networks, take advantage of new resources, and above all, stay within the dynamics of immediacy that our public demands. Today, our people expect internal communication to be immediate, entertaining and presented in different formats such as video, written, and virtual reality. The challenge is to speak that language in an environment of constant change to attend the needs of our publics.

Consistent messages for internal and external audiences

The lines of internal and external communication are blurred. Today more than ever, the consistency between the image projected by a company and how it is perceived by employees is fundamental. However, we must bear in mind that the important stuff is not just to talk about communication. What we communicate must be a reflection of what really happens. It is a fact that both inside and outside any company that its behaviors are perceived by people, whether or not they are perceived by their workers. These behaviors and actions are what we communicate through internal and external communication. The work of the communications team must reflect the true spirit and way of being and acting when the company is in contact with all people.

It is also key that those who manage internal communication maintain permanent communication with those who manage external communication. We must maintain a multi-directional approach that

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ensures that communication has a 360-degree view. In other words, our stories are told at the same time on various communication fronts to all our publics. The idea is that we must communicate with each audience, taking into consideration the specific approaches that each public requires. This not only ensures coherence but also helps us multiply the impact and reach of communication, strengthening our reputation.

Building relationships and lifelong learning

There are some practices that are highly effective. The first is to take responsibility for our relationship with the rest of the company, find out what is happening in other areas and what their needs are, and to propose solutions within our competences.

By getting to know people and establishing a relationship based on trust, we do the job in a better way. Other business areas recognize the contribution and collaborate with the work.

Another important practice is to adopt a permanent learning attitude to stay current. We can not always use the same practices to communicate because we will lose the interest of the people and our effectiveness. We need to keep an eye on what happens in the outside world, take advantage of new practices, use technology, keep learning, and replicate good practices. In short, we plan to be the first to get bored of what we do and constantly look for new ways of communicating.

We value the perspectives of young people. Internal communication teams have been doing the same work for many years. We have discovered that the interns who come to learn from our work help us discover new ways of communicating. They refresh our knowledge and challenge us to continue learning. They always bring something new and have new ways to do things, questions that take us out of the comfort zone, or a newly developed technique. With this relationship, both parties learn and grow to develop more effective communication strategies.

Finally, I believe that collaborative work is fundamental. An internal communication area cannot work like an island. It is highly interdependent because communication must, first of all, contribute to the objectives of the company. It is not about communicating just to communicate. The business strategy, including the economic objectives of the business, must be incorporated into the design of the communication plan.

Everything starts with a business-aligned strategy

The first thing we do is design a communication plan that incorporates strategies and supports business objectives. Internal communication is fundamental for the construction of culture, but it does not remain in that base. It is also key for alignment and the achievement of goals.

Our role is to ensure that people are clear about where the company is going and how they contribute to that goal. It is essential that the internal communication team design their strategies based on clear objectives, validate these strategies with senior management, and finally design a measurement plan to report progress and results. Internal communication must and can provide results.

Internal communication must show measurable results

When we talk about designing communication strategies aligned to the business objectives, we refer to the parameters used to measure the results.

Internal communication is only considered valuable to leaders when it shows measurable results. Our objectives are not communications objectives. They are based on the objectives of the company.

We determine how to contribute to those objectives based on internal communication competences. For example, if the objective is the digitalization of employees, we work on internal communication strategies to support that goal and establish objectives and activities.

Some examples? We created videos with technological tips and we measure their reach using intranet analytics, which shows how many people have seen the videos. We also do internal surveys to understand how people value internal media. The survey we conducted this year revealed that our weekly bulletin is the most appreciated employee communication channel, followed by our digital billboards (monitors with information) and then the intranet. Co-ordination meetings that teams have with their bosses rated behind these channels. The results are very valuable to us because they indicate that we are on the right path.

Digital analytics is a powerful tool for IC to establish metrics and measure results.

Antonia Ashton

Battling acronyms, tech-speak and jargon

As one of the world's leaders in the enterprise software space and a complex German engineering heritage, SAP is by no means free of the tech jargon and messaging complexity that dogs the communication of many players in our industry. While we have made great strides in decluttering and fine-tuning our internal and external communication style over recent years, there is always room for improvement. In general, our industry suffers heinously from obfuscation and an obsession with confusing acronyms. As such, it's very easy to get lost in the verbiage and come away with no clear idea of what's actually being communicated. In this context, communicators across the globe at SAP are collectively waging war on acronym tech-speak with a view to effectively persuading audiences.

Like Design Thinking principles, where our company devotes much time to ensure our product portfolio truly meets our customers' needs, all good communication is based on really understanding your audience. And our audiences, both internal and external, have changed and are changing day-by-day as is our employee base. Not only are we working with people from multiple cultures representing different age groups and skill sets, we need to find language that is simple, powerful, and unequivocally clear.

No one owns the narrative any longer and 'Big Brother' message control is a thing of the distant past. While this shifting scenario represents a huge change it opens up huge opportunities through new channels like social, platforms for sharing internally and the like and the powerful force of organic employee advocacy. For the most part, no matter how complex an organisation's offering, stakeholders seek simple, clear and authentic conversations.

The virtual circle approach

People often talk about internal and external

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communication as if they are completely different things. Therein lies a fundamental error. They are inextricably intertwined and barriers between internal and external communication have become less defined.

At SAP, while these areas of expertise are separate within the organisation, there is more and more cross-pollination as all communication planning is driven from an integrated perspective. Nothing in the communication portfolio is seen as stand-alone and this represents a significant shift over the last few years. This integrated approach is like a virtual circle with one area of expertise feeding into another,

promoting alignment of messaging that can be adapted to a specific audience and then localised and shared in an osmotic manner. This approach is not only driving better alignment but increasing consolidation of the global communication portfolio, which translates into increased productivity and the streamlining of many processes. In turn, this approach brings marketing and communication functions together across paid, owned, shared, and earned platforms.

All audiences expect to be heard

Employees have a voice that should be heard and they no longer passively receive information. They also no longer have a limited number of prescribed channels through which to respond to the organisation. Thanks to interactive digital platforms and social media, all of our stakeholders inside and outside of the organisation, are now empowered, connected and expect to be heard.

SAP has deliberately driven a seismic shift in the internal communications space over the last decade and several elements have contributed to significantly improved perception of the relevance and value-add. These include:

- regular engagement with top leaders
- making managers aware of the role they play in cascading information and motivating their teams with training provided on an ongoing basis
- actively encouraging the celebration of local successes, not just global ones
- harnessing the power of storytelling
- focusing on being culturally aware and inclusive
- providing push and pull open channels for informal engagement
- leveraging social media channels
- cutting back the clutter including death to the useless newsletter with a readership of 50!
- making everything mobile friendly
- being hyper-alert to timing by thinking about when it best makes sense to send messages out (e.g. Fridays are weekend days in many parts of the world, don't send out things that are not mission critical in the last week of a financial quarter)
- not defaulting to email but using many new, cool channels like the SAP Portal (intranet), Periscope interviews, and Twitter Chats

Creating value, growing competencies

As most of us know, effective communication is a leading indicator of financial performance and employee engagement. Simply put, the ability to communicate effectively with people both inside and outside of the organization is a key characteristic of companies that thrive.

At SAP, leaders are actively encouraged to flex their communication leadership muscles and constantly hone their internal and external skills in a variety of formal and informal ways. To start, the importance of communication is something that's vociferously driven by the company CEO who innately understands how non-negotiable communication is to get exemplary business results. The topic is addressed at regional levels regularly, and all leaders are encouraged to keep their skills fresh. Much training on various facets of effective communication is offered.

Of course, the most compelling factor is demonstrating what exciting things can be achieved. Creativity and fresh approaches are continuously encouraged from the communication teams themselves.

Clearly, it's not only about financial performance. This is where teaming up with HR comes into play. Effective communication between a company and its employees enables businesses to fully tap into the talents of its people. In turn, this translates into positive retention and attraction of top talent.

At SAP, this is not a difficult value proposition to pitch to the business and it is validated by the fact that the communications team is increasingly being 'brought to the table' to contribute business-relevant perspectives far earlier than traditionally was the case. This is, of course, hugely gratifying as it allows the function to make even more of a contribution to the business.

Among others, tools that are helping leaders communicate effectively include:

- Beyond formal global and local all-employee gatherings, regular informal gatherings take place on topics of the day/month/quarter called 'Coffee Corners'.
- We solicit ongoing feedback using an 'Ask & Rate tool' that works particularly well. Employees can pose questions either by name or anonymously, and others vote those questions up or down. This gives us a great insight into what topics are truly on our employees' minds and we can then address them in different forums.
- We also enable company-wide conversations. The value is clear. We have to empower our fellow employees to communicate. Creating ways for employees to exchange ideas, information and questions are important.
- We support the creation of materials for podcasts, videos from execs, VLOGS, blogs with an emphasis on things that are quick.
- We provide training from messaging preparation to social media tips.

Speaking the language of business

Before engaging with a business leader, make sure you understand their objectives. Do your good, old-fashioned homework with Design Thinking principles in mind. When you clearly understand their business and executive communication objectives, think about how a structured communication approach could support their efforts. Be clear about what key success factors are to realise their communication goals.

Being able to talk the language of business when engaging with leaders is critical. In doing so, you start on a level playing field. This hopefully translates into mutual success and they ultimately become powerful evangelists for the power of communication.

Ask them to articulate what communications success looks like from their perspective and then work backwards.

Encourage an authentic communication style. This is the only way that efforts will be credible and sustainable. Work with them to regularly refresh skills and practice. Securing enough prep time for important things is critical.

Build relevant measurement into your campaigns to factually demonstrate the value-add that effective communication brings to business engagement, not only when there's a crisis.

Mark Dollins

Doing more with less

The challenges facing my team at DuPont principally came from doing more with less. As budgets and headcounts were reduced, the demands on the team, both for bandwidth and skill base, were increasing. These opposing forces required us to think and work smarter. We needed to be more efficient in how we managed our own work, and we needed deeper, broader and more integrated skill sets. This is particularly important in the rapidly increasing digital communication space. It's no longer good enough to be proficient as writers, message developers, and communications strategists. We need to understand social and digital media competencies that once were reserved for external facing stakeholders. These newer skill sets need to be acquired and integrated into our arsenals.

Those challenges also bring opportunities to be more successful and influential with the business. Being squeezed for time and resources, we need to learn how to say 'no' to more tactical and less value-added communications tasks. If we are up for the challenge, we can develop far more strategic skill sets that earn us the seat at the table.

Working outside in/inside out

My global internal communications work with PepsiCo and DuPont has been rooted in a concept I've come to call 'outside in/inside out.' Essentially it's assumed that any internal communication can have external implications, and vice-versa. We don't look at this dynamic as something to deal with. We look at it as an opportunity to drive clear and consistent messaging for whatever business initiative or result it's designed to drive. Internal and external sub-functions were aligned under one communications structure, which is the right way to do it. It affords regular interaction between communications professionals who manage internal and external stakeholders. We partner on messaging, align on strategy and metrics, and remain in lockstep for execution. Clearly, everything from messaging
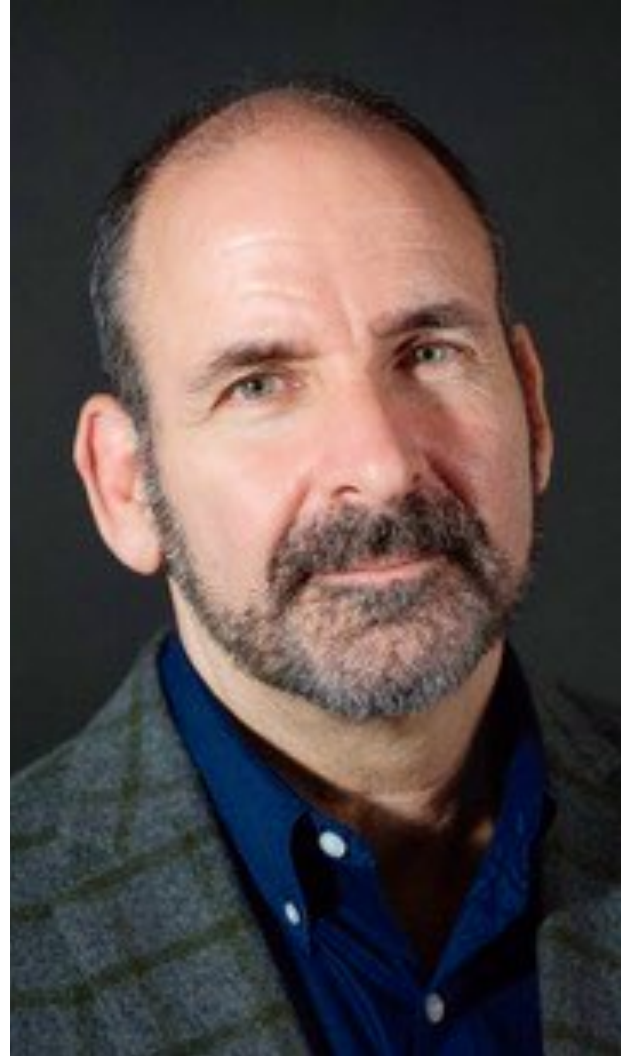
Mark Dollins is based in the USA, and he was the Head of Executive & Global Employee Communications, at DuPont, until recently. He is currently the President of North Star Communications Consulting, LLC. At DuPont, his key responsibilities included global employee communications, executive communications, communications talent management, and change management communications. DuPont has 35,000 employees and operations in >90 countries.

to sequencing can have an impact on the overall success of any communication plan. Alignment using that outside in/inside out principle is the only way to ensure we're thinking and acting holistically with all stakeholders on behalf of the business.

Building leader communication competencies

People leaders, defined as any employee who manages one or more team members, are better at understanding that internal communications skills are central to driving effective change, and every organization is dealing with change in one form or another.

I see this increased understanding, first-hand, through qualitative feedback and quantitative metrics that show the use of communications tools and skills development materials is increasing. If we build the right strategies and tools for leaders to drive change through communications, they will use them.

We created unique tools reserved only for them. We created content that is customized for their roles as communicators and leaders. We developed training to help them self-assess and improve their communications competency on the continuum. Any successful internal communications function today must have leader communications as a critical segmentation of employee communications. It starts with building solutions that are grounded in the leader's experience. What does he need? What are her pain points?

Connecting internal communication and business results

That which gets measured gets done. We deepened our focus on communications measurement, and perhaps more importantly, connected those communications metrics to business outcomes. During our 2016-2017 merger communications at DuPont, we routinely showed steady, solid progress and connectivity between communication measurement efforts and organizational health and engagement scores. We also showed the impact of internal communications on voluntary attrition rates in a very compelling and positive way. We had to up our game, literally, in measurable ways. That means knowing what to measure and when, doing the analytics on the data, and showing how we're using those insights to drive continuous improvement. It's what leadership cares about and how it assigns a value for the function.

Beyond measurement, it's about bringing insights that leaders cannot, and will not, get from anyone else. Telling leaders what will make them more effective leaders through communications gets big attention. And to do that, we have to measure communications activities, distill the feedback, and deliver actionable recommendations. That's a true value-added service for leaders that translates to business metrics like higher employee engagement, greater productivity, safety, or lower voluntary attrition rates.

It's key NOT to keep the results confined to the communications function. Executive leadership and HR/OD leadership need to understand what's working and see the commitment to getting the job done. It requires that we keep putting ourselves out there and transparently showing our results. Even if we fail from time to time, seeing the core commitment to driving results is important to getting – and keeping – a seat at the table to influence senior leaders. All too often, I see communicators doing good work, but not telling their stories of success and failure. If we expect and work to be seen as something other than order takers, we have to own the agenda and not be afraid to learn what's working and what isn't. That kind of transparency is what moves our function forward.

Tali Dulin

Communicating in times of change

Teva is a leading global pharmaceutical company and the world's largest generic medicines producer. We deliver high-quality, patient-centric healthcare solutions used by millions of people every day. 2017 was a very challenging year for our company, but we kicked off 2018 with our new CEO in place, a simpler organizational structure and a new executive management team. We are now going through a comprehensive restructuring plan, so this is a time of significant change and impacts all employees worldwide.

A key focus area was to address the complexity of our company, which is made up of numerous businesses and acquisitions over a 117-year history. By unifying and simplifying our organization we plan to create greater synergy across the units and regions and instill new ways of working to achieve greater business success. Creating an environment for cultural change and a new unified mindset is a major challenge, but also an opportunity.

Like the rest of the company, the internal communications team was impacted by the restructuring and is now a far leaner group. Nevertheless, we needed to quickly and effectively communicate the decisions, and then help employees navigate the change, understand the rationale, and start to rebuild trust, motivation, and engagement.

It was clear we needed to actively engage employees in the process of change. We launched a new open dialogue channel – small sessions, face-to-face with leaders. This enables employees to express their concerns, vent their frustrations and talk through new ways of working. It's a process and it takes time. So far, the two-way communication has facilitated leaders understanding their team perspectives and helped employees feel included in forging the company's future.

Tali Dulin is the Head of Corporate Internal Communications at Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. (Teva). Based in Israel, she is responsible for corporate internal communications, global internal communications initiatives and campaigns, CEO communications, and the Icomm Center of Excellence. Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. (Teva) has approximately 45,000 employees and operations in approximately 60 countries.

We're all in this together

Internal and external communications are both part of the Corporate Communications and Brand unit at Teva. As such, we have always worked closely alongside each other but were focused on different audiences. We are now writing a new chapter in Teva's story together. This is an opportunity to talk about what we stand for, what we do, and the value we bring for internal and external stakeholders.

It is critical that we all tell the same clear, strong narrative and use our professional teams and resources as effectively as possible. We hold regular alignment meetings, have a global editorial calendar and plan how content can be leveraged for multiple

audiences together. Providing our local communication teams with the content pre-packaged for different audiences and channels enables them to distribute global content faster, simply adding their own local flavor to ensure relevance.

A great example of this cross-pollination of content is our external website 'lifeeffects.teva', which contains blog posts, articles, podcasts and videos by patients about how they experience day-to-day life, living with asthma, migraines, ADHD, and depression. Our patients are the primary audience for this website, but the real-life examples also provide a bridge of understanding and empathy between our employees and the people they serve.

Even as the lines blur, the internal audience remains my personal passion. I feel a strong sense of responsibility to create an informed, effective and collaborative environment where people can get their best work done. An exciting part of this is providing the channels for people across the world with similar goals and interests to connect and communicate quickly and easily. That is when internal communication really takes off.

Focus, process, and discipline

We believe in creating a communication style that is fast, open and honest. Creating a culture of straight-talking is always essential, but particularly during a period of restructuring when trust is on the line. There are a lot of changes that are hard for people to process, but having a clear up-front rationale means that even if the news is unpopular, it is listened to.

With the arrival of our new CEO, people really wanted to hear from him directly. We knew he wouldn't be able to meet personally with everyone immediately, so we created a new video channel where he answered key questions and explained the steps he was taking to strengthen the company. Being able to see and hear him explain his plans helped people better understand his approach and leadership style.

A key to being timely and effective in our communications is having a focused and methodical way of working. Pharma is a highly-regulated environment and our content requires a strict approval process. We need to translate into at least 12 major languages to ensure effective reach. It starts with strategic planning and then the creative process followed by carefully coordinated and disciplined execution, and finally goes through analytical measurement and review.

Measuring and correcting

Building a strong relationship as a trusted business partner is essential. Our leaders and other key internal partners understand the value that we bring, and we are included throughout the process. We bring insights about where the audience is and how to create the change desired to affect business outcomes.

We are huge believers in measurement. Just as the company and unit goals are clearly measured and presented on a monthly and quarterly basis, we prepare our own reports for internal communications. Having a dashboard helps us sense when our target audience is pulling back, enabling us to go in and investigate the root cause. It could be they are incredibly busy with a project and the messages simply are not getting through, or there could be a problem in their understanding of the message. By having our finger on the pulse of the organization we can course-correct in real time. Having solid data helps leaders understand what you are saying is not a "hunch or gut feeling", but something real that needs to be addressed.

Understanding the new trends and technologies helps leaders see that we bring a strong, professional understanding of what we do. There is a large amount of experimentation involved and what works one quarter may not work the next. Audience habits keep changing. Where before they wanted to get short, clear, fast communications, now they may need reassurance and detailed explanations. We advise on the best method and sometimes this includes reminding them of the tried and tested 'old way', simply sit down and talk to each other.

Measuring business outcomes

It's critical to demonstrate the direct link between a behavioral change or business outcome and the communication strategy and execution we put in place to create that change. Giving communications the same KPI's as the business means that we judge our communication effectiveness by the final result, not the amount of communications, channels, and methodology it took. These factors are governed internally to prevent overload and ineffective communications. While we examine opening and click rates, attendance and feedback, our bottom line is the business KPI. This also helps leaders to understand that we are full partners in their goals.

Patrick Humphris

Engaging employees to serve customers and fight financial crime

We're here to help the business focus on accelerating the growth from our Asian businesses, including in Hong Kong, the Pearl River Delta in Mainland China and across the nations that make up ASEAN, the Association of South East Asian Nations. Asia-Pacific is an area where there are exciting opportunities for HSBC.

We need to make sure that communications with our workforce across Asia-Pacific is as advanced and targeted as the best in the world. We focus on three areas.

First, we focus on the big strategic priorities of the organisation, such as technology and digital banking and thematic areas such as the Belt and Road initiative and supporting the transition to a low carbon economy.

Second, we think carefully about the medium and make sure we use the full range of communications tools from face-to-face townhalls to extensive use of video and other visual communication.

Third, we use data and insight from our quarterly snapshot survey of employees to show the impact we're having and focus our communications on those areas where we want to move the dial.

HSBC has operations in 18 countries and territories, from Mauritius to New Zealand, with Hong Kong being our largest market. Given the scale of our presence across Asia-Pacific, the opportunities and challenges for employee communications to connect and engage our employees are immense. Getting it right matters because every employee plays a part in the growth of our company, serving our customers, and fighting financial crimes.

Patrick Humphris is the Head of Communications, Asia Pacific, at Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited. Based in Hong Kong, he is responsible for employee communications and media relations in Asia-Pacific. The number of employees expressed in full-time equivalent (FTE) staff as of December 31, 2017, was 228,687. The Group serves customers worldwide from around 3,900 offices in 67 countries and territories in Europe, Asia, North and Latin America, the Middle East, and North Africa.

Consistent messages inside-out

We have a fully integrated communications function. Within the function, we have employee communications specialists and media relations specialists, but fundamentally we are integrated across all our major teams and within country communications teams. There are good reasons for this.

Our message needs to be consistent. Significant internal communications cannot be kept out of the

public domain and major media issues impact our employees' sense of pride in working for HSBC. Taking an integrated approach to communications makes complete sense because the message to our people and the outside world has to be consistent.

Employee communications these days must be timely. With the advent of social media, the flow of information has become rapid and boundaries between internal and external communication are largely irrelevant.

To be heard, we need to be relevant to the lives of our employees. They're using social media and they're increasing access to their information via their smartphones. It's important that employee communications recognizes this trend and uses it effectively because it's consistent with how we are living our lives.

We believe the old-fashioned distinction that you could draw between internal and external communications is from an analogue era and not suitable for today's digital world.

What's going to grab attention?

It's about the newsroom culture. What we mean by that is the culture of thinking "what's going to grab my attention?" People are bombarded with information every minute of the day. The challenge for internal communicators is to think about how to create engaging content that employees want to read, watch, or listen to and positively influence hearts and minds.

Our content needs to be engaging because we're competing for their attention and employees are busy with their day jobs. As a function, communications must learn lessons from the external environment and create content that is unmissable.

Collaboration across our communications teams is also critical as many of our stories highlight HSBC's international and business connectivity. We have an opportunity to use our messages across various employee channels and across our geographies. A joined-up approach in content and distribution planning helps to ensure we get maximum mileage for our stories.

More than a post box

Communications is ultimately a service function. We're here to help the business grow, build a positive and strong culture, engage with and listen to employees, and keep them informed.

While we must ensure that we continue to demonstrate our worth, we have found that our leaders greatly value the partnership we bring as they focus on achieving the organisation's priorities, influencing its culture and enhancing its reputation. We enjoy a position where we are brought in early to understand business challenges and create appropriate communications strategies, rather than being used simply as a post box to issue messages from the business.

Insights, influence, decisions and results

Insights give us quantitative as well as qualitative data to benchmark sentiment and enables us to target our communications in a precise way. If, for example, we find a group of employees that have relatively lower scores in a particular area, we then know that we need to focus our attention on engaging this group or empowering leaders with the information to make a positive change. We're then able to measure the impact of our communications over time and track the trend on a quarterly basis.

Using data to inform our communication approach, in particular, the recommendations we make and the actions we take helps position our communicators as strategic advisers.

Lucia Muthová

Senior managers must be strategically involved in dialogue with employees

Our company is facing many changes and we are in the process of transformation. Internal communication is now even more important. We need to explain the reasons for all changes to our employees, inform them about our strategy, their role in the whole process, and find enough time for mutual dialogue. Informed and motivated colleagues are drivers of change and crucial for the success of the transformation.

I see internal communication opportunities in finding mutual understandings between different groups of employees. Our role as communication professionals is to offer them a basis for constructive dialogue, listen to their opinions and needs, and enable them to speak openly. At the same time, we encourage the CEO and top management to be more strategically involved in open and permanent dialogue with employees. Our task is to continuously create a platform for one-to-one discussions.

Employees are the best ambassadors

Internal and external communication in our company have always worked hand-in-hand and they are handled by the same department, ensuring full integration of both functions. Everything that is presented externally whether media releases, advertising campaigns, or new products and services are presented within the company first. The best ambassadors of your company are employees, themselves.

Of course, a lot of other internal information is presented via internal communication channels. Integrated communication means not only integrated

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internal and external communication but also integration with other company functions such as human resources or market management. We regularly circulate information between our departments by meeting regularly and circulating minutes. Internal communication in our company coordinates the release of information so we are informed about all the news in advance.

Multiple channels and co-operation are keys to success

Generally, communication is a quickly developing area. People are busy, so effective communication is targeted, short and concise, managed, and prepared to reach different target groups. We constantly work

on changes in communication tools and styles. Currently, we use the internal TV channel, e-newsletter, e-mails, and posters. Our managers meet colleagues regularly at town hall meetings and informal events and regular feedback is provided in an anonymous engagement survey. Face-to-face and Q&A meetings are a very strategic and an effective way of communicating in the changing working environment.

Co-operation among departments is a key to effective internal communication strategy. A consistent and coordinated approach to changes is a must. It is extremely important for our company to have a positive mindset so that ongoing changes are implemented efficiently and the company can keep up with the rapidly changing environment.

Does the data show change?

Without a doubt, facts and figures are critical so measuring communication impact is important. Figures offer clear evidence of how internal communication strategies and activities work and deliver valuable feedback that management understands.

Sometimes it is not easy to put numbers together at the end as we focus more on project execution than results. I think most of IC professionals would agree, but we want to know the impact of specific activities on employee behaviour, management, and the business. It is nice to receive positive comments, but only the exact data can show us the real impact of our projects.

In an era of digital tools, it is easier to measure communication activities by the number of likes, comments, discussions, shares, viewers, readers, and social media analytics. It is crucial to ask the right questions BEFORE the project starts: What do we want to achieve, do we want to somehow change employee behaviour? In the end, we should be able to answer the questions: Have we changed behaviour or not? Is there an impact on the company and its business goals?

Good communication supports business results

An effective business leader considers IC as a part of his or her everyday job. Relationships are healthy only if mutual communication works. It does not matter whether the relationship is between husband and wife, parents and children, between business partners, students, and teachers or, managers and employees, if you do not communicate, listen and react, your partner feels ignored and that his or her opinions and feelings are not valued. All conflicts spring from misunderstandings and a lack of information.

Our business goal is to improve understanding of the strategy, reduce the fear of the future, and increase confidence in management and business through intense two-way communication. We regularly ask our employees whether they feel well informed, understand the company strategy, and are motivated to drive changes. Motivated and well-informed employees are more engaged; one of the main goals of every successful company.

According to survey results, the understanding of the strategy, confidence in management and the degree of open, two-way communication has improved in our company. For example, we started hosting regular town hall meetings a few years ago to support personal communication with employees at the headquarters of the company and in regional offices. In support of open communications, we used the smartphone app to ask questions. People can choose whether to enter their names or just post an anonymous question. After each event, we measure direct feedback, employee satisfaction with responses, and understanding of the information. Direct feedback is analyzed and discussed with management.

Part of our communication job is to share business goals with our sales agents to support them in their job and help them practice professional and effective communication with customers. We are in the role of facilitators between management and salespeople. We need to ensure a sufficient communication flow where mutual expectations are met. Through this process, sales agents understand their importance to the company strategy and the business impact. Management understands our strategic role in this process.

Nicholas Wardle

Learning from new people

Alshaya continues to grow at pace, which means new brands, new markets, and new employees. This means new people to engage and collaborate with. There's plenty of scope for mutual learning as we can learn from fresh voices (for example, when we partner with a new brand) and they from us. One of the beauties of working in a large organisation is that it increases the chances of adding to your knowledge bank through the sheer scale of talent available. When we partner with brands or support functions we always encourage their input into communication campaigns and the creativity of our people never fails to delight.

Our biggest challenge is to better enable two-way communications. Our annual survey provided evidence that our people feel we would benefit from this. We've identified that our tools need an upgrade. Now, we need to ensure that we select the right ones to fit this complex multi-market, multi-language workplace.

No barriers between internal and external communication

Our internal and external communication is one corporate communications team. We've recently moved to sit together and now have weekly content meetings, so everyone knows what stories are upcoming. Of course, we have a content calendar and seek to be ahead of every story. There is still some figuring out about who writes what. Does a person 'own' a story internally *and* externally? But, we're confident the physical move will further enable collaboration. All our team members have mouths and they're encouraged to use them!

Finding the employee voice

Our annual employee survey has really helped to drive change, including the way in which we communicate internally. It is in its second year and the introduction of mandatory departmental action plans in direct response to feedback has had such a

Until recently, Nicholas Wardle was the Global Internal Communications Lead at Alshaya Retail, based in Kuwait. He is now Head of Employee Engagement & Communications at One Housing in the UK. At Alshaya Retail, the communication team offers brand and divisional communication support, strives to enhance organisational reputation management and works to increase employee engagement. Alshaya Retail has more than 53,000 employees and operates in 17 countries.

positive cultural and business impact. Our Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer are firmly behind this 'employee voice' process and getting their buy-in has been so important.

Alshaya is a very traditional company, but people have said how they would like to receive communications and our leaders are acting. I fully agree with Engage for Success when they say that employees need to 'see and talk to their leaders, and have confidence they are being listened to and their views are being heard'. Some of our leaders, who once preferred to communicate via email, are now embracing video and face-to-face to be more visible. This is a very positive step. Dr. Kevin Ruck from PR Academy has written extensively on if you have a

regular flow of upward communication from employees to leaders, who are then receptive to this information and willing to act where necessary, you can achieve the sweet spot of an informed employee voice.

It is my opinion that although there will always be a place for some central communications, messaging is far more powerful and has more integrity if it comes locally from people, be it leaders (top-down) or employees (bottom-up). Teams need to take greater ownership of their own intra-team communication and not leave everything to a small central team. People know when a message has been ghostwritten and can smell the lack of authenticity.

Speaking of numbers

We always, always talk numbers to our leaders, so our monthly reporting includes the metrics like reach, views, and impact. Saying you're doing great work won't land. You need to prove it. Executing a pretty, engaging campaign keeps communication folk happy work-wise, but unless it helps to achieve an increase in sign-up, reduction in phone calls, enables self-servicing or some other action, it won't be seen as successful by the big chiefs. It's a cliché, but you really have to display how your work makes a difference.

The first step for any campaign is to have a strategy document. This proves we really plan what we do, displays how the work fits into a business objective and sets out what we want to achieve in terms of hard figures. You should always share this with the leader who signs the cheques for the project and, where possible, get their sign off. Creative people seldom like planning, but this step is a necessity. We made a decision last year to enter the Institute of Internal Communications Awards. We were delighted to win and this industry recognition has boosted our credibility internally. It's one thing to say that you know what you're doing. It's another for it to be recognised by your industry.

How will this satisfy a business need?

The starting point to demonstrate the impact of IC on organizational goals is to ensure that your overall internal communication strategy is aligned with the overall business strategy. Everything you do must work towards a clearly defined organisational goal.

Pet projects can be personally satisfying but they don't justify your headcount. You need to be aware of the pet projects of others too, which can mean having to be firm and say 'no'. It can be difficult. A question to ask when reviewing any request for communication support is: How will this satisfy a business need? If all your work is aligned to business requirements, then you can freely converse with leaders on how your work is helping to achieve a business goal.

Our corporate communication team reports monthly, quarterly, half-yearly, and annually to our CMO. This reporting then goes into a wider business unit report, that includes marketing, customer service, digital and other disciplines, which then goes right to the very top. We measure the things you would expect, such as views and impact versus targets. The one 'new' thing for me in my current role is that our VP likes us to report on how many key messages land in each 'bucket'. Everything you write should 'hit' a key message and it's good to check that you have a fair spread of stories. For example, if you've not written a CSR story for a while, it's probably a good idea to find a story to maintain awareness of this important aspect.

It doesn't come naturally to all IC pros, but you need to shout about what you do. Just because your great work and success metrics can be seen it doesn't mean they are heard. Take your own communication advice. People retain information much better if the information comes directly from a human being. Other departments are competing for budgets, and if you don't lobby your own team and their great work, no one else will.

Internal communication, like any support function, can often be taken for granted. If all you do is send stuff out, then you deserve to be so! Modern internal communication teams need to elevate their status and be seen to be business partnering or even better, leading business transformation. A familiar gripe from IC pros is that they only hear about major projects at the last minute. This speaks volumes about the importance their business places on internal communication and the reputation of their team. If this happens to you, I would throw a quizzical look at your IC leader, as they've clearly not established the importance of internal communication in your business.

Paola Foglia

Internal communication in the evolving marketplace

TIM is facing many challenges. The telco scenario went through a deep crisis in the last decade requiring our company to reinvent its business model. We are now playing in the same round with new competitors and over-the-top companies.

This major structural change presents other demands: improve the customer experience, simplify the organization and processes, take advantage of all the opportunities offered by new technologies, digital transformation, and keep pace with emerging adjacent markets.

The internal communication team operates on three levels, strategic, tactical and operations, with the following objectives:

- report on transformation and disseminate strategy within a complex and changeable scenario
- practice business storytelling by translating the strategy into projects, activities, products and best practices
- strengthen engagement and the sense of belonging, involving people with diverse backgrounds and histories, of different ages and professions
- reach everyone in a timely and widespread manner, by creating different access for a satisfying and inclusive user experience

We identified three areas of working, strategy and leadership communication to disseminate the strategy and foster proximity, business awareness, and experience to get people involved in the core business and enable people to experience the brand, company life and people engagement aimed at promoting, and disseminating HR initiatives to enhance engagement, development, and welfare.

The convergence of internal and external communication

At TIM, internal and external communication

Paola Foglia is the Head of Internal Communication at TIM Group. Based in Italy, her key responsibilities include developing, implementing and measuring internal communication strategies, plans and tactics. She is the key IC advisor, facilitating and driving the integration of internal and external communications, and ensuring compliance of corporate brand and identity for the company's intranet portal. TIM Group has 60, 000 employees. The main markets of the company are Italy and Brazil. The Group is also active in Europe, Americas, Africa and Asia through Sparkle.

are not integrated, however, there are many structured mechanisms to ensure common storytelling. We build a medium-term agenda of communication themes and integrated teams work in the editorial committees of each channel and target audience including external websites, the intranet, investors, and employees to name a few.

According to a recent European Internal Communications Research[1], the main challenges facing internal communication in the next three years include: digital evolution and the social web, aligning internal communication with corporate strategy and strengthening the role of internal

communication to support the decision-making process of top management. All of these challenges imply a strong strategic alignment between internal and external communication.

A few unique best practices

Our managers recognize that it's crucial to have a deep understanding of people and cultural factors that influence people at work, and then transform this active listening into a consistent, creative action plan that matches company goals and people needs.

Referring to the Profession Map developed by the Institute of Internal Communication in the UK, I would add that internal communicators should be positive, enthusiastic and tenacious.

Among the best practices at TIM are:

A WELL-BALANCED CHANNEL MIX THAT REACHES EVERYONE

The intranet, email and print materials are the main tools used. The trends in digital channels promote continuous improvement of the intranet and corporate newsletter and the creation of internal communication apps. Print materials also decorate the workplaces and are used for marketing purposes, circulating commercial information and encouraging participation in internal initiatives.

A WIDESPREAD STRATEGIC PROGRAM

We organise an internal launch for the strategic plan, including a live event for the managers. We developed a cascade program and planned meetings according to the type of messages to be distributed, the characteristics of the target population, and logistical aspects. This program reaches every person in the company. The cascade is supported by a toolkit that includes content and other material.

ENGAGED INTERNAL NETWORKS

Internal communication increasingly plays the role of activating and empowering internal networks. The following factors have been crucial in our case:

- the clear and coherent mission of the group
- precise identification of the community's participants

- community management action
- continuous engagement, through motivational and training events, dedicated kits and moments of celebration

BRAND ACTIVATION INITIATIVES AND USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Various types of brand activation activities are carried out including promotion of free tickets, exclusive site tours, dedicated exhibitions, and events sponsored by the company. Engaging, entertaining contests that incorporate music, dance and writing are linked to our brand. Storytelling videos sharing colleagues' special experiences create an emotional bond between the person and the company. The crowd model is also important for us and is used to gather ideas, opinions, photos, videos, and other user-generated content. Our goals are to tell a story (branded content) and encourage people to interact with the brand, improving the sense of pride and belonging.

INCLUSIVE PROJECTS PAYING ATTENTION TO PEOPLE PRIORITIES

Welfare remains the biggest area of investment in terms of company life. A very rich array of actions have been put into place for people including health, conferences and summer camps. Family day is the most important event sponsored by the company for families and is an opportunity to educate people about the business.

A structured approach to IC planning

We defined a structured process to elaborate on the integrated internal communication plan focused on assessing the current situation, highlighting the areas to promote and improving and planning the key activities for the year.

The working method for defining the integrated internal communication plan consists of five steps:

SCENARIO: studying strategic approaches to internal communication through contact with the academic world and industry associations

BENCHMARKING: a project sponsored by TIM to explore current corporate practices by interviewing the heads of internal communication at other companies

THE CURRENT SITUATION AT TIM: examining the analytics of the internal communication channels used at TIM and the qualitative sentiment towards the content handled through various sources of feedback

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS: one-to-one meetings with the Board and top managers to explore their view about the current state of the art, business priorities and needs

TAKEAWAYS AND PLAN: an evaluation stage that weighs trends against TIM's needs, and then developing and submitting the work plan

How we demonstrate the impact of IC on organizational goals

Quantitative and qualitative information is gathered from various sources to evaluate the effectiveness of current internal communication practices and the sentiment within the company related to as regards the key themes of strategy, business and company life.

MEDIA MIX: The effectiveness of the internal communication channels is measured using traffic and footfall indicators and through user experience analysis.

CONTENT: The content produced is analysed by type, use, and appreciation by means of analytics and qualitative feedback such as comments on news items, feedback questionnaires at events and themed surveys.

SENTIMENT: Mood is evaluated through the network of internal ambassadors and internal (intranet) and external (social groups) qualitative sources.

Selva Carbajal

IC practitioners must assume their role as business partners

The automotive sector is going through one of the deepest transformation processes in its history. The impact of technology in our production processes and in our workforce, the volatility of international markets and a new vision aimed at achieving "zero crashes, zero emissions, and zero congestion" have produced changes in the business model, our structures and our way to work. Our operations around the world have been restructured, forming new business units that now bring together countries with different cultures, different languages, and different mindsets. Today, they must work together as a single team achieving extraordinary results in very short periods of time. In this process of change and integration, the area of internal communications has challenges and opportunities to demonstrate that it is a key area, that strategically managed can generate tangible value to the business. Internal communication professionals must capitalize on moments like these, abandoning the purely tool-based concept of internal communication and fully assuming their role as an internal communication business partner.

The integrated communication function

Both internal communications and external communications belong to the Communications and Public Affairs department. Although each area has a manager in charge, the efforts are constantly coordinated through an integrated action plan, producing synergy and strengthening each other. Social networks erased any divisions between internal and external disciplines. Any fact, internal information has the potential to become external information through the same employees that today act as informal correspondents of the organization. In the same way, all external communication is evaluated by the employees and compared with the internal communication of the organization, immediately impacting the perception

Selva Carbajal is the Internal Communication Manager at General Motors. Based in Argentina, she is responsible for managing internal communication for 18,000 employees belonging to the Mercosur business unit (Argentina and Brazil). General Motors employs more than 120,000 people and has operations in more than 100 countries.

of transparency and credibility of the communication strategy. This is a challenge because it requires a constant alignment between both areas, but it is also an opportunity to strengthen communication with our collaborators by providing relevant and timely information that allows them to act as true ambassadors of the company.

IC is among 12 factors evaluated against employee engagement

International consultants have conducted significant research that provides tangible evidence of the impact of internal communications on business results. Sharing this information with the organization's leadership is raising awareness of the importance of this discipline.

In our case, the organizational climate survey that is done every two years globally considers internal communication among the twelve factors that generate engagement in employees. A business case is developed where engagement has a clear impact on different business variables such as security, staff turnover, and financial metrics to name a few. Internal communication is considered a business variable inside the company. It is evaluated and measured and plans are drawn up so that it becomes increasingly effective.

Measuring the impact of IC

Measurement tools are the main way to demonstrate the impact that communication has on the organization's objectives. The global organizational climate survey contains results related to the knowledge, understanding, and assessment that our collaborators have for key issues such as security, vision and values, business results, and the impact of organization actions in the communities where we work. This is possible thanks to the different activities developed by the internal communication area under the format of events, news or endomarketing campaigns. Other ad hoc measurements for specific campaigns include specially formulated questions to understand the importance of communication in the achieving results.

Strategy, roles, and results

The continuous improvement of the effectiveness of the internal communication process is one of our permanent objectives. What is not measured can not be improved. To achieve this, we work on four basic pillars:

1. Every year we develop a strategic plan with objectives totally aligned with the business.

2. We segment the audiences and implement a strategy we call 'glocal' with 70/30 content: 70% customized actions for special audiences by location and 30% standardized actions to ensure alignment and consistency in the message.

3. We act at all times not only as a trusted advisor with communication expertise but as a business partner that participates in decision processes from scratch. It is important to know the business and speak the language of the business.

4. We measure our results through the same metrics used by the rest of the company (EBIT, Free Cash Flow, Market Share), but we also implement our own KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) through ad hoc measurement tools such as opinion polls or data analytics that allow us to understand the impact and assessment of the different actions.

Terhi Kivinen

Doing more with less, teaching others how to communicate

Having sufficient resources is a challenge. DSM has downsized most of the functions, including communications, during the past years and at the same time, the demand for communications professionals' support has increased. The demand for IC professionals and our services is going up as we face many change initiatives and our colleagues recognize the value of effective internal communications. We're also much more in the strategic advisor role than in execution due to the shrinking resources, and that has demanded lots of training in the organization to equip people to actually do communications themselves. We advised on the set-up of functional communications processes that are run by the functions, not communications. We have trained all of our executives around the company in storytelling. There is, fortunately, more understanding about why this is important, and people are more and more applying these techniques in their daily work.

In a global company, the usual complexities of the mix of languages and cultures also have to be taken into account. It doesn't make our lives easier, but it is a matter in the background. One thing we're looking to improve is the diversity of our central communications team, especially from a cultural perspective. That would be helpful in many ways. Our headquarters are based in the Netherlands but as a global company, we have to have a global view.

On the other hand, new ways to engage and manage constant change challenge us to continuously think differently. We need to understand how we can best enable and engage via communications without drowning people with information overload. It is much more about targeting, tailoring and thinking about who needs what and when. We are constantly offered a wide array of platforms, solutions, apps and other tools to help us communicate more effectively.

Terhi Kivinen is the Senior Director, Internal Communications at Royal DSM. Based in the Netherlands, her key responsibilities are to develop and deliver global internal communications strategy, plans and policies in support of the company strategy and objectives which address employee engagement and pride, business and functional excellence communications, change management and inclusion, and diversity. Royal DSM has 22,000 employees and operations in 65 countries.

However, it requires much more than just adding a new tool. We collaborate with our HR and IT colleagues to find the best solutions that fit our organization. One of the current questions we are working on is the role of AI in internal communications. We're already using AI elsewhere in DSM, so would it be possible to leverage that in communications?

Managing communication is a team sport

Most of the communications issues on our table have both sides, internal and external, and we're all involved in reaching our common objectives via an integrated approach. We build messaging, channel, and stakeholder plans together and align with the top management and our regional communications network to ensure everything is consistent.

A concrete example is the use of social media. All of our stakeholders are using social media including employees. That is why we want to reach them via traditionally external channels as well and also empower them to share the content relevant to them and their networks.

We align by planning together on weekly basis, and our overall strategic planning is done by this integrated approach in mind.

Using big data and more tools

Effective internal communications should be very much top-of-mind for management and all line managers. The efficient flow of communications that people need to do their job is only the bare minimum. A key thing is to avoid top-down mentality and emphasize dialogue. Sharing, aligning and collaborating is important. Enabling employees to share content in social media with their respective networks reaches a lot more people than doing it centrally. We're also actively training more and more people in storytelling and all of our communications people have gone through the training. Storytelling techniques are used in both internal and external events or training more and more. Moving away from the huge PowerPoint decks is definitely a nice development and much appreciated by the speakers and the audiences.

Analyzing the big data available can offer surprising insights about how people work and offer us more information about the most efficient way to communicate. Having a multi-channel approach and taking cultural differences into consideration when reaching all the internal target groups despite their type of work, region or language, is also important. We also have to bear in mind that part of our workforce does not have individual laptops due to the type of work they do. They have somewhat different channel needs than the regular office employees.

Leaders support internal communication

We're very fortunate that our leadership already understands the value of professional internal communications and change management. The new leaders who join DSM are already well-versed in the value of communications and many are excellent communicators. It is increasingly rare to be in a situation where you have to explain the value to an executive level person. It is more about fine-tuning the messaging, choosing channels or helping them to prepare events or speeches.

We have many examples of proof points and don't really have to fight to sit at the table. Internal communications has a strategic advisor role in all our major change initiatives. A good example of that is the strategy process. DSM publishes its updated strategy in mid-June, and we in communications (both internal and external) have been working with the top management to create a comprehensive communications plan that engages executives and employees to cascade the strategy in the best possible way. That is a fully integrated approach with external and internal channels and moments, first centrally then moving on to the regional and business group level. Communications had a key role in the 2015 strategy round during which many organizational change processes were introduced.

How we demonstrate the impact of IC on organizational goals

We measure many aspects of our activities and projects to show concrete results to the business. We have surveys, focus groups, and the system data to monitor various aspects of the communications activities or programs. We constantly keep track of our corporate news center user data and change our approach accordingly. The employee engagement survey provides lots of information about our success in communicating change or strategy. We have also started to measure internal reputation and are able to base some of our planning on the feedback. We have continuous dialogue with the CEO and the executive committee about the possible ways of communicating and introduce and test new ways such as global and regional vlogging to enable multi-language communications without complicated translations or"impromptu" group discussions with the CEO for employees who don't normally have access to him. This is much appreciated by both the employees and the CEO.

Paul Osgood

Managing weapons-grade communication

Like most internal communications teams, we are the strategists, consultants, and initiators of digital disruption. This is an exciting and exhilarating time, and it is without a doubt our greatest challenge and opportunity. Long gone are the long-term institutional investment propositions designed to create monolithic platforms that will see us through the next decade or so. The rise and fall of enterprise-wide social networks provide a great example of shorter-term investments delivering tangible, if ephemeral, leaps forward in collaboration and engagement. So, creating the virtual water cooler or coffee machine remains an elusive prize, no matter how much the vendors of enterprise social networks tell us otherwise.

We compete for the attention of our lawyers and business services teams as they expect to consume and engage with weapons-grade communications from a variety of digital platforms and channels. If we get the balance right between cost, fit for purpose, coolness, and accessibility, we become the 'cool parent' of communications – admired, respected and, most of all used. Get this delicate balance wrong and we simply create irrelevance for all our communication. Most internal communications practitioners should remain fearful of getting this all wrong. That is a positive tension that should imbue our daily lives.

Growing digital roses

At Clifford Chance, all the internal communications, external communications, digital, and brand team members meet every Monday morning to share their agendas. Critically, this extends to shared reporting

Paul Osgood is the Global Head of Internal Communications at Clifford Chance LLP. Based in the UK, he is responsible for internal communications and employee engagement. Clifford Chance LLP has 5400 employees and operates in 28 countries.

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lines, shared business partnering and shared communications strategy and planning. Without lockstep working and working relationships, we lose our focus and the true understanding of our communications strategy. When this works well, the approach is completely seamless. Our recent management of gender pay gap reporting was innovative and is impacting recruitment, retention and our external positioning. This has only been achieved through seamless and intense working relationships where skills have been pooled and ideas shared. For a mature and somewhat cynical communications professional, this was a really impressive and inspiring way to work.

In many respects, the integration and alignment of internal and external communications is a natural result of universal access to news. All stakeholders access and evaluate news in real time. This means

that the marketer who is promoting their product or service is utilising the very same channels that are being used by many stakeholders to collaborate, socialise and transact on their own or their organisation's behalf. It's a heady mix which truly blurs the lines between employment, procurement, recruitment, and even shopping. In one regard we are returning to the late 19th century ideals of George Cadbury when he created Bourneville where "No man ought to be condemned to live in a place where a rose cannot grow." Our digital infrastructure is extensive. We live, work and socialise online and our digital roses grow around us. Sustaining a singular internal communications approach that ignores the very environment in which all our employees thrive is naïve and leads to communications irrelevance.

From order taker to consultant

At Clifford Chance, we use a simple internal communications consulting model to develop communications strategies and solutions for all of the operating areas of the firm. We bring a consulting mindset to our stakeholders that sometimes surprises those who expect the team to be the traditional internal communications order takers. Time after time, we are able to demonstrate the added value of asking what our stakeholders are seeking to achieve with their communications. Simple 'Know – Feel – Do' analyses, for example, begin to open up opportunities for true engagement across the firm.

Stakeholders throughout the organisation need to understand the key strategies of the firm sufficiently to translate their knowledge into meaningful client engagement. As internal communicators, we have a responsibility to nurture behaviours that help reduce the time delay before internal stakeholders feel confident enough to share their knowledge with clients. Identifying how we use communications to help speed up this cycle delivers demonstrable benefits and new client opportunities.

Data unlocks dialogue

I am a huge believer in using data to deliver a deep understanding of the value of our work. Data analysis not only allows objective judgments to be made but more critically, it is data that usually unlocks the dialogue about communications in an organisation. It gives credibility to internal communications team members, many of whom may not have maturity and experience to offer a valued opinion based simply on what they know or have seen.

But we shouldn't fall into the trap of believing that data is a panacea. To badly paraphrase Dan Ariely, "Data is like teenage sex: everyone talks about it, nobody really knows how to do it, everyone thinks everyone else is doing it, so everyone claims they are doing it." Excellent internal communications data needs a great deal of energy, persistence, and patience. It's a classic voyage of discovery for the internal communications professional and, in my opinion, a journey that not enough practitioners seem willing to make.

Is the market rising or falling?

The perception of internal communications' impact is often inextricably linked to the state of the market or the position of an organisation in that market. In a rising market, business leaders look for signals of alignment with organizational goals. Do our employees get them? Agree with them? How loud can they shout them to all stakeholders? In a falling market, the position is quite different. Business leaders are more focused on mood and sentiment about organisational goals. Are they fit for purpose? Will employees deliver on these? How will employees deliver on organisational goals and do they have the tools to achieve this?

These differences in business leaders' requirements have to be properly understood by internal communicators if they are to demonstrate an impact on organisational goals by organisational communications.

Shel Holtz

Building IC from the ground up

Internal communication is new to this organization. Leadership is enthusiastic about its potential but has never been through an internal communications planning exercise before. The organization is also heavily grounded in engineering, so tactical solutions are more easily grasped and endorsed than longer-term strategies.

We conducted an audit of internal communications and found several gaps that cannot be filled by existing channels. Filling those gaps will be vital if the company hopes to achieve some of its strategic objectives, which requires a significant culture change.

However, I tend to view this as more of an opportunity than a challenge, given that the overall culture is strong and employee engagement is high. There's an appetite to develop employee-generated content and to share stories. There's just no mechanism that makes it possible.

The challenges that we plan to apply communication solutions include the following:

- Supervisors are not communicating corporate priorities to their teams, which means they're also not explaining what those priorities mean for their teams or how they'll work differently to support them.

- Most communication is face-to-face, contained within micro-tribes that have formed as the company has grown. Not a lot of information gets in or out. Each micro-culture has created its own narrative based on the conversations that take place within it. Each sees itself as different from the others and the company as a whole. Success stories and innovative practices are not shared.

- Because of these micro-cultures, employees don't recognize that their colleagues at other sites share the company's core values the same way they do.

Shel Holtz is the Director, Internal Communications, at Webcor. He oversees the strategic planning and execution of an IC plan, manages the various channels used for IC, provides metrics demonstrating the ROI and other benefits the company is accruing from its IC efforts, provides communication assistance and advice to members of the executive team, assists in the planning and execution of key company events, manages the company's social media presence (40% of employees learn about company news and activities through social channels), assists in external communication (website, public relations efforts), and coordinates internal and external communication. Webcor has approximately 775 salaried and 1,400 hourly employees, with operations in California, USA.

- The micro-cultures also support a culture of individual accountability, which certainly has its upsides but also prevents the growth of a culture of collaboration and consistent execution.

Employees responding to our internal communications survey expressed a strong desire to be updated on business development efforts so that they can feel reassured that there will be a job site to go to when they finish their current projects, and project status updates.

The company's social media efforts are the responsibility of the internal communications department, given that about 40 percent of the company's employees use social media to stay current with company news and information.

Finally, the existing communication channels, primarily email and an intranet, are seen as useful but not vital channels for getting and sharing company news and information. The intranet, for example, treats all news the same (everything is given the same weight), regardless of whether it is critically important for all employees to know or just mildly useful. There is no unifying graphic identity for company internal communications. Too many communications are single #All email messages, contributing to a torrent of emails that many employees pass over because it does not include an action item that they are responsible for.

Despite these challenges, there is much to build on. The executive team is highly respected. Employees believe they communicate effectively. There is a strong, positive outlook for the future. The culture is warm, welcoming, and hospitable. Employee engagement levels are high. The company ranked among the top 10 in the 'largest companies' category in a recent regional Best Places to Work competition. Leadership is amenable to improving communication but through active participation and investment in channels. What's more, they're anxious to see metrics that demonstrate progress is being made.

Limited external communication focus

External communication is extremely limited in this organization and focuses mainly on recruiting. Marketing is effectively non-existent since, in this industry, nobody decides to do business with a company based on their marketing materials. The Marketing Department spends its time mainly developing exhaustive proposals. Our external PR is

handled by an outside consultant who mainly issues press releases announcing personnel moves and project milestones and entering the company in various competitions like '40 Under 40' listings.

The company's social media efforts are the responsibility of the internal communications department, given that about 40 percent of the company's employees use social media to stay current with company news and information.

We conduct a weekly editorial call every Monday that includes IC, marketing, and our outside PR counsel to coordinate internal and external communication activities.

Strong face-to-face communication supported by IC media

As the function is relatively new, many of these attributes are in development. Native to the culture, however, is a strong face-to-face communication competence, even if it is sometimes ineffective as an element of a cascade. Even at the lowest levels of the hierarchy, people know they can speak up, ask questions, and share information.

Among the company leadership, there is a strong recognition that formal communication processes are required as the company grows. Leadership also shares the belief that some communication is aided by compelling media and presentations, such as the annual recognition of employees who exemplify the company's core values. High-quality video is shown at the annual holiday party, with winners introduced by senior leadership, which helps spread the word about the honorees and what they did to merit the recognition.

There are also efforts to spread information that can be more useful with a little pre-and-post-activity communication, such as the monthly operations meetings.

We're lucky because leaders already understand the value of internal communication. It's why they created the position, at the recommendation of the head of human resources, to whom I report. My work is focused more on connecting the dots for leadership, establishing specific connections and helping our leaders see the impact of certain kinds of communication on discrete goals and objectives. For example, research revealed that people managers are not communicating with their staff about corporate strategies and how they relate to the work that their team does, leading to the plan to target people managers as a discrete audience.

Leading and lagging indicators of IC impact

One of my tasks is to demonstrate the ROI of internal communication, which is a year-two initiative. Since we are in the process of introducing our first strategic internal communication plan, our initial measures will be lead indicators, that is, the predictive measures that are tied to each objective we have established, such as the amount of employee-generated content that employees contribute, the adoption of new channels we introduce, and the open and click-through rates for new email bulletins. Once we have established that people are using the various components of the plan, we can move to lag indicators that measure the impact the communication is having on the company's strategies and culture. For example, we will measure the degree to which communication has led to front-line support for key strategic initiatives and reduced turnover.

Aniisu K Verghese

Focus on the customer and colleagues

My responses are specific to the challenges and opportunities that we face at Tesco in Bengaluru where I serve as the Corporate Communications leader. Established in 2004 to standardize and centralize capabilities and competencies for the organization, Tesco in Bengaluru makes the experience better for millions of customers worldwide and simpler for over 440,000 colleagues. As a multi-disciplinary team serving our customers across markets a little better every day, we engage with a multi-generational workplace, supporting colleagues to receive information at the right pace, and bring predictability to information sharing. Among our opportunities is helping our managers to be better communicators, building stronger communities to improve engagement and partnering with colleagues to craft relevant and appealing communication.

We're in it together

We believe that our colleagues need to hear news about the company first before anyone else. Therefore we have defined our process and structure such that internal and external communication operates as an integrated effort. Both of these functions are combined, improving planning and implementation. By trusting our colleagues to do what is right for the business and equipping them with resources and tools to do their work well, the communications team focuses on providing timely guidance and support when needed. Through daily team huddles, communication dashboards and review meetings we stay aligned and on course to deliver on our goals.

What we do and how we do it

We are a retail business. Our colleagues based in Bengaluru, India are as much involved in serving our customers better as are those in the markets where we operate. Therefore, it is essential that they

Aniisu K Verghese is the Senior Manager, Corporate Communications, at Tesco Bengaluru. His key responsibilities include employer branding, media and industry relations, reputation management, digital marketing, employee communications, and corporate social responsibility. The business goal is to build trust in Tesco, inside and outside of the business and play a key role in revitalising the brand. Tesco Bengaluru has 440,000 employees with about 4000 in Bengaluru, India, and operates in several countries.

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understand who we are as a brand and what we stand for, as much if not more than any other colleague in the business. Our communication highlights helpfulness – a core aspect of how we serve our customers. Our practices include listening and using a mix of channels that appeal to different audiences. For example, a weekly CEO vlog shares the progress we are making as a business, and an engaging colleague communication app, face-to-face briefings and a consolidated weekly update helps so colleagues assimilate messages better.

Our colleagues are at the heart of the communication we do. They need to hear from us first, before anyone else does, about any initiative

that affects their lives and those of our customers.

Another mindset we focus on is less is more. We are mindful that our colleagues are busy. Our aim is to ensure they receive the right level of information at the right time to be effective at work. In terms of behaviors, we believe all our colleagues are ambassadors of the brand and capable communicators. Our goal is to help them continue advocating our brand and delivering on our strategic objectives with tools and resources. Among the practices that allow us to be effective are planning, closer involvement at the start of initiatives and following our consistent brand standards. We also conduct outreach workshops and clinics on communication and design where best practices and brand guidelines are shared with colleagues. Another approach is to involve colleagues to improve the quality of communication, seeking periodic feedback, inviting ideas and co-creating content and communication with their support.

Aligning communication to business results

We focus on demonstrating the linkage of communication objectives with business goals. By measuring and reporting on the impact of communication and sharing best practices and industry benchmarks, we create greater awareness of the value internal communication offers. For example, knowing how colleagues engage with messages and what content appeals to them allows us to reassess the content, channel, and timing of our communication. We use analytics to understand the impact of internal communication and feed insights to business leaders for effective decision making. We conduct focus groups to learn more about the effectiveness of communication and make suitable

"We brief the leadership team on the standards of communication, the approach and process followed for internal communication and how it aligns with business goals. In isolation, internal communication doesn't mean much to the business. Often, knowing the impact of ineffective communication helps to place conversations in perspective."

changes based on feedback we receive. In business meetings, communication is often on the agenda, which helps reinforce the importance of the function and gain support for initiatives that impact business teams.

Measuring impact

We brief the leadership team on the standards of communication, the approach and process followed for internal communication and how it aligns with business goals. In isolation, internal communication doesn't mean much to the business. Often, knowing the impact of ineffective communication helps to place conversations in perspective. One of our key practices is an outreach program on effective communication that we conduct periodically for business managers and leaders. It covers topics such as communication planning, creating effective messages and influencing with communication. These sessions help to elevate the level of appreciation of communication in everyday interaction and work. We also use an industry standard email tracking software that gives us real-time insights about open rates, readership, and engagement among others metrics. It tells us how our internal communication is perceived, what improvements we can make to the messages and which audiences need more attention.

Gary G. Hernandez

The battle between head and heart

One of the hardest things we do in communications is balance employee advocacy and the company position. In our hearts, communicators want to take care of employees. In our heads, we want to attend to the needs of the business. When these two factors line up, everyone is happy. When they don't, and they often don't, we have tension, and because we are in the middle, the tension comes to bear on us.

Lay-offs are a classic example. Internal communicators typically know about layoffs, reorgs, and divestments long before employees do. We spend long months planning how to share the news and how the business will operate through the change. There is nothing like listening to a colleague talk about their future when you know they will be gone in two months. If you tell them, mass panic ensues and you end up fanning the fire you are trying to put out. If you keep your mouth shut, then a little bit of you dies inside. It's a tough position to be in and internal communicators live it every day.

The opportunity is in helping the company get to a healthy state and helping the employees get through it with minimal trauma. In short, communicators need to find the magic formula of delivering the needs of the business in a way that upholds the dignity of employees. Communicators are the alchemists of the business world, always trying to make gold out of lead.

Another challenge we face is in helping our management, the business, or whomever we are communicating on behalf of, anticipate the consequences of their messaging. I often see clients balk when stakeholders take exception to a decision that they communicate. It is our job not only to help management communicate that decision but to anticipate the reaction stakeholders have to it and not flinch.

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In today's world, we can finally stop talking about what we will do if something leaks and get on to making decisions and delivering messages that we won't be ashamed of when they do leak. I hear a lot of communicators and business people express concerns about airing dirty laundry. The solution is to keep your laundry clean.

I also think that people expect things to operate within a company the same way they operate outside the company. This is the challenge. What do employees experience outside of work? Choice, flexibility, and instant access to information, whether it is correct or not. Not all companies can provide these to employees in a reliable way. There are real constraints that aren't going away overnight. Things like legal issues and cyber-security threats limit how and what we communicate inside a company. I do believe employees understand the difference between the external world and the internal company world, but their tolerance for this difference is diminishing. I don't have the solution. It will be interesting to watch it play out.

Finally, I would say that the internal/external dichotomy can be balanced by using honest and authentic communications. Honesty has to do with messaging and authenticity has to do with voice. We can provide honest and authentic communications without divulging confidential information and coming across as disingenuous.

Get to the point

Attend to the needs of the business. As business communicators, our purpose is to keep the business healthy. Understand what your business needs and deliver it.

Employee engagement for engagement's sake is wasted time. We should always have an answer to 'engage with what?' As business communicators, we should be striving to engage employees with the strategy, the company objectives, and the plan to deliver them.

Keep it simple. No one has time to read page long messages. Tell them what needs to be done, why it needs to be done, and how to do it and then move on.

Plan in the background, deliver on time, exceed expectations

Nothing communicates louder than performance. Put together strategic communication plans that are fit-for-purpose and that help deliver real business outcomes. Deliver on time with the minimal amount of disruption. Do your planning in the background and do it quickly. Communicators tend to spend 80 percent of their time on planning and then walk away feeling like they completed the job. Don't get me wrong, planning is hard work and it takes time, but the business only cares about that last 20 percent, the execution of the plan. Do your planning in the background and then deliver on time, at or below budget, at a quality level that exceeds expectations.

When I asked a fellow communicator this same question, she said she strives to connect her leaders with employees so that they could experience for themselves the value of real communications. This might happen at town halls, in informal conversations, and even in the dreaded end-of-year message. If you want your leadership to understand the value of communications, help them to communicate effectively and feel that value firsthand.

Results: Three things to keep in mind

First, understand the difference between outputs and outcomes. They both exist. They are both good in their time and place. Do not confuse one for the other and always strive for outcomes.

Second, embrace the fact that correlation is not cause and effect. We need to understand that there are rarely going to be times when our communication activities have a direct and isolated impact on business outcomes. And that is okay. What we can say, with hand on heart, is that if there is a 70 percent chance of a business outcome being realized, good communications can increase it to 90 percent. The math isn't exact and that's the point. Can communications absolutely and solely increase a company's bottom line by xyz%? Probably not, but it can increase the probability of that goal being reached.

Third, share your successes. If you achieve a great outcome, don't keep it to yourself. The planning may have happened in the back office, but you don't have to keep the results there. Tell your leadership. Tell your stakeholders.

Iwona Burzyńska

Holistic, organic communication

The main opportunity and challenge in front of every communications team is a unique, comprehensive, cross-functional view of the whole organization. On one hand, this perspective enables us to effectively co-operate with management on messaging that builds community and engagement around the brand both internally and externally.

On the other hand, this knowledge obliges us to give feedback that goes far beyond communications activities, and that part is a challenge. I like to refer to Abraham Lincoln's metaphor saying that "character is like a tree and reputation is like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of, the tree is the real thing." If we assume that the tree is our organization, communicators are expected to shape the shadow (reputation both internal and external) but it is very much defined by the shape of the tree. We have a unique opportunity to see the entire tree because all business functions co-operate with us and use our channels. It is our duty to give feedback to the organization on how the shape of the tree influences the shadow, how the activities of the company shape its reputation and present the feedback on the activities that were communicated publicly.

I believe that communication should always be two-way. We strive for maximum effectiveness and understanding when communicating ideas internally and externally. In case of external communications, we go back to business with feedback coming from the market. In case of internal communications, we share feedback from people. We are the guardians of reputation, therefore we need to also take care of "the tree". This is the main challenge and opportunity because it requires organizational maturity and openness to discuss reputation issues on top of regular business topics, especially in hectic times. The more we do it, the more powerful communication is.

Structure and process are keys to success

In Lafarge Poland, all communication channels (internal, external, digital and marketing

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communications) are under one roof. I see this as a big advantage for this organization. The lines between communication channels are blurred. Especially now in the information, digital age, any message about our brand spreads instantly. We have to be fast and efficient in preparing and sharing the same consistent messages in all channels simultaneously if we want to be credible, reliable and transparent to our internal and external stakeholders.

How do we ensure alignment between channels? We are lucky to have all communication channels in one team's hands, but we still needed to define the

structure and the process. It consists of three elements: map of content, regular team status meetings and collaboration within the communication team, status meetings and interfaces in co-operation with other functions. Let me dive into each one of them.

A map of content is a tool or a platform. In our case it is a GDrive shared spreadsheet that covers three dimensions: communication channels and sub-channels such as a CEO endorsement message, company printed magazine, intranet, town hall meeting or teleconference, topics to be communicated and the communications schedule.

Regular communications team status meetings and collaboration within the team are necessary to keep all the communications channels aligned. In my team, each member has a full ownership and accountability for one channel, but the key is to have a clear pipeline and the timing of topics and messages to be communicated. During our weekly status meeting we follow, fill in and update our map of content with a special focus on the topics to be communicated in the upcoming week and who is responsible for content collection for each of them. After that, it has become a habit in a team to collaborate daily on the simultaneous communications in all our channels.

Irreplaceable mindsets, behaviours, and processes

Mindsets and behaviors are key attributes and differentiators of a good communications team. Expertise and skills are replaceable. They can be outsourced, developed or acquired. Mindset, behaviors, personality, and attitude are unique and irreplaceable. That's what I hire for. Communications team members have to be brand ambassadors, influencers, guardians of the reputation and storytellers. It is important for us to be able to synergize, find coherence, and simplicity. We have to know what questions to ask to find a good story. We have to be flawless in terms of integrity, reliability, and transparency so that people can trust us. These are the qualities that help us conduct effective internal communications.

"We strive for maximum effectiveness and understanding when communicating ideas internally and externally. In the case of external communications, we go back to business with feedback coming from the market. In the case of internal communications, we share feedback from people. We are the guardians of reputation, therefore we need to also take care of "the tree". This is the main challenge and opportunity because it requires organizational maturity and openness to discussing reputation issues on top of regular business topics, especially in hectic times. The more we do it, the more powerful communication is."

The other dimensions are practices and structure using a set of tools. Internal communications channels are in place, a map of content, communications touchpoints, internal briefs, interfaces with business functions and social media are part of our solution. We feed the following channels regularly: CEO messages for the strategic topics, the intranet and newsletters, a quarterly company magazine and a monthly health and safety magazine (online and printed), quarterly town hall meetings held simultaneously in all locations with a senior leadership team member always present, monthly teleconferences with managers reporting to the management board, a closed Facebook group for employees, TVs and screens in 65 locations, posters, brochures and other printed materials, and information boards. Combining a great attitude and good content supported by structures and practices delivers spectacular results.

A seat at the table

In our organization, the Head of Communications is a member of the Senior Leadership Team consisting of 14 heads of functions reporting to CEO that meets monthly to discuss strategic topics. Thanks to that communications is up to date with what's cooking in business and we can also consult and advice immediately on how to approach certain topics.

Communications is also present at these meetings to ask the right questions that business is not always considering, e.g. if we announce it like this - what will our people think? How will they feel? Will we motivate them or rather discourage them? The strongest and persuasive argument we use to help our leaders understand the value of internal communication is the employee engagement factor. Next to hard HR hard tools like salaries or fringe benefits and soft HR tools like people development, it's communications that has huge impact on building engagement of the employees. Organizational culture is a combination of HR and communications, therefore the cooperation between the two is so powerful.

KPIs to track our impact

We prepare a monthly communications dashboard one-pager and report covering all communications channels (internal, external, digital, marketing communications) and the results of activities in each channel referring to two organizational goals: growing reputation and employee engagement. We measure pre-defined KPIs to track our impact on both of them and we compare ourselves with the competition. The dashboard and report are discussed in the monthly operating board meeting.

Jean-François Berthet

Employees matter because together, we are stronger

The alliance between Renault and Nissan was established in 1999. With the addition of Mitsubishi Motors in 2016, it became the biggest automotive partnership in the world. It's also the longest-lasting and most productive one. In 2017, cumulative sales by the three companies made us the No. 1 car maker globally.

Without a doubt, the Alliance is a unique success story. The role of the Alliance communications team is to tell that story, not only to our external stakeholders but also to our employees.

At the Alliance, we believe that employees from the production line to executives are key to our long-term success. Our ultimate goal is to create a genuine Alliance culture that permeates the cultures of Renault, Nissan, and Mitsubishi Motors without replacing them. A strong culture is key to a strong, successful, growing, long-lasting and performing Alliance. Similar to how a genetic scientist edits the genes of a molecule, we are trying to inject a bit of the Alliance into the cultural DNA of each company.

The trust of our employees, their belief in the Alliance and their engagement in what it stands for are all important for our long-term performance, simply because we work together. Turning our employees into believers is key to defending our reputation and supporting our values. It's also important to our vision of the future of mobility and society: a future in which cars are electric, autonomous and connected.

Creating content that engages employees

Our job in Internal Communications is to explain, demonstrate and convince our employees that the

Jean-François Berthet is the Alliance Internal Communications Manager at Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi. He is based in Japan. The focus of his key responsibilities is on promoting the Alliance success story across Renault, Nissan, and Mitsubishi Motors through content creation and editorial strategy. The company has 450,000 employees and operations in 200 countries.

Alliance is working and benefiting each company. They are the ones building the Alliance, day after day. They are the ones who go the extra mile, working across 12 time zones, struggling with different accents and clumsy conference calls. Most of all, they are the ones who have to adapt and adjust to a shifting technological environment and new ways of working and building cars.

We need to keep them interested and motivated about our unique story of competitiveness, innovation and human adventure. To do so, we create short videos that follow our employees in their daily lives. We let them explain on camera what they do and why it makes sense to do it together, rather than separately. Our editorial principles are simple: We need to represent each side of the Alliance and show the benefits for each company.

We use no narrator, no script and no prompter. We subtitle each video in English, French, and Japanese. In our stories, we try to leverage both the brain and the heart. We bring facts to convince and stories to move.

To reach our audience of 450,000 employees, we publish each video simultaneously on the intranets of Renault, Nissan, and Mitsubishi. We want everybody to have access to the same stories at the same time.

Working in alignment

Internal and external communications need to work hand in hand. For external news, we want to make sure that we align announcements and employees don't discover important news from the press. It's key to make each announcement internally at the same time as externally, so we work as a team to align messages and timings. However, for all background stories that aren't linked to an announcement, internal communications mostly drives the agenda, messaging and content creation. In most cases, we're able to use the content produced internally to support our story externally.

Collaboration and flexibility

In the case of the Alliance, a combination of three independent companies based on cross-shareholdings, the work of Internal Communications is based on collaboration with the internal communications teams of the three companies. It requires an open mind on all sides and a willingness to accommodate different constraints because each company has its own pipeline of content to promote.

Alliance communications leverages the existing internal tools and channels of our member companies to bring our content to all employees. This means we need to discuss every piece of content in advance of publication with each company's team. Collaboration and flexibility are compulsory.

Storytelling builds community

Alliance business leaders understand the value of internal communications as a tool to cascade messages and ensure employee understanding. They are also convinced of the strategic aspect of internal communications to achieve business results. In our case, this is the long-term sustainability of the

Alliance, which supports the long-term sustainability of its three companies by creating a strong internal culture and the importance of developing a two-way communication between leadership and employees.

Therefore, our main strategy is to develop compelling internal content that supports the company's narrative and creates an emotional bond between the employees and the overarching story of our Alliance in relation to the three companies.

In particular, we produce regular video or written stories that illustrate the Alliance's motto: 'Together, Stronger.' In a balanced way we try to show how, by working together, our three companies create additional value, become more competitive and generate greater performance.

Increasingly, we want to give employees opportunities to share their own success stories without having to go through Alliance communications. As internal social networks become more widely available, our role will be to support the surfacing of employee stories that illustrate our narrative.

From complex to simple

At Renault, Nissan and Mitsubishi, we conduct a yearly survey that covers the main dimensions of employee motivation and empowerment. As part of the survey, the perception of the Alliance is assessed through two specific questions. One measures the understanding of the basic premise of the Alliance and the benefit of synergies. The other measures the impact of the Alliance's success on each employee's personal motivation.

While employee perception of the Alliance may be impacted by external parameters such as the financial performance of each company, top management changes or organizational changes, we believe the score of these two questions is a good indicator of the performance of our communication. For example, having identified the need to communicate more to Japanese employees in Japanese, we launched a Nissan-oriented Alliance communications campaign. The subsequent survey showed an increase of 15 percent in the positive perception of Alliance benefits among Japanese employees.

Jonas Bladt Hansen

Moments that matter

A lot of things have changed since I began my career in the field of internal communications. In my early days, modern CEO communication was about sending out a newsletter once a month. The newsletter was written by someone in the IC department and signed off by the CEO. This might still happen in some companies, but definitely not in the most forward-thinking ones.

Today, most of us are on social media following friends, politicians, passionate CEOs, companies we like, pop stars and other celebrities who are leading the way by posting ongoing messages, videos or pictures about themselves and their causes. By doing so, they are changing the understanding of what it means to be authentic. This also means that the expectations towards how we communicate internally in organizations have changed.

I believe that the way people experience communication in their private lives has resulted in a demand for more authentic, open and ongoing communication in the workplace. Furthermore, people want to *experience* what their company and leaders represent. It is no longer enough to read an article from the IC department. As LinkedIn or Instagram has the potential to reach the same number of colleagues as the intranet, we must accept that external channels are just as relevant for us. In other words, I do not believe that internal communication departments focused on producing updates and news stories for internal channels have a golden future. IC departments focusing on these things should consider joining forces with external communications or create one team focusing on content production.

IC has a significant role to play in shaping the story of why the company exists and laying the foundation for what people who work for the company should experience. The reason why a story is important in relation to creating an experience is a simple fact that the human brain is hardwired to make us feel something when we hear a great story. In the era of digital communication, we have so many

Jonas Bladt Hansen is based in Denmark. Until recently, he was the Director and Head of Global Internal Communications at Arla Foods. He is now a Senior Advisor at Bloch&Østergaard ApS. At Arla Foods, his key responsibilities included building a business outcome-focused function from news reporting to strategic C-level communication, developing digital solutions for employees including the intranet and other communication solutions, developing clear communication cadences in a matrix organization, and leading a global team of highly-skilled communication professionals. Arla Foods has 20,000 employees and office locations in more than 30 countries. Their products are sold in more than 100 countries.

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opportunities to tell great stories, especially by using more visual channels. We have become more distracted, which means that our brain has become very impatient and picky about what content it thinks you should spend time on. There are high expectations for what great content is. Just look at your LinkedIn feed.

IC professionals must become the experts in defining where and how we tell the story about the company cause and values. This is something we might think

that we've always done, but we can do it different with much more impact. I am not talking about telling the story in the traditional way by writing stuff on the walls or doing some stories on the Intranet.

Our opportunity is to deliver the *experience* of why and ensure that the company cause and its values are *experienced* in the moments that matter to our colleagues. This is important because <u>human beings forget approximately 80 percent</u>[1] of what we learn within a month if the learning is not being repeated shortly after the first learning took place. Our brain is trying to prevent us from wasting too much energy on unnecessary things, so it prioritizes what's important. It tends to ignore things that don't make you feel something. This is why it is important to reinforce the company cause and values in important moments that matter if we want to make sure that people live the company cause and values.

Look at how Southwest Airlines has aligned its vision and mission statement with their promise to their employees and how that plays out in customer and employee satisfaction surveys, or how Cisco defines all their moments that matter.

Ensuring the company cause and values in the moments that matter differs depending on who you are targeting. Take your sales team for instance. Have you done all you can to help them understand the company cause so they can sell the story about your company to your customers? Not your responsibility? Think again. Does the sales team have a channel where they can feed back experiences and discuss how to solve customer service dilemmas? How do new employees experience the company during the onboarding phase? If your company story is about being innovative and having the most creative people on board, do they experience that when they are onboarded? Can they share their ideas when they start? What about the onboarding package? How does the story unfold? Do you send them seven folders and an annual report to read or do you send them VR glasses to experience your company story?

These are some of the new questions we need to ask ourselves to ensure that we create the right content and facilitate the right dialogue among people. In my opinion, the internal communications department of the future focuses on helping the business by creating employee experiences that reflect the company cause and its values. We will need to join forces with IT, HR and others. We might step on someone's toes

from time to time, as this area has not been fully explored and no one has the full responsibility today. But the benefits are clear, people want to work for companies with a clear purpose in the world. If the purpose and the values are experienced in the everyday work life, it is much easier to deliver them to customers and create more value for the business.

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts

I believe that a significant part of the current internal communication tasks will be merged with external communication and possibly other departments like talent management. Who should be responsible for your executives doing a blog post on LinkedIn?

It makes a lot of sense to harvest these synergies by applying the COPE (Create Once, Publish Everywhere) mindset if you manage to agree on the priorities. You can't do everything, so you need to focus on the topics that really resonate with the higher purpose of the company.

I do not believe that content production should be the main focus of internal communication professionals in the future. It needs to be a common task, ensuring that the story we tell about our business is coordinated, prioritised and told in a compelling way. We need to join forces so that we are able to invest more in the content that really makes a difference. For internal communications, I see a different, but very exciting future.

A simple formula for success

Until now, my approach to IC has been that all we do should be anchored in the corporate strategy, and the things we do should result in an experience that inspires action. When creating content, for instance, I like to take some inspiration from the field of content marketing. The questions I would normally ask before deciding how to support the business, have been:

What would you like to achieve or what do you want your target audience to experience and do? Think of the <u>ADKAR model</u>.[2] Should this drive desired behaviours? How does this support the business success?

One way to design an effective strategy is to apply the four principles in the EAST mindset:[3]

Easy: Break down the (complex) message into simpler messages.

Attractive: Consider how you attract attention. Work with catchy headlines, images, videos and consider how to personalise the messages to ensure relevance. What is the hook that will make your audience stop and reflect?

Social: Use colleagues as ambassadors and consider whether the initiative should be communicated by a trusted colleague or leader rather than the communications department.

Timely: Consider when your audience is most likely to be receptive to your message or activity and design your strategy accordingly. Make sure that you have sliced your messages into smaller pieces and make them relevant in the moments that matter to people. For instance, ensuring people follow a certain policy is not solved by publishing an article on the Intranet. The information must be present or easily accessible where your colleagues make decisions if a behaviour is to change.

Asking leaders key questions

IC professionals must be able to act proactively to deliver value. This requires that we have access to executives and senior leaders in the business. If that is the case, it is possible to identify opportunities and prepare a good communication strategy.

My approach has been to discuss and understand the strategic focus areas in the supported business areas as soon as they are defined. Based on that discussion, my team would work out an overview suggesting three focus areas for internal communications within that area specifying the WHY, WHAT, HOW & HOW MUCH (KPIs). It's a one-pager that addresses our focus areas for the whole year. As soon as the leadership team within the area signed off, we would work on developing the detailed initiatives and start executing. During the year, we follow up on an ongoing basis showing the activities and their outcome.

Know where to make a difference

It's very helpful to break down the aspects of the strategy where internal communication can make a real difference. If your HR department has a goal of increasing the retention rate, then one aspect could be to increase the number of internal job applicants. Here's where IC can help. By breaking down the overall goal into concrete activities, you will be able to show how you support the organizational goal. For instance, content on the intranet could motivate people to sign up for the job agent. In that case, the link clicks from the article to the job agent is the concrete KPI that IC supports.

Going back to the EAST model, use it to think about where you can attract your colleague's attention and think about the timeliness of the information. Are there any specific touchpoints, where your people would be more receptive to sign up for an internal job agent? Perhaps ease the access to the internal job database or consider doing something entirely different like developing a personalized and proactive job bot that suggests new jobs based on people's profiles.

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Kerrie McVicker

Keeping up with the quick pace of change

First and foremost is the need to change, adapt and evolve at pace! This is both a challenge and an opportunity that isn't unique to our team or company. The way people listen, learn and communicate, both as consumers and as employees, is constantly changing. To remain relevant and add value, internal communications needs to do the same. This is an opportunity in that constant iteration encourages creativity, resourcefulness and agile thinking, and a challenge in that you cannot waste time without being left behind.

Nestlé Oceania has a highly diverse and complex workforce. Our people and operations are dispersed across different geographies and business areas with variable access to technology. A thorough understanding of employee demographics helps to navigate the complexity of targeted employee communications.

As part of a global organisation, there is always so much to share and talk about. Internal communication provides a lens to ensure communications are localised for our employees and that organisational information and feedback flow.

Moving in the same direction as external communication

Internal and external communications are often communicating similar messages or stories, albeit to different stakeholders, through different channels and with different filters applied for relevancy.

Our teams maintain good visibility of what the other is working on and plan for regular opportunities to connect with each other, align and share organisational information. Together, our teams combine to create a broad view of issues affecting the organisation. There is a lot of value to be gained from working very closely together.

Kerrie McVicker is the Internal Communications and Employee Insights Manager at Nestlé Oceania. She is based in Australia. Her key responsibilities include leading the internal communications strategy and managing its implementation across Nestlé Oceania in Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands. This role supports leadership, employee and change communications. Nestlé Oceania has 5900 employees in 6 countries. Globally, Nestlé employs around 328,000 people and has factories or operations in almost every country in the world.

At an organisational level, our internal and external communications teams in Oceania sit within different functions. This, however, is not reflective of how we interact with each other.

There is a high degree of trust between our teams that is built on respect. Our relationship is highly collaborative. We support and learn from each other, brainstorm with each other and freely share our insights and knowledge.

The coaching and advisor mindset

Internal communication is an enabler for organisations and it plays an important role in facilitating strategic connections and conversations.

To create effective internal communication, we build and maintain strong networks and trusted relationships across all levels of our company, both within our market and with our global colleagues. A well-established and structured approach covers key topics across a range of touchpoints and helps us embed internal communication in processes or projects at an early stage. As strategic partners for leadership and change communications, we create employee-centric communications that draw out the 'why' and 'what's in it for me' factors. Using this coaching mindset within the business, we empower employees to engage in organisational conversations internally on our online collaboration platform and externally on LinkedIn. Finally, we provide channels and opportunities for employees to give feedback.

Working with leaders to create clarity

Our employee landscape is complex. Multiple generations work at the same time in any number of environments including offices, factories, distribution centres, in the field, retail and virtually across six countries and no single communications channel connects with everyone. Employee insights are the value internal communications brings to navigating this landscape. These insights inform us how best to cascade information through the business and provide a focus for turning content into compelling messages so that employees can hear what they need to hear.

Communicating a consistent message to employees across our market connects them to our company's purpose, values, and organisational goals. The more our people understand what we stand for and where we're going, the better they understand how they contribute and make a difference in their day-to-day work.

Internal communication plays a key role in building trust, awareness, and engagement with employees. We support leaders in knowing their people, enabling conversations and creating connections. As a strategic partner to the business, leaders look to internal communication to share expertise on employees and the employee experience for decision-making and managing change.

Finally, internal communications adds value to leaders and employees by acting as a 'translator' and a conduit between the levels of an organisation. Helping business leaders quickly understand what is important to other functions or employee groups, and what their different perspectives and unique pain points might be, helps them shape their communications so it lands the way they need it to the first time.

How we demonstrate the impact of IC on organizational

Employee insights are fundamental to effective communications. There is a lot of information available including communication measures, an abundance of HR data and organisational feedback such as engagement surveys, communication surveys, diversity and inclusion initiatives, focus groups, feedback loops, organisational networks, and employee interviews. By drawing this all together, internal communication plays a valuable role in turning information into employee insights that the business can use for three things: information, inspiration or decision-making.

Strategically, insight sits behind the counsel you give to the business in the moment. They are what you draw on when coaching the business day-to-day, and what informs the stories you tell that become part of the fabric of our organisational culture. Practically, insights are an input for developing effective communications plans and content. Impact on organisational goals can be realised by ensuring at the outset a shared understanding with the business of what success looks like. With clarity over the end state, aligned communication objectives combined with employee insights deliver impactful communication plans with clear measures tied to outcomes.

Joss Mathieson

Shifting culture

In 2017, we began a significant transformation of the company under our new CEO, Emma Walmsley, launching a new strategy and starting to shift the culture of the company. My internal engagement team was central to this and, while challenging, it was a fantastic opportunity to show the impact we can have.

Engagement started in Emma's six months as CEO Designate. She undertook a listening tour to find out what things employees wanted to keep, like our purpose and values, and what they wanted to change, for example, make it easier to get things done. Emma listened to external views from investors, media, partners, and regulators, which we shared with leaders and employees as further context for change. While GSK was recognised for many of the things it had achieved in the previous decade, investors felt that the company was lagging its peers in terms of performance.

In response, we launched a new GSK strategy and moved at pace to introduce a string of changes that have all required excellent communication. We set a new goal, supported by three strategic priorities: innovation, performance, and trust. All areas of our business and all employees now align their annual plan objectives to these priorities, where previously there were numerous strategies. To shift how we work, four expectations introduced. Courage, accountability, development, and teamwork complemented our values and fostered an agile, patient-focused, high-performance culture.

Other changes included a new performance and reward system that encourages teamwork and a focus on overall performance of the business rather than individuals, moving from two-annual to twice-annual employee surveys to better understand the pulse of the organisation, and using several new tools to help develop our leaders and employees to be the best they can be.

Given the ambition, scope, and urgency of the

Joss Mathieson is the former Vice-president, Global & Corporate Internal Engagement at GSK (GlaxoSmithKline), and he is based in the UK. His key responsibilities involved creating a positive engagement experience for 100,000 employees around the world who live and breathe GSK, driving alignment, building pride, releasing energy and improving business performance, helping leaders to listen and engage more effectively, and delivering compelling, audience-focused communications and events. GSK has operations in over 100 countries.

transformation, we needed to take a fresh and modern approach to internal engagement. We knew employees would need time to connect with Emma, understand why we needed change, and feel energised by GSK's new goal and expectations. The changes touched everyone and needed to happen at pace, so it was critical that every employee understood and felt part of what was taking place around them.

Underpinning this, our internal engagement strategy was designed to shift from traditional, leader-led and top-down information flow to involving all employees in meaningful, multi-way conversations

about what matters to them. We gave everyone the opportunity to share their ideas for making GSK even stronger and feel empowered and motivated to act.

The integrated approach

Both internal and external communications were part of our Communications & Government Affairs (CGA) function for many years, but alongside the new business strategy, we moved to an even more integrated approach. Internal and external communications are part of the same teams, and often both are part of people's roles, particularly at a regional and local level. Teams report into CGA but are aligned and embedded with our three global businesses. My team (Global & Corporate Internal Engagement) sits within our Corporate Affairs department in CGA, which works company-wide and guides and supports colleagues embedded in all three businesses.

We also created a Global Digital Communication team responsible for both internal and external digital communications, aligning content and editorial, channel management and delivery, and analysis and insight. This had benefits in terms of planning stories and content that works for both internal and external audiences, and transferring best practices, monitoring and measuring impact.

Evolving communication channels

We strongly encouraged engagement through two-way dialogue, with leaders listening to their people and responding to their needs and ideas, rather than old-fashioned top-down cascades. However, when internal communication is needed, we considered who was the essential audience and what we needed them to do because of the communication – to act, be informed, be inspired, or inspire others.

We used straightforward language and emphasised storytelling, both in our internal communications and when training our leaders to help them engage effectively. We continuously monitored and measured through our channels and our 'Let's Talk' employee champions, identifying where we can improve.

We used a mix of technologies like Poppulo for email and Yammer to keep conversations flowing. We are now adopting Workplace by Facebook to create a better digital employee experience and support improved productivity, collaboration and engagement. This has the potential to significantly change how we work and engage more employees, more effectively.

Our next improvement will be to move beyond internal communications and engagement to greater employee involvement. With our HR colleagues, we are looking to identify and involve peer-to-peer influencer networks at various levels within the company to accelerate effective change. They are the true voice of their colleagues and very credible. If they are willing to be role models for change, others will follow.

Focusing on business outcomes

Fundamentally, we focused first on what outcomes the business needs and how best we could help achieve them, avoiding just delivering communications outputs. We were competing for people's attention so there must be a compelling reason why we are communicating, linked to the business strategy, as well as a fresh idea for engaging in an effective way.

Communications business partners who can operate strategically and be credible advisers are key to delivering this. They are part of the business, advising how employee engagement can improve performance and reduce risk by building a better reputation from the inside out. Equally important is their role helping to build leaders' capability to engage.

As you'd expect, we support this by measuring reach and uptake through our channels and listen through a mix of surveys, focus groups, our employee champions, and channel monitoring. That data is analysed to gain insight that is shared with leaders to highlight positives and action areas, which is meaningful evidence in demonstrating our value.

Let's Talk

It helps that we have a CEO who values employee engagement to the extent that she has made it one of the ten key performance measures for the company. To track progress, we run our survey twice a year and we run our survey twice a year and leaders get feedback on how engaged their teams are. We demonstrate how our efforts contribute and consequently they value our support to help them communicate well.

With the scale of changes happening at GSK, we helped leaders navigate through it by focusing on business outcomes, improving performance and building trust with employees. A key part of our solution is 'Let's Talk', an interactive, multi-dimensional programme allowing people to explore the new strategy through a series of linked conversations. It includes a mix of conferences and events, Let's Talk Live TV, local leader-led sessions, peer-to-peer conversations, a network of employee champions, and a mix of proactive and reactive communications that keep the conversations flowing.

Let's Talk is an ongoing, company-wide conversation where feedback and ideas are acted on locally and worldwide. The reaction has been remarkable, with thousands of enthusiastic employees getting involved, and tangible, measurable results recorded from the start, including an improvement in engagement scores. It is reinforcing the value of internal communications and getting leaders to approach employee engagement in a better way with better results to show for it. But it's just the start. . .

Lina Jakucioniene

Thriving in a digital world

Leading the Baltic communication department of the international ERGO insurance group, the main challenge is to find the synergy between team members working in three different countries, speaking three different languages with huge cultural differences. At the same time, we benefit from sharing best practices with each other.

A crucial topic is the flow of information from communication teams to decision makers. Today's media landscape requires communication professionals to react promptly via multiple media channels.

Another challenge for our communication team is to protect reputation and establish and regain trust. In the digital environment, we have to deal with a volatile insurance environment.

Today's digital media world needs algorithms for data processing and interpretations. Collecting and preparing such information and keeping decision-makers and internal clients up-to-date with useful information is a core task for us and helps us fulfill our role.

Visual elements are and will be more important for communication in the future, forcing us to acquire new competencies.

Social bots are predominantly viewed as a threat, but in some cases we see opportunities arising.

We also see such challenges as coping with the digital evolution and the social web, linking business strategy and communication and dealing with the speed and volume of information flow.

Lina Jakucioniene is the Head of Corporate Communication in the Baltic states at ERGO. Based in Lithuania, she is responsible for internal and external communication. ERGO Insurance SE has 1200 employees in three Baltic countries. The ERGO Group has operations in over 30 countries.

The five-minute rule

In our company, the proportion of priorities towards internal and external communication is 50:50. We have a golden rule: internal communication goes at least five minutes earlier than external. It means that every single message is communicated to our internal staff first and then to media and social media. Both functions are closely integrated and there is no gap between internal and external communication.

People support what they help to create

Engagement of employees in all activities is the key to success. The outcome of our internal communication survey (as it is very wide, we call it an audit) shows that people appreciate feeling that they are an important part of the organization. If you involve them creating the company goals, strategy, and values, they own the outcome and seek the best result.

The contribution of the communication department to overall success includes:

- supporting operational goals and processes of other departments through communication activities
- daily management of the department (planning, budgeting, allocating resources)
- constant improvement and further development of the department
- translating the organizational strategy into a fully aligned communication strategy
- communicating the organizational strategy to all stakeholders

A powerful force for business success

After each successful internal event created by employees, the performance results increase. Employees are motivated to work effectively and generate the best results. Leaders see the real impact on the business. Effective internal communication is a powerful force that helps enrich employees' lives, leading to a 40 percent increase in customer satisfaction, a 30 percent increase in profitability, and a 36 percent increase in the overall performance of the company. Providing effective tools for communicating is a key business function that inspires and aligns everyone.

Measuring success

We use the AMEC's Integrated Evaluation Framework to demonstrate to business leaders the impact of internal communication on organizational goals.

Sobha Varghese

Technology, measurement, and strategy

The world of business runs on communications and with effective internal communications, the organization can function like a well-oiled machine. In terms of challenges, reaching everyone despite the immense strides we have made in communications technology remains a gap area. Workplaces are changing with virtual workers and distributed workforces being the norm rather than the exception. Coupled with the need to reach employees faster or at least at the same time as the external 'social' world, IC pros have a daunting task at hand.

To reach everyone at an increasingly faster pace, IC pros have to use creative formats, compelling content, advanced tools, newer technologies and collaborative platforms, meaning that it can be the same whirlwind world of social inside the company. For example, in TCS, our 400,000+ employees can collaborate and connect with each other from anywhere in the world via our internal social media portal 'Knome' and our messaging platform 'FrescoTalk'. We've seen how our social platform allows anyone anywhere to address a question to the leadership, cutting across hierarchies and bringing about higher transparency. We also employ traditional IC media such as intranets, corporate magazines, a video channel, townhall sessions, and meetings to connect with our employees.

Another key challenge is measurement or assessing the impact IC brings to the organization. Proving value is essential to have management buy-in and leadership support. Collecting feedback from employees and consistently fine-tuning the IC strategy to suit audiences is needed in diverse organizations like ours. While measurement and fine-tuning are critical, it is not always simple or straightforward to do this in real life.

Sobha Varghese is the Head, Internal Communications, Continental Europe at Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). Based in Belgium, her key responsibilities include designing and developing the internal communications strategy, planning, and budgets. She is the owner of IC content and channels, editor of the quarterly magazine, and directs information flow within Europe, maintaining links with corporate headquarters, enabling leadership communication, establishing IC campaigns, communities and connections. Tata Consultancy Services has more than 400,000 employees and operates in 46 countries.

In the midst of all this, having a clear internal communications strategy is advantageous for an organization. Internal communications can unify messages from all corners of the company to present the vision and direction the company takes, enhancing the organizational narrative. It can foster collaboration and instill a feeling of community or a sense of belonging. IC is truly an enabler in promoting engagement within companies, strengthening bonds and creating networks towards the development of an inspiring workplace.

Internal and external communication work together

In this age of speed and social, news travels fast. This has led to an almost complete breakdown in the barrier between internal and external communications. What a company shares on its external communication channels is quickly internalized in its employees' coffee corner and WhatsApp communications, and communications made internally often immediately make it to social media. The golden rule is that you should not share anything internally that you wouldn't be comfortable revealing outside. The reverse is true as well. Beyond the mechanics of where the IC teams are placed, which can boil down to budgets and resources rather than skills and strategy, there is an inherent need for both internal and external teams to connect, collaborate and work together towards common objectives.

We are at an age when a press release or a newspaper article just doesn't cut it. Organizations need to create customized and compelling pieces of content for different media and audiences to get the right messages across at the right time. Both internal and external communications teams need to work together in tandem towards this. There are tremendous synergies to be had from working together in this manner and understanding that both disciplines are equally important.

While treating new developments in our organization, we prefer to take the content and tailor it to different audiences. For example, in IC, we like to use a friendly, focused and more engaging tone and personalize the message for our IC media and platforms. It can be a shorter, sharable format for our internal social platform, a visual, longer story for our magazines or to-the-point messages for our email alerts. On our social platform, we especially like to have our employees make comments, share their views and start a conversation. Wherever possible, we also link to external sources which we have enabled so that our employees get a complete perspective about a development.

"Beyond the mechanics of where the IC teams are placed, which can boil down to budgets and resources rather than skills and strategy, there is an inherent need for both internal and external teams to connect, collaborate and work together towards common objectives."

While both internal and external communications tell the company's story, IC pros say it to the people who know the organization best and feel the reality of the workplace every single day.

Creating a sense of belonging and community

Our employees have a high affinity for sharing, which when combined with a generous spirit of collaboration, are key mindsets propelling internal communications. A senior leader I spoke to recently put it across as "people coming together to help each other" with a great "sense of belonging and community". He mentioned this "fluidity" to be the "core DNA" of the organization. People coming in from outside are amazed by this. TCS has the framework of a large organization, but with all the possibilities of entrepreneurship within. Our employees can leverage the company as a platform, take charge, and participate in our many business and community initiatives.

To illustrate, in our recent employee campaign called #TCSsuperstars, we identified and highlighted the stories of employees who were achievers in different walks of life. We had several inspiring stories lined up on our internal social platform at the start of this campaign. Our employees liked and shared these stories while also immediately connecting with the selected superstars, congratulating them and asking for insights from their experience. This has been one of our key internal communications initiatives, connecting and celebrating our people.

IC drives engagement and builds corporate reputation

Internal communication is a unique discipline that cuts across departments such as marketing, human resources, and business units and brings them together. Having a strong IC strategy means that you can remove silos, provide the right context for raw information, and translate it into useful knowledge for employees.

The IC function has to deliver results and demonstrate value to gain leadership support. For example, we break down our stories into easily digestible and relevant pieces for the internal audience. As a result, we have informed and equipped employees, who come through as the true face of the company in many situations. Through IC campaigns and programs, we facilitate conversations, foster connections and create a feeling of community. Engaged employees not only support business and sustainability initiatives, they also spread the word and stand up for the brand.

In terms of internal perception of the department, I would like to point to the results of our annual employee survey 'Pulse' that takes stock of engagement and satisfaction to internal services. As per this survey, our communications department stands tall with high scores for employee satisfaction. Through all this, our leadership can see the great value IC brings to the table in terms of engagement and enhancing the corporate reputation.

How we demonstrate the impact of IC on organizational goals

Effective internal communications is a major factor behind a driven, motivated and passionate workforce. When you see that employees support the organization's goals, rally behind its initiatives and come together in times of need, it is indelible proof of the high impact of IC. When you see employees rise above differences and converge as a community to drive the organization forward, I believe you have seen the power of IC at work.

We are a skills and people-driven business and our ability to create revenue, gain new clients and keep customers satisfied are all linked to how engaged our employees are. IC is an important enabler for all the key business metrics of our business. For example, our brand was rated the fastest growing IT services brand in 2018 by Brand Finance, currently valued at USD 10.4 billion. From among many variables weighed to arrive at this valuation, our employee and employer brand related factors were a crucial component.

Torben Bo Bundgaard

Change communication becomes business as usual

We have been successful in strengthening capabilities and engagement in leadership communication at the senior executive levels in most parts of the company. However, we see a continued need and opportunity to clarify communication roles and strengthen communicative capabilities at the middle manager levels. We believe that elevating middle managers role in securing alignment around top-down communication, encouraging dialogue and facilitating bottom-up communication is of key importance for further strengthening engagement among Novo Nordisk employees.

With our role in organisational communication, we also need to contribute to creating an agile mindset where continuous change is seen as a normal and non-threatening part of doing business. As such, we increasingly play a role in planning and managing change and building change communication capabilities among senior leaders and their local communication partners.

Finally, we play an important part in strengthening the collaborative mindset in Novo Nordisk by encouraging people to work closely together across functional silos and see themselves as part of a larger team.

Aligning internal and external teams

The central communication functions in Novo Nordisk are organised around stakeholders. They focus on employees at large, external media, and policy-makers to name a few. Our organisational communication function is mainly focused on employees with a mission to ensure engagement

Torben Bo Bundgaard is the Vice-president of Organisational Communication at Novo Nordisk A/S, and he is based in Denmark. Organisational Communication comprises the global internal channels, leadership summits and training and consulting of leaders in Novo Nordisk. The company employs 42,000 people and has operations in 79 countries.

around key priorities of the company. Our ambition is to enable our colleagues to communicate and act as champions on behalf of the company, internally and externally.

To ensure a close alignment between the teams who work with different stakeholders, we have established an editorial board consisting of employees from the relevant communication functions who are charged with overseeing, planning and producing messages and stories across different channels and stakeholder groups. Internal and external messaging and story development is highly integrated in Novo Nordisk.

Guiding behaviours

We are privileged to have a clear vision and defined values called 'The Novo Nordisk Way' and 'The 10 Essentials', which to very large extent, guide behaviour among leaders and employees in the company. Much of this guidance relates to communicative behaviours. For example, there is an expectation that "Unit and individual goals are ambitious, clear and understood and link to Novo Nordisk overall goals," and "internal and external communication is planned and conducted on a timely basis." Since these behavioural guidelines are not only made explicit but audited regularly by a group of in-house facilitators, we ensure a fairly high level of compliance with the mindset and intentions behind The Novo Nordisk Way.

Communication effectiveness reviews

One of the most successful practices that we have developed over the last ten years is the 'Communication Effectiveness Reviews' or 'CERs'.

We conduct between four and six of these reviews every year in Novo Nordisk affiliates and headquarter units. Essentially, the CERs are comprehensive listening processes where we analyse the strengths and weaknesses of local organisational communication through quantitative and qualitative methods. Based on the findings from surveys, individual management, team, and focus group interviews among employees and middle managers, we 'hold up a mirror' enabling the leadership team to workshop with us to define concrete and realistic actions to strengthen local communication. These reviews consistently strengthen the understanding of leadership communication at the senior executive level and they have elevated the role of local communication professionals to become more strategic.

Measure impact

Last year, we started doing corporate-wide 'NovoPulse' surveys to establish a baseline and follow up on key organisational topics and goals and the company's reputation among employees. These surveys help communicators and local leadership identifies strategic communication gaps and progress toward creating alignment and engagement around key priorities.

Although we are flexible in the timing of the NovoPulse surveys, they are an established tool for our business leaders in many parts of the organisation allowing them to follow up on the impact of their local communication. Similarly, we follow up on our Communication Effectiveness Review after 6 to 12 months, usually by conducting a survey to check progress compared to the baseline.

Vija Valentukonyte-Urbanaviciene

Integrated communication during times of change

We observe a huge dynamic shift in the telco and IT industries. Recently, T-Mobile announced their plan to merge with Sprint in the US and Vodafone announced they will acquire Liberty Global assets across Europe. Telia has done it within the group in the past two years. In Lithuania, the merger of IT, TV, broadband, and mobile merged and rebranded into one business February 2017.

Until then, internal communications had a key role to help the leadership team execute the change and engage employees, moulding two cultures into one. Now, the focus shifts towards our customers. We have to deliver the promises we made to them, remain simple and friendly, provide converged solutions and make sure we stand out of the competition. What it means for us is the alignment of marketing, external and internal communications working hand-in-hand, making sure that our employees are ambassadors outstandingly serving our customers and bringing solutions where our processes are still not that great. I see it as integrated reputation management, and it indeed requires an integrated approach to these functions. Social media also comes into play. Consumers and employees all have a voice and how they behave spotting a mention about the brand or posting something themselves may make a huge difference for the brand.

Employees come first

By having a workforce equal to 1/1000th of the country's population and just completing a major change, employees are a communications force you cannot ignore. Each can become an ambassador or anti-ambassador of the company he or she works for and make a significant impact through his or her social networks when it comes to the perception and reputation of the company. In our annual reputation

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She is responsible for internal and external communications, social media communications and reputation management. Telia Lithuania has 3,000 employees. Their core market is the Nordics and Baltics across seven countries including Lithuania.

survey is an indicator of trends for the future and one of our target groups is employees. We know that it takes minutes for a small internal glitch to make it to the headlines in the newspapers. Even much smaller companies empower their employees to create the desired external perception of the organisation as advertising is not enough. The 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer shows that trust is a key challenge for today's organisations. I believe employees have an opportunity to enhance the trust in organisations.

What it means for us is that the functions mentioned above are set to work much more closely together. They are now in one division, making sure the coordination is happening altogether. The campaigns are first run internally and then launched externally. All the new things reach our frontline first, who are

sometimes harder to reach. We expect both, internal and external communicators to understand both sides of the fence and make sure everything is aligned with our strategy, toolsets, and tone of voice.

Living the brand promise

The most important behaviour to highlight is walking the talk. To deliver on the brand promise, we first aim to live it internally. If 'simplify' is one of our core values, employees have to feel safe to call out when something is too complex and improve it. We avoid using jargon with our audiences. Another one of our brand elements is 'digital first' and we make sure we think digital first when generating the solution.

Research, collaboration, and campaigns

We use a few proven strategies to help business leaders understand the impact of internal communication on organizational goals. First, are the research and surveys. Although in today's world we argue whether annual employee engagement surveys or reputation surveys are relevant, they are still good and relatively easy tools to measure the indicators of long-term trends that later can be further researched in focus groups. However, they are only helpful when you have something to benchmark against like different periods or other companies in the market.

The second is a true collaboration with other divisions on certain projects. A good example is the collaboration between communications and HR to create and deliver culture change programs. By bringing different competencies and insights together at an early stage, the programs proved to be much more powerful, and it was obvious to the whole organisation and the management team. Both teams endorsed each other because of the great teamwork. Imagine if you did one of these with each division in the company.

Third, and my favorite, is having specific internal communications campaigns to assist with hitting specific business targets. When an opportunity like this arises, you should not hesitate. If it's available, even allocate some budget for an extended campaign.

My highlights were:

1. Sales lead generation projects where employees are encouraged to generate new sales leads for our services through their social networks. You can calculate what percent of total sales were brought in through employee leads.

2. Employer of choice in Lithuania elections, where we capitalised on our true ambassadors and encouraged them to tell their stories in social media. We didn't only win the elections, we tested the integrity of our organisational culture in a really practical way by understanding to what extent employees were up for this challenge, while not overdoing it so they wouldn't feel forced. It was amazing to see the extent of social media presence that was generated by our employees during this campaign, and it was more authentic than any advertising or some other tactics that other companies use like endorsements from influencers or public figures.

What all communicators definitely have and should capitalize on, is receiving and analyzing employee feedback and supporting the dialogue between the top and bottom tiers of the company. This is often more effective than a pure opinion alone and opens new avenues of insight for busy management teams. Establishing easy and reliable access proves your value as the communicator in itself.

It's also critical to understand the organisation's goals, scorecard, and the business plan to achieve those KPIs. With this, a communicator can assess and show what communications input was.

Rachana Panda

Digital platforms, communication style, and support from the top

There are opportunities galore. GE is forever evolving as an organization and as communicators every transformation is an opportunity, particularly for internal communicators.

Digital media has set new standards: two ways and real time. Internal communication needs to flow in two directions. Employee feedback and input are essential to build engagement and enable organizations to continually improve the relevance and value of their messages. The good news is, with interactive digital signage software, visual communication, media players, interactive surveys, and comment and review features, organizations can turn passive readers of interactive paper memos into active communication participants.

Digital platforms enable companies to communicate in real time, customize messages to fit the needs of various geographic office locations, reach remote employees, display up-to-the-second performance metrics and emergency information. We are great believers in new formats and platforms.

What is the right style? Formal, boardroom-style communication is familiar and comfortable for many large organizations, but it might not be the most effective way to reach and influence employees. Speaking from experience, adopting an informal style, one that melts hierarchical corporate barriers, can be perceived as threatening, but because of social media and a strong preference for informal style among younger generations, this may be the way to go.

Support from top management is a must. For any internal communication program to work, leadership must actively and vocally support it, day in and day out. Organizations with an ivory tower culture struggle with this challenge more than those where

Rachana Panda is the Chief Communications Officer for GE in South Asia, and she is based in India. She has a leadership role in communications and is responsible for the strategic direction and governance of the function in the organization. Her responsibilities include media relations, CEO/CXO level engagements, industry forums, marketing communications, digital media, brand building, and crisis communications. GE employs 20,000 people in the region. Globally, the company has 300,000 employees and operates in 170 countries.

leaders jump into the trenches and gain firsthand awareness of how important communication is to get results.

One thing that hasn't changed is the need to embark on internal communication with a clear and sustainable strategy, and then measure the results to assess impact and value. The strategic challenge is to implement a plan that is not too broad, narrow or ambitious. A smart approach is to create a strategy that phases in communication activities over time, starting with simple and straightforward applications before moving on to the more complex.

Internal is now the new external. It's interesting to see how a decade ago most of us never considered internal communications as a full-time role, but today every progressive company understands the role of a strong internal and culture communicator. There is a single word that sums up what a person sees when they look deep inside our businesses. They see our culture. At one time, our internal culture was just that, internal. Now, there's no such thing as internal culture. The culture of an organization is out there, larger than life and totally visible. It is a crucial part of the brand.

An organization's culture never really stands still. Like a growing child, it morphs and evolves in sync with what is happening inside the company. A company's brand is primarily the story of its cultural journey from birth through evolution, transformation, beliefs, and most importantly stakeholder perception. The most critical stakeholders are employees, more so in the digital era, where everyone is a reporter or a storyteller. How we empower and leverage our employees will decide the outcome. There is no perfect way but it is worth trying a few new ideas.

I believe internal and external communication should play like a symphony in total harmony. The use of digital media for internal audiences is becoming more and more seamless. For most conglomerates like GE, we know that we must constantly deal with information overload through multiple channels. At GE, Eddie, an agile internal news sharing platform named after Edison, the founder of GE, is a platform that was recently developed to develop and share content easier and simpler. Eddie is a cool, smart innovator and he facilitates every employee to become a storyteller externally as well.

Expert alignment and full participation

Communication is about creating an alignment between the big picture goals, plans, and strategies from the top of the organization and the employee on the front line. We need special skills to drive a thought through strategy. These are experts who are domain specialists adept at recognizing behavioral shifts and information consumption while assessing the wisdom of using multiple channels. They can ask relevant questions of leaders, simplify and translate the strategy for employees. Most importantly, domain experts can measure and analyze data. We insist on domain expertise.

At GE, we believe internal communication is ultimately the responsibility of the CEO and business leaders. Leaders must realize the importance of their relationships with their employees, and it is imperative that the initiative comes from the top. The CEO must make the time to connect directly with people, listen and value the inputs provided by experts, be open to feedback and demand more engagement. I have had the opportunity to work with leaders at GE, who understand this well, and push for innovative ways to connect with employees be it millennials, commercial teams, diverse talent, or manufacturing talent. Each audience is very different in terms of messaging and platforms. GE has developed some very interesting real-time content on this over time such as the doodle series, our newest Molly ad, and "My mom works at GE".

Practices to increase the perceived value of internal communication

Demonstrating that internal communicators have a strong grasp on the company strategy and understanding of the audience is needed to help business leaders understand the value of internal communication. Most internal communicators end up spending their time in tactics and employee engagement activities. While these are important, the real value of a communicator is to drive the company culture and deliver the strategy adding to the business outcomes. Here are some key practices which in my view are key to business leaders valuing internal communicators:

- Develop solid business acumen. A firm grounding in the organization's business is vital to building the strategic muscle.

- Work with a business plan in mind. This will help you align your work with business priorities as also assess and demonstrate impact.

- Make sure you engage with the key stakeholders to understand their business priorities. These are key insights that will help you create successful communication strategies.

- Use varied communication interventions and formats. While the usual town halls, intranet, newsletters or broadcast mailers are the trusted channels, yet there are immense opportunities to think creatively.

- Add and mix different channels, moving away from corporate speak, customizing narratives so that they are relatable to the new generation that is entering the workforce.

Creating a stronger culture

Internal communications is deeply related to building culture. It can build team collaboration by recognising team members, cascade strategy, build pride and collaboration, and support culture and growth. The measurement could be through opinion surveys, focused storytelling and engagement, reach and interaction metrics. Ultimately it is a change in culture or building a stronger culture that shows that internal communications is working.

Susan Blundell

Customization, speed, budget

Internal communications at Toronto Pearson Airport is accountable for business unit communications to the 1500+ employees of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA) and to the 50K+ employees of the airport at large.

One of our greatest challenges is in developing the right channels and processes to reach these audiences. With such a diverse mosaic of backgrounds, education and language disparity, it isn't a one size fits all solution.

The second challenge, that I am sure many communicators face, is that information in today's workplace moves at lightning speed. We are a 24/7 operation, which means that our internal communications team must be responsive around the clock. Add the need for mobility and "information at your fingertips" and it results in a need for innovative and technologically advanced communication programs.

Lastly, there is a discrepancy between the need for innovative programming and available budget.

Strong communication and shared process mark integrated communication

While blurred lines exist between internal and external communications, there are also very clear stakeholder needs that can be identified. Our internal communications are either categorized as business unit communications that are distributed to all GTAA employees, or corporate-wide communications that are also sent out to airport employees. Our external communications team manages all media relations, and all outgoing communications from the CEO's office, the executive suite, and all external-facing social and digital media.

Our internal and external teams reside in the same office space. Our director of external communications and director of internal communications and communication services meet

Susan Blundell is the Director of Internal Communications and Communication Services at the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA) in Canada. She is responsible for employee communications, airport worker communications, corporate marketing and design, airline marketing, and corporate events. The GTAA has 1,500 employees and 50K airport workers.

regularly, as do the managers from both teams. Daily communication is critical.

Our intake process is centralized and involves a request form to initiate the process. Our communications request form process is currently manual and has resulted in ongoing issues for our internal and external communications teams. As part of our plan to improve the client experience, we are implementing a customized project management solution that allows clients to see their project status through a clearly-defined process. It is also a mobile solution that will allow users to make their request from any device. It will house all communications

plans, materials, proofs, creative briefs, and allow for electronic sign-offs. We are currently in the testing phase with IT and anticipate a roll out this year.

Both teams are a part of an integrated emergency response plan and actively participate in full-scale emergency exercises to plan for potential emergencies. When it comes to operational efficiency, the two teams collaborate to ensure that communication is effective and timely, especially in a crisis scenario.

Values guide thinking and behaviour

Our organization has two values, respect, and integrity, along with four 'Rules of the Runway.'

1. Results First, Safety Always
2. Act Now – Be Transparent – Be Accountable
3. Win as a Team
4. Relationships Matter

Our annual employee 'Evening of Excellence' rewards employees for living and demonstrating our Rules of the Runway and our values.

Using data, running pilot projects, and multiple channels

In an operational environment it is critical to provide leaders with metrics and reporting that:

a) identify the communications that employees are reading
b) what they are missing
c) the impact that communications are having

Our annual communication survey allows us to create a database of user feedback. In addition to other reporting, we look at overall employee engagement and draw a line of sight to the impact that increased communications have on our overall engagement score.

We recently ran a pilot where we took a department that historically had poor engagement scores and little to no requests for communications support and assigned them a dedicated communications advisor. Within one year, the engagement scores went up and the feedback from employees is that they feel much more aligned with the business unit goals and objectives. The pilot was so successful that we are restructuring to provide a 'business partner' model for all business units in 2019.

In addition to the Rules of the Runway, support from the executive team and senior leaders who understand the importance of being transparent and effectively communicating with employees can positively impact employee engagement and knowledge-sharing across the company.

We use a number of channels to communicate with our employees. The majority of our workforce is mobile, which means that we cannot rely on desktop communications such as email or employee intranets. We recently launched tools such as Yammer, a mobile portal, and an employee digital screen network to effectively reach employees who are on the go. We also use traditional methods such as posters, newsletters, and publications, but nothing beats face-to-face communications. This is why we hold an all-employee meeting twice a year with our CEO.

Reinforcing business strategy

It is important for each employee within an organization to understand the strategic goals of the company and how the role they play contributes towards the success of those goals. I have always believed in the rule of seven. See it seven times and it sticks.

We introduced the concept of a strategic goal scorecard that we update bi-monthly. Our scorecard has easily identified icons for each strategic goal and allows our employees to see at a glance how we are measuring against those goals. The scorecard is shared online and in our employee newsletter every month.

Our Connection, which is our vision, mission, values and strategic goals, is on the wall in every meeting room, on the screensaver of all desktops, and integrated throughout the organization on wall spaces in cafeterias and break rooms.

Within the employee newsletter that focuses on employee and organizational success stories, articles are paired with a strategic goal icon so that employees know which strategic goal the initiative supports. This is a simple thing, but over time employees came to recognize and can now name all the strategic goals.

At our all-employee meeting, our CEO speaks to the strategic goals and shares his vision for the organization with employees. We use the same iconography within his presentation, further reinforcing the imagery.

Our culture has reached a point where a project team will ask, "What strategic goal does this project support? Should we be doing it?" Employees recognize what the goals of the organization are and they can align work in a way that is effective in pushing us closer to reaching our goals.

Maggie Tan

Communicating, connecting and engaging

As our workplace becomes more mobile and online, we continuously adapt our communications strategy in terms of how we communicate, engage, and connect our employees in the digital age.

That means a clear shift from print to digital and a smart combination of face-to-face and digital broadcast and exchange. In addition to our existing formats, we have developed a variety of new ones ranging from a global all-employee meeting hosted by our CEO and a one-hour discussion with our top leaders on Yammer (called 'YamJams') to the Henkel 2020 Talks where our leaders share their insights on the company's strategic priorities.

Given the international nature of our workforce and numerous departments, a key challenge is to provide interesting, useful, and relevant content that addresses the diverse interests and needs of our employees. We want to involve our colleagues and share their stories in the form of articles, videos, presentations at events, or peer-to-peer sharing and engagement on Henkel's Yammer social network. In line with this, we focus on providing an inclusive framework and environment where employees feel confident to contribute and enthusiastic to participate. To achieve this, we apply a few principles across our various internal communications channels. The first principle is to simplify the language, avoid jargon and explain acronyms. Depending on requests, we provide translations for various local languages. We also try to profile each country and department at least once a quarter. For employees without access to computers, we use noticeboards to share news and information from the intranet. Additionally, regular town hall meetings and employee events are held at all sites.

Events are always great opportunities for employee engagement, bonding, and networking. These events feature sharing by our employees and occasionally

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government, and social organizations. In many instances, digital tools are used. We have been able to connect employees located in different cities across Australia and New Zealand for town halls through video conferencing. In Singapore, we use Kahoot for fun quizzes and Slido for live questions and polling. These tools have helped to increase the level of interaction and make the events interesting and enjoyable.

The one-voice policy

At Henkel, we adhere to a one-voice policy for both internal and external communications. Besides message consistency, we follow the same disclosure,

confidentiality, copyrights, usage rights, and intellectual property rights guidelines. For example, we require persons shown in photographs that we post, either in internal and external channels, to explicitly consent to the use. As much as possible, we emphasize informing our employees before communicating externally. By being transparent and open, we have been able to establish trust and secure employee support in crucial moments.

Focus on employees

We focus on creating awareness and help our employees relate to corporate topics, including Henkel's purpose, mission, company values, and strategic priorities. We identify employee role models across all areas and levels of the company to showcase their passion and how they make a difference through articles and videos and by inviting them to share at various events.

Our internal communication channels and activities emphasize engagement, which means encouraging feedback and dialogue and promoting inter-departmental understanding and collaboration. This ranges from the 'like' and 'comment' features on the intranet, surveys, and competitions on Yammer, to town hall meetings supported by digital interactive tools and Q&A, dialogue sessions, and TED-style talks.

Overall, we have seen that an open and less formal environment helps the speakers to relax and present better, helps the audience to focus better, and encourages people to speak up and interact more.

Leaders are held accountable for communicating

People are one of Henkel's corporate values, so our leaders understand the importance of internal communication, take responsibility for it, and are very supportive. Our 'people' value requires that all employees treat each other with respect and embrace the belief that everyone can make a difference. Our leaders are required to lead by example through performance and actively engage with employees by being open and encouraging feedback. This aspect is part of the performance appraisal for all managers.

Leadership communication is a key pillar of our internal communications program. Our leaders in every country proactively schedule dates for quarterly town hall meetings and regular internal events. Our Corporate Communications team supports and enables them to cascade important information. Many leaders also give their ideas about how to improve the engagement with employees.

Taking the measure of effectiveness

We measure employee interest and understanding of our key topics by tracking the number people reading articles on the intranet and measuring the engagement rate on the enterprise social network (number of posts, likes, and comments). We gather feedback from our leaders and employees at our events or in surveys. The data gives us a good idea of employee interests, their understanding of key topics, and expectations. We share these findings in post-event reports or in management meetings. Together with our leaders, we regularly define and fine-tune our internal communications topics, activities and long-term strategies.

Zeynep Arayıcı Korzay

Communicating across cultures

Yildiz Holdings operates in the consumer goods industry, producing famous global brands. With 65,000 employees in offices, factories, and stores around the world, it can be highly challenging to produce projects that our employees want to be a part of due to cultural or socioeconomic differences and legal frameworks in the countries. However, challenges can become opportunities for professional development and growth. Our global presence and diverse teams ensure our projects are more powerful and efficient.

Aligning internal and external communication

In our organization, the IC team works within human resources and report to the Chief Human Relations Officer. The corporate communication team reports to the Vice-chairman. Regardless of reporting relationships, we work side-by-side in managing projects and any crisis situations that arise. We see our colleagues as brand ambassadors or managers of the media channels, and we ensure that our employees hear company news before it becomes public. Procurements, agreements, investments, and sponsorships are first announced in the company. Press releases and social media posts are shared simultaneously. Our teams are aligned. In addition to supporting the Chairman as the key external spokesperson and for IC, I support external communication and create efficiency advantages related to preliminary preparation and timing.

Beginning with the end in mind

Our priority is the alignment of the company's big picture. We focus on creating a line of sight between the vision and mission with the role of each employee and align the business plan with employee goals.

We listen. To ensure that IC is not limited to leader and HR communication, we keep two-way communication channels active.

Zeynep Arayıcı Korzay is the Senior Manager, Global Internal Communications, at Yıldız Holding. Based in Turkey, her key responsibilities include developing, managing, and executing global IC strategies and plans, providing strategic communications advice and counsel to the executive team for internal and external issues, and advising the executive leadership team on change management communications. Yıldız Holding employs 65,000 employees and has operations in approximately 180 countries.

Beside Yammer and Workplace by Facebook, we conduct surveys and town hall meetings to hear questions and opinions. We do not fill the speech bubbles. We ask employees directly.

We keep leader communication transparent, intentional, consistent, and sincere. We begin with the end in mind. What do we want people to do, say, think, feel *differently*? We execute our work accordingly.

We also use tools that help leaders analyze how employees engage through communication by referencing our internal surveys, focus group results, and global research.

ANALYSIS

BLURRED LINES BETWEEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Nearly 100 in-house internal communication professionals around the world answered our questions about how they manage the blurring of the lines between internal and external communication in their organization.The responses revealed a number of trends and a range of changes that IC practitioners working inside the corporate firewall are adapting to and in some cases, embracing.

Blurred Lines but Stronger Distinctions: Internal Communication Professionals see Opportunities as External and Internal Draw Closer

The relationship between internal and external communication is changing and tightening. But according to nearly 100 respondents from in-house internal communication functions around the world, these changes do not currently represent an existential threat to the practice or function of internal communication in large organizations.

The responses revealed a number of trends and a range of changes that IC practitioners working inside the corporate firewall are adapting to, and in some cases, embracing.

Organizational alignment and role definition

Most of the responses to the two questions[1] addressed organizational changes and the need for tighter alignment between internal and external communication. The major distinction was around whether organizations would go so far as to formally integrate, or in some cases, re-integrate their internal and external communication functions under one reporting line, or whether they would opt for more informal approaches including common meetings, shared planning or a mutual review of activities.

The responses show a trend towards integrating the internal and external communication functions.

"No company can ignore this! It is utterly imperative that the company's internal communication content complements and perfectly aligns with what the company is publishing externally. In our organization, internal and external communications belong to the same department. That makes content sharing much easier, alignment more precise, and communications a lot more effective."

"We merge them in the same team to ensure effective integration."

"We are lucky to have both external and internal communication in one department, so they are integrated. I have a PR manager reporting to me as well as the head of IC. My management strategy is to have strong co-operation and continuity in my team so that colleagues could substitute each other during absences and tasks can be redistributed if necessary. This makes my team flexible and responsive."

The trend, however, is by no means uniform.

"The lines aren't blurred, because distinct audiences need and want different information. But we must collaborate, so we align in our messages and timing. Someone is responsible for internal, and someone else is responsible for external, working alongside each other constantly."

"At an organizational level, our internal and external communications teams in (our region) sit within different functions. This, however, is not reflective of how we interact with each other. There is a high degree of trust between our teams that is built on respect. Our relationship is highly collaborative." Indeed, several respondents mentioned that their organizations were splitting the two activities into separate functions.

"I believe that clear and separate comms plans allow to ensure that internal audience is not left out."

A trend that is more prevalent and that cuts across integrated and more autonomous functions is that the differences between internal and external audiences are largely accepted. Tangibly, this means recognizing that internal communication requires distinctive tactical and tonal approaches and should not simply be occupied with the internal distribution of messages prepared for external audiences.

"Every time a PR campaign is produced, employees must be considered stakeholders and strategies must be created specifically for them rather than simply giving them access to what is produced for the public. Their needs are different than those of clients or the general population."

The lines aren't just blurring: they are becoming more permeable.

While there is a 'blurring' of organizational lines, the other main finding is that respondents are demonstrating that the lines between internal and external communication are becoming more permeable, meaning that externally facing messages are becoming more visible internally, and internal communication can, intentionally or otherwise, reach beyond its intended internal audience.

The pervasive nature of smartphones and use of social media during and after work hours are seen as a major driver in the increased impact and immediacy of external messaging landing inside of the organizational firewall. While organizations often go to considerable pains to make sure that formal external announcements are shared through internal channels before being shared through social and traditional media, many organizational and industry voices are independently present on social media and are continually communicating. Employees are often following those voices in real time.

As for the flow of internal messaging towards customers and the public, there are two trends that respondents identified, but neither was addressed by most respondents. The first is that there is a degree of acceptance that while there is a likelihood for internal messages to be shared externally, this likelihood should not deter organizations from communicating directly and thoroughly with their employees.

"While treating new developments in our organization, we prefer to take the content and tailor it to different audiences. For example, in IC we like to use a friendly, focused and more engaging tone and personalize the message for our IC media and platforms. It can be a shorter, sharable format for our internal social platform, a visual, longer story for our magazines or to-the-point messages for our email alerts."

The second is that there is a degree of explicit recognition of the role of employees as advocates for their organizations' brands (particularly their employer brands) and products, with some organizations actively encouraging and supporting employee participation as formal organizational ambassadors in their communities.

"We've also seen a massive shift in what employees expect from the companies they work for, and that is a strong purpose, a good corporate citizen, values that resonate with them. These things need a dedicated internal focus to optimize engagement and connection to everything companies say externally."

In summary

It is widely acknowledged – for a variety of reasons – that internal and external communication are drawing closer. This appears particularly true at an organizational level and to an extent in terms of internal impacts of external messages and internal championship of organizational messages to external audiences. Most importantly for internal communication professionals, this convergence has also engendered an increasing respect for the distinct nature of internal and external audiences and this bodes well for practitioners whose work is based on a mastery of that distinction. The internal and external functions may be converging, but the disciplines of internal and external communication appear to remain distinct, at least for now.

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[1]**Question of the survey**: "How do you manage the blurring of the 'lines' between internal and external communication in your organization and how do you make sure the needs of your internal audiences and constituencies are not overlooked?"

Question to contributors: "Blurred lines between internal and external communication are here to stay. How does your organization deal with this reality in its approach to internal communication? Can you share how your organization ensures internal and external communications are aligned together and also specify if both functions are integrated or not?"

STATE
TRENDS
PRACTICE

A RESEARCH-
BASED
PERSPECTIVE

The reality of internal communication in companies is unveiled via two commanding research projects conducted in Europe and in the USA.

The first examines the current status and trends in internal communication in European companies. The second is a two-part research identifying best-in-class practices for employee communication and the gap between the knowledge of what best-in-class global communication leaders reported is effective and what the majority of IC professionals reported to be practicing.

Internal Communication in Europe

Current Status and Trends in Internal Communication in European Companies

In today's constantly changing economic and social environment with technology innovation playing a central role, internal communication becomes an important source of competitive advantage for companies. International research in this field confirms and highlights how a well-managed IC system becomes a major tool to implement organizational change successfully. The ability and willingness of a company's top management team to invest in an effective IC system represent a key element of success.

Massimo Greggia is the European Association for Internal Communication (FEIEA) Vice-president and a member of the Executive Board of the Italian Association for the Development of Internal Communications (ASCAI). He is based in Italy.

In 2017, the Italian Association for the Development of Internal Communications (ASCAI) launched a pan-European research project to establish the status and trends of internal communication across Europe. The initiative was undertaken under the patronage of the European Association for Internal Communication (FEIEA) that brings together IC Associations from European Countries.

Entrusted to Università Cattolica in Milan, Italy, the research project[1] was led by Professor Roberto Nelli. The survey was conducted in 12 European countries where internal communication professionals from 448 companies, representing all the companies with at least 500 employees, were surveyed.

This article highlights some of the key findings of the research.

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[1] Full report can be found in Nelli, R. (2018). *Internal Communication in Europe. Key success factors and managerial approaches*. Milan: Vita e *Pensiero. The publication is the result of the research project "European Internal Communications" of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, promoted, coordinated and financed by ASCAI, with the high patronage of FEIEA (European Association for Internal Communication).*

Objectives of an internal communication system

Based on the research and as shown in Chart 13 below, internal communication professionals still consider IC is as a tool to socialize "soft" business goals such as promoting and sharing a company culture and identity (86% of positive responses), communicating business strategy, goals and performance (77%), improving employee engagement/motivation (77%) and supporting organizational change (69%). On the contrary, IC is less frequently perceived as an enabler of more "robust" business goals such as increasing sales (only 18% of positive responses), reducing costs and/or increasing employee productivity (22%), increasing customer satisfaction (30%), or strengthening of competitive advantage (30%).

It may be interesting to note that in 30.6% of the respondent companies the department responsible for defining IC goals and objectives is the Corporate Communications department, followed at a distance by the CEO (18.1%), and by Human Resources departments (14.3%).

In particular, the research highlighted a significant difference in relation to the objectives pursued by IC, depending on whether there was a dedicated IC or not. This hints that the existence of a dedicated department is essential to identify communications issues and adequate initiatives to address them.

Chart 13 - In your organization, to what extent does IC support the following objectives?

	Not at all				Very much
Increase sales	29%	28%	25%	12%	6%
Reduce costs and/or increase employee productivity	17%	31%	30%	17%	5%
Support competitive advantage	13%	26%	31%	22%	8%
Increase customer satisfaction	18%	24%	28%	21%	9%
Facilitate business processes	6%	21%	38%	25%	10%
Increase organizational efficiency	6%	19%	37%	28%	10%
Develop the communication skills	9%	21%	31%	28%	11%
Stimulate and promote innovation and creativity	6%	21%	26%	32%	15%
Encourage networking	8%	15%	29%	32%	16%
Communicate procedures and operational issues	4%	18%	29%	33%	16%
Improve employee socialization	5%	16%	30%	32%	17%
Increase employee satisfaction	4%	12%	27%	34%	23%
Develop and disseminate corporate knowledge	4%	12%	23%	38%	23%
Support organizational change	2% 7%	22%	33%		36%
Improve employee engagement and motivation	4%	18%	32%		45%
Communicate business strategy, goals and performance	5%	16%	34%		43%
Promote and share company culture and identity	2% 10%	25%			61%

As shown (Table 2), four factors were identified as the main drivers of IC objectives. They are Competitiveness, Socialization and Networking, Corporate Identity, and Operations and Processes.

The factor represented by **Competitiveness** encompasses objectives aimed at supporting the economic performance of a company in the marketplace an (increase of sales and increase of customer satisfaction), initiatives aimed to reduce costs and/or increase employee productivity and, more generally, all of those activities aimed at supporting competitive advantage.

The factor represented by **Socialization and Networking** includes those objectives aimed at developing and disseminating corporate knowledge and stimulating innovation and creativity through the growth of employee socialization and the strengthening of networking, thus ultimately contributing to an increase of employee satisfaction.

The factor represented by **Corporate Identity** brings together those objectives that are typical of IC, consisting of communicating business strategy, goals and performance, and promoting and sharing company culture and identity for the purpose of improving employee engagement and motivation and supporting organizational change.

The factor represented by **Operations and Processes** pools together those objectives concerning the simplification of business processes and increasing organizational efficiency through communication of procedures and operational issues.

Table 2 - Factors representing the underlying dimensions of IC objectives system

Factors and variables

Competitiveness

Increase sales

Increase customer satisfaction

Reduce costs and/or increase employee productivity

Support competitive advantage

Socialization & Networking

Increase employee socialization

Encourage networking

Develop the communication skills of the organization's participants

Stimulate and promote innovation and creativity

Increase employee satisfaction

Develop and disseminate corporate knowledge

Corporate Identity

Communicate business strategy, goals and performance

Promote and share company culture and identity

Improve employee engagement and motivation

Support organizational change

Operations & Processes

Facilitate business processes

Communicate procedures and operational issues

Increase organizational efficiency

Extraction method: Principal component analysis
Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization

Source: Internal Communication in Europe 2018

Internal communication assessment

Not surprisingly, the research highlighted that assessing IC effectiveness is possibly the most critical, yet complex activity. Indeed, only a little more than one-third of companies regularly monitor or assess communication efforts, mainly focusing on quantitative measurements rather than qualitative measurements.

As captured in the chart 17 on the next page, respondents mainly measure intranet usage (60%) and employee satisfaction/engagement (57%), followed at a distance by employee understanding of key messages (35%) and employee attitude and behaviour change (31%).

Chart 17 - Which items are monitored or measured to assess IC effectiveness?

	Never				Always
Impact on strategic and/or financial objectives	30%	26%	26%	14%	4%
Financial/personnel costs for projects	29%	27%	21%	14%	9%
Internal communication process quality (internal workflow)	20%	25%	28%	21%	6%
Channel effectiveness	22%	24%	25%	20%	9%
Employee attitude and behaviour change	22%	20%	27%	23%	8%
Employee understanding of key messages	19%	21%	25%	26%	9%
Employee satisfaction/engagement	11%	14%	18%	29%	28%
Intranet usage	17%	8%	15%	25%	35%

Source: *Internal Communication in Europe* 2018

The impact on strategic and/or financial objectives (56%), the financial/personnel costs for projects (56%), channel effectiveness (46%), and the quality of internal communication processes (45%) are rarely or never monitored or measured.

The items that are monitored or measured were analysed in accordance with the DPRG/ICV[2], a framework that conceptualizes evaluation and measurement activities in four groups:

Input: This stage corresponds to the resources employed, including staff and other costs of communication.

Output: This stage consists of both process efficiency and range and variety of content/messages available to employees across a variety of channels.

Outcome: This stage measures the impact on employees such as awareness, understanding of key messages, commitment, change in attitudes, and behavioural dispositions or actions of employees.

Outflow: This stage refers to organizational goals achieved as a consequence of communication processes, such as strategic and/or financial objectives or corporate performance.

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[2] The theoretical framework was developed by academics, management accountants, and communication associations in Germany (DPRG/ICV, 2011; Watson & Noble, 2014, pp. 170-181; Zerfass et al., 2017), also adopted by the "European Communication Monitor".

Overall, little attention is paid to the monitoring of internal communication processes from their start (INPUT) through their potential economic impact (OUTFLOW) (Chart 18).

Once again, the analysis revealed that assessment of IC effectiveness is significantly more frequent where a dedicated IC department exists.

Chart 18 - Which items are monitored or measured to assess IC effectiveness?
(average values)

Item	Category
Impact on strategic and/or financial objectives	OUTFLOW
Employee attitude and behaviour change	OUTCOME
Employee understanding of key messages	OUTCOME
Channel effectiveness	OUTPUT
Internal communication process quality (internal workflow)	OUTPUT
Employee satisfaction/engagement	OUTPUT
Intranet usage	OUTPUT
Financial/personnel costs for projects	INPUT

Scale: 1 (Never) to 5 (Always)

Source: *Internal Communication in Europe* 2018

Regarding the methods for assessing IC effectiveness (Chart 20 on the next page), particular emphasis was placed on feedback from face-to-face events (54%), intranet analytics (51%), and employee surveys (47%). Again, more "robust" methods such as cost-benefit analysis (61%), exit interviews (58%), focus groups (56%), and enterprise social networks metrics (36%) are rarely or never used.

When asked about the main barriers for properly measuring the effectiveness of IC, the majority of respondents indicate the lack of adequate tools and effective methodological approaches as the main hindering factors (Chart 22 on the next page). Surprisingly, the shortfall of adequate financial resources is not considered as the main barrier.

With regard to employees' structured listening, such as ad-hoc surveys and regular feedback collection, only 36.2% of respondent companies regularly hold listening activities. From among these companies, 63.9% regularly carry out internal climate surveys, 56.3% use quick online polls to get feedback on single initiatives, projects and issues, and 53.2% use a mailbox for suggestions and proposals by colleagues. Feedback on top management statements is used quite regularly, followed by tools such as focus groups, panels of colleagues, and finally, online voting systems.

Chart 20 - How often are the following methods currently used to assess IC?
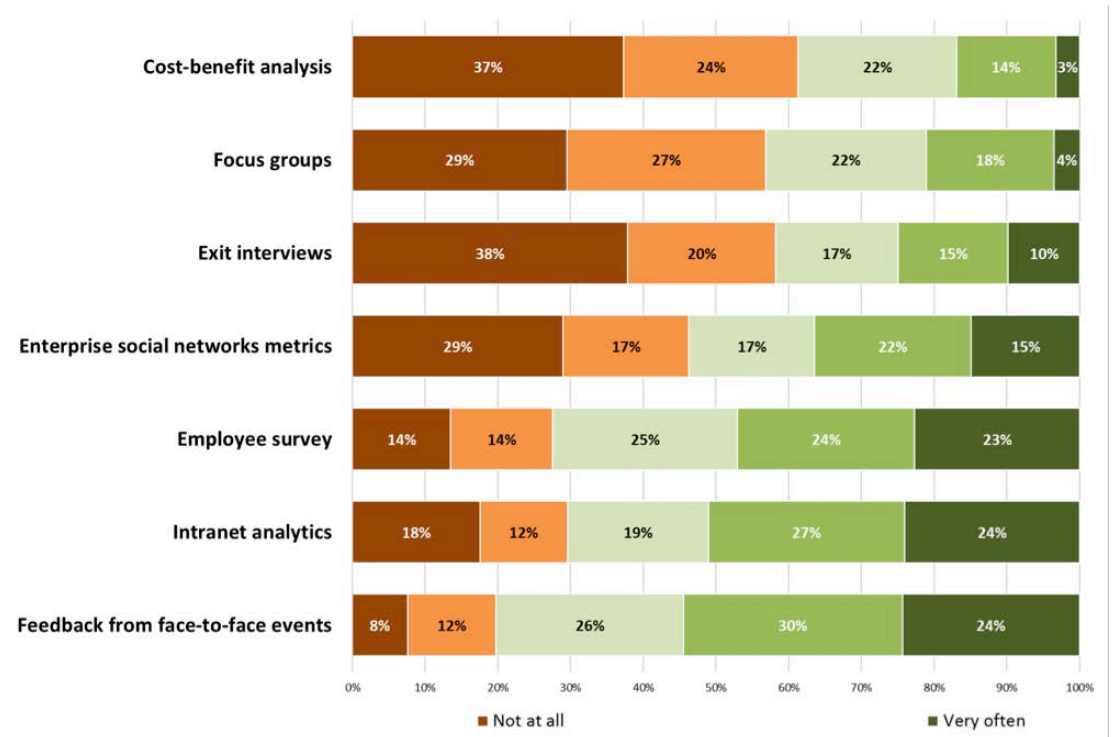
Source: *Internal Communication in Europe* 2018

Chart 22 - To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements concerning the barriers affecting the effective measurement of IC?
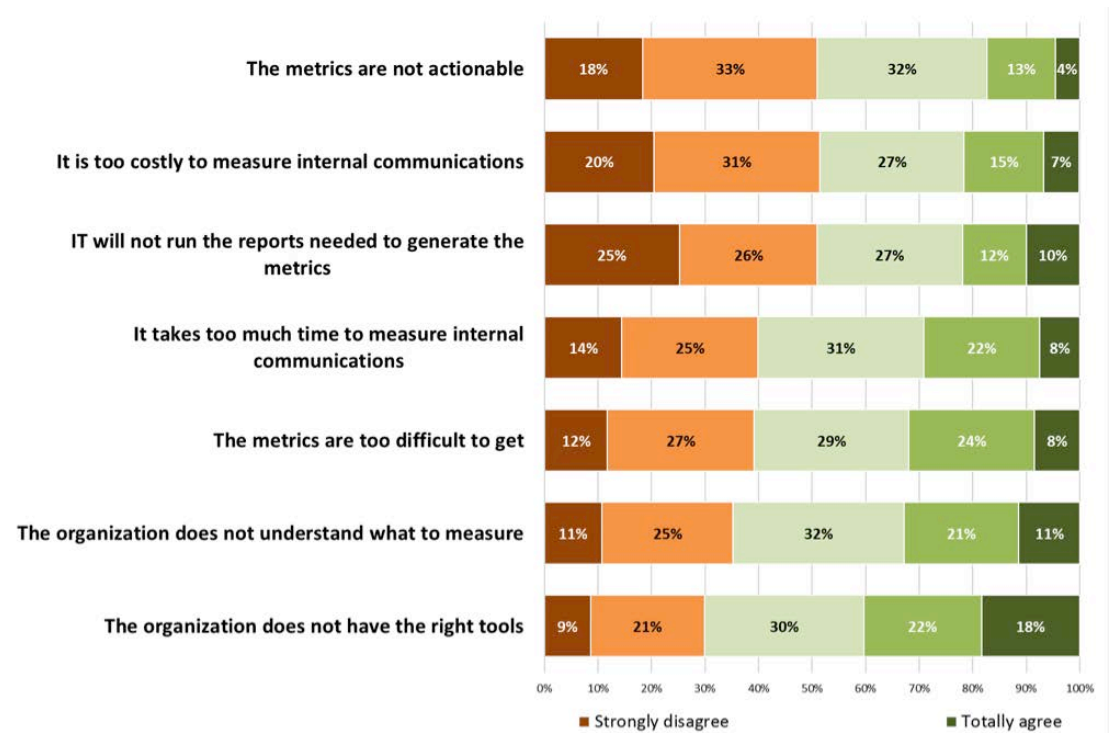
Source: *Internal Communication in Europe* 2018

Effectiveness of internal communication strategy

Notwithstanding the difficulty in assessing IC effectiveness, a large majority of respondents state that IC generally supports the strategic goals of the organization and only 15.7% of them believe that it does not (Chart 24). While respondents have a mixed perception about the importance of the role that IC plays in the overall performance of the organization (Chart 26), almost 40% of them declare that their IC strategy is effective or extremely effective at helping achieve key business goals (Chart 27) and only 15% consider it ineffective.

The analysis revealed positive correlations between the perceived effectiveness of the IC strategy and:

- the importance of the role of IC in the overall performance of the organization

- the belief that the organization invests enough in IC: respondents most satisfied with the level of investment, believe that IC is more effective to help their organization achieve business goals

- the perception of the level of integration between internal and external communication (some 70% of respondents that perceived the IC strategy as effective and think that internal and external communications are integrated) (Chart 30).

Charts 24, 26, 27, 30 Source: *Internal Communication in Europe* 2018

Chart 24 - IC supports the strategic goals of the organization
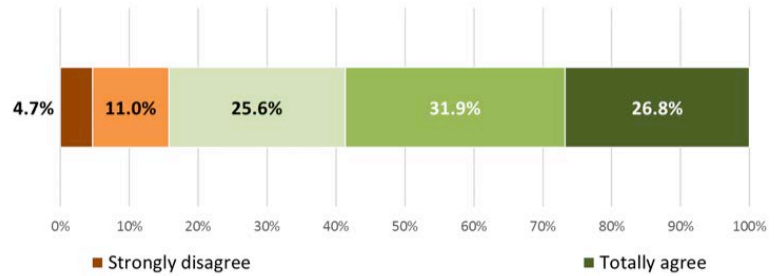
Chart 26 - IC plays an important role in the overall performance of the organization
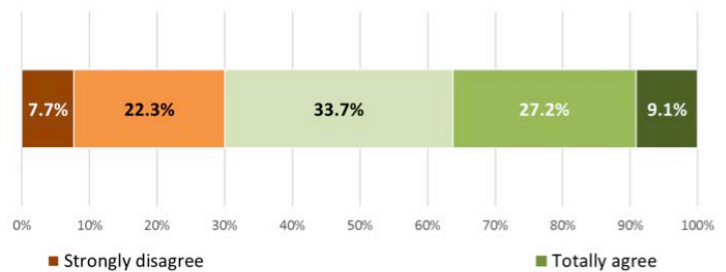
Chart 27 - How effective is your IC strategy at helping your organization achieve its current business goals?
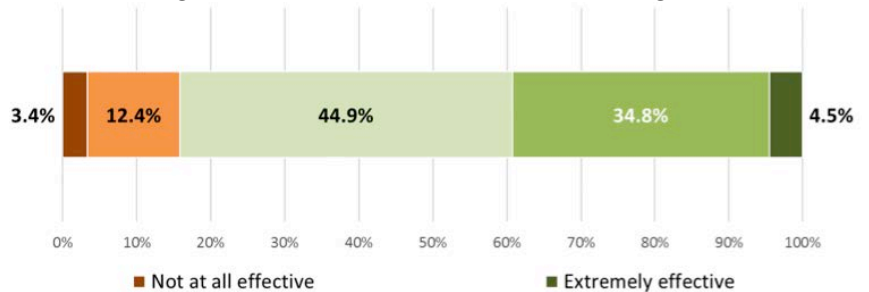
Chart 30 - How effective is your IC strategy at helping your organization achieve its current business goals?

The contribution of IC to organizational objectives and management decisions

The research deepened understanding of the role enacted by internal communication in respondent companies based on two key aspects that encompass five variables:

- the level of support provided by IC senior management and other corporate departments both for the development of their communication skill, and in terms of communication consultancy for performing their activities (*"Supporting business goals by managing Internal Communication"*)
- the level of engagement of the head of internal communication in outlining strategic corporate decisions ("*Helping to define business strategy*")

With regard to the first aspect, the results showed a fairly high level of support provided by the IC team/department (Chart 33). IC advises managers how to manage specific communication challenges (57%), supports executives/senior managers by providing information/insights for decisions (49%), and enables them to recognize the inherent communication aspect in any of their decisions and activities (40%).

As far as the second aspect, the findings generally revealed a low level of executive influence for the IC head. Only 35% of companies say that the IC head is always invited to senior-level meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning and 32% indicate that the IC head is involved at the earliest stages of strategic planning. Some 35% of respondents declared that the IC head is involved in decisions only when problems occur.

Chart 33 - Thinking of IC within your organization, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?
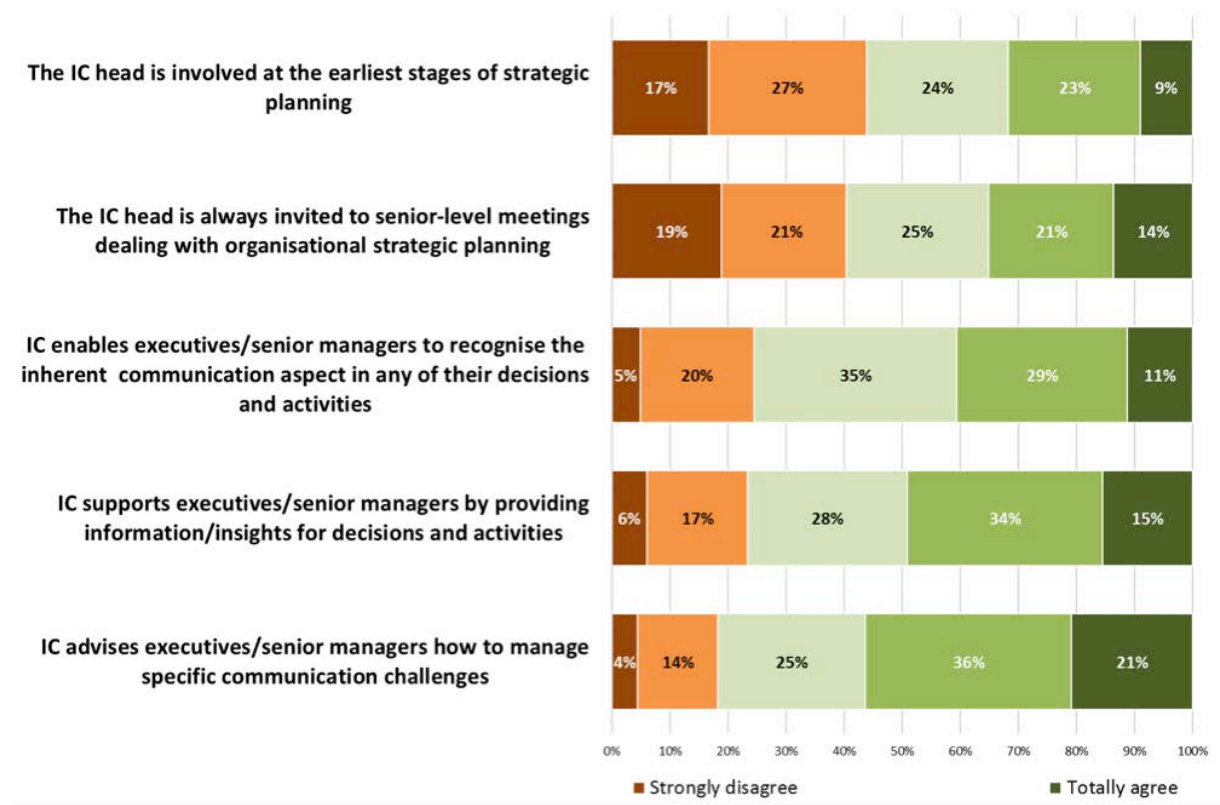
Source: *Internal Communication in Europe* 2018

As a general rule, perceptions about the effectiveness of IC increase the most when IC helps define business goals and supports their achievement on a daily basis. In other words, when IC is seen as a direct contributor to organizational objectives and decision-making. On this basis, respondent companies were clustered[3] (Chart 35) into four groups corresponding to four different roles performed by IC departments:

Strategic facilitators: the dual role of supporting the definition of business strategies and the attainment of the desired corporate performance

Business advisers: helping to adjust organizational strategies and supporting top management by adding the communicative dimension to strategy formulation

Operational supporters: focus is on supporting other offices, developing communication skills and providing genuine consultancy with no involvement in strategic activities

Isolated experts: no clear link between internal communication activities and corporate objectives

Whenever IC plays a "*strategic facilitator*" role, the communication team is considered by senior management as a reliable consultant and managers across all departments take recommendations from IC seriously, being aware that communication is an integral part of their tasks. In such a context, IC is seen as directly contributing to the formulation of strategic corporate decisions.

The research shows that whilst IC should aim at playing the role of "*strategic facilitator*", in slightly more than a quarter of the surveyed companies IC actually plays such a role.

Significant differences were noted with reference to the presence or lack of a dedicated IC department and of a formal IC plan, whilst no significant differences were observed regarding the allocation of a specific budget.

Chart 35 - Roles enacted by IC that reflect the relationship with organizational processes and strategies

Supporting business goals by managing internal communications
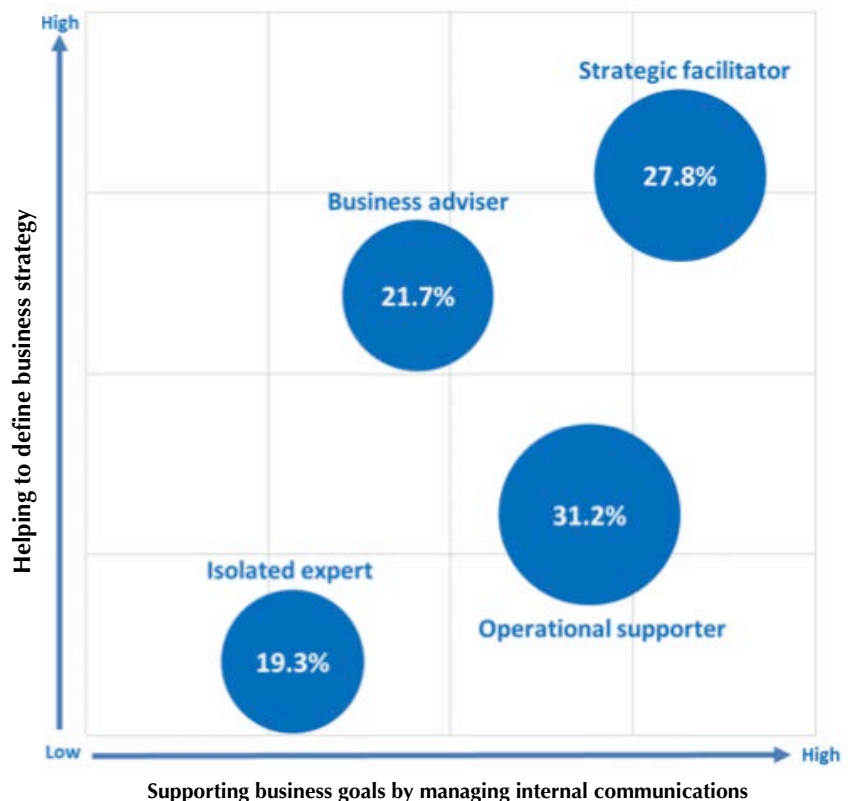
Source: *Internal Communication in Europe* 2018

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[3] Based on the methodological approach adopted in 2014 by the European Communication Monitor (Zerfass et al., 2014), a joint study by academia and practice that has been conducted annually since 2007 by the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA) and the European Association of Communication Directors (EACD).

Characteristics of high effectiveness communication strategy

The research also tried to identify the elements that define an overall effectiveness model for internal communication and the related organizational and managerial aspects. Once again, the effectiveness of IC strategies relates to the extent to which internal communication is seen as useful and contributing to business goals.

The research thus considered the following aspects:

- the level of engagement of the head of IC in making strategic company decisions ("*Helping to define business strategy*") and the subsequent executive influence
- the level of support offered by the IC team/department to other company functions both in developing their communication skills and providing genuine communication consultancy ("*Supporting business goals by managing Internal Communication*")
- the level of *IC advisory influence*, which implies top management recognizing the role played by IC and more generally, the level of awareness of management about communication aspects in any of their decisions and activities
- the perception of the *quality of the communication climate*, i.e. the existence of a supportive communication climate, which allows for a better exchange of information and a more positive and engaging work environment

Results show that the "*high effectiveness*" companies, where internal communication management achieves a high level of effectiveness includes 41.6% of the companies. More than two-thirds of these companies have a dedicated IC department, mainly reporting to Corporate Communications or to the CEO. In almost 70% of cases, IC has a specific budget allocation and in 73%, a formal IC plan.

On the contrary, the "*low effectiveness*" companies only have a dedicated IC department in one case out of two. Moreover, in almost 30% of cases, the head of the department does not report directly to the CEO or anyone on the board (weakly aligned department).

The frequency of cooperation with other departments is also key to establishing a difference between low and high effectiveness companies (Chart 53).

Chart 53 - How closely does the IC team in your organization work with…

(*) = p<0.000

Source: *Internal Communication in Europe* 2018
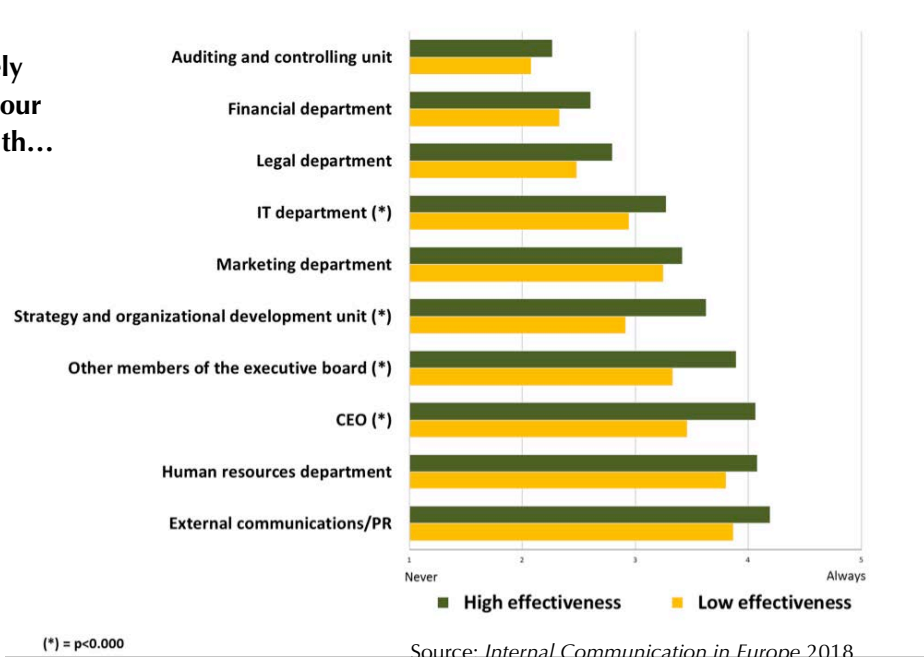
The chart 55 below and the chart 57 on the following page capture the main characteristics of companies considered "high effectiveness" versus "low effectiveness." A comparative analysis of these characteristics shows that the fundamental differences between companies in the two effectiveness clusters can be narrowed down to the following five elements:

1. **Alignment of the IC department**: the proximity of the IC department to top management is higher within the "high effectiveness" cluster than the other cluster
2. **Collaboration of the IC team with other departments** within the organization: the IC team in companies belonging to the "high effectiveness" cluster are significantly more integrated into the organization
3. **Measurement**: companies belonging to the "high effectiveness" cluster are better in using research to assess IC effectiveness on all levels, from input through output and outcome to outflow of internal communication
4. **Listening**: companies belonging to the "high effectiveness" cluster have significantly more developed methods of collaborators' structured listening, such as ad-hoc surveys and regularly feedback collection
5. **Strategy formulation**: companies belonging to the "high effectiveness" cluster show a better ability to properly formulate the IC strategy

Going back to the four roles performed by IC (see Chart 35 on p. 102) the analysis showed that 46.5% of the "*high effectiveness*" companies have an IC department that is acting as "*strategic facilitator*", while in 45.3% of the "*low effectiveness*" companies the IC department acts as "*isolated expert*".

Chart 55 - The profiles of the two clusters of effectiveness
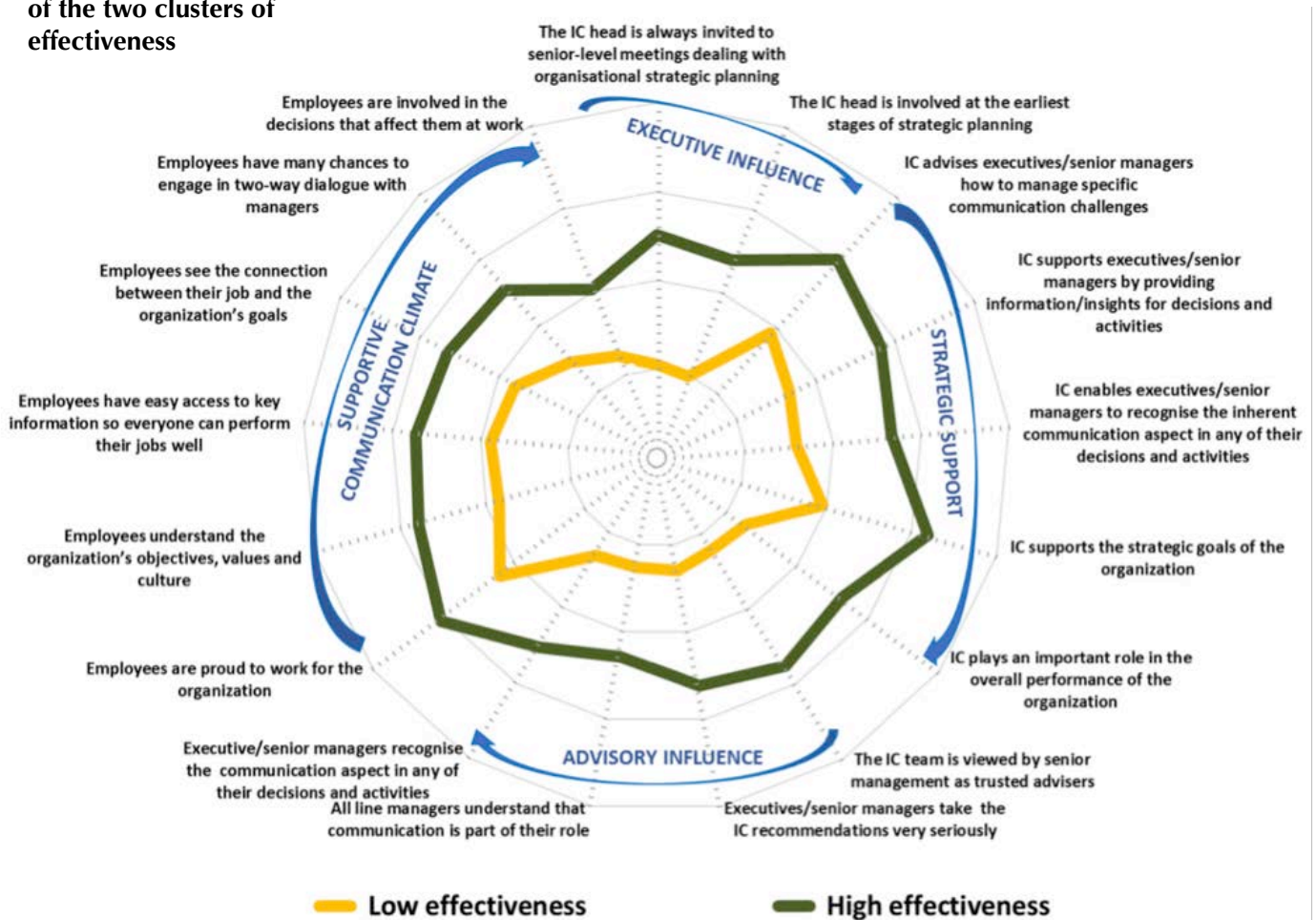
Source: *Internal Communication in Europe* 2018

Chart 57 - The profiles of the two clusters of effectiveness

The perception that the CEO values IC

The IC team works closely with CEO

The organization invests enough in IC

Senior managers value IC work

Internal and external communications are integrated

IC reports the outcomes of its work regularly to senior management

IC gets positive feedback to its work by employees

IC strategy is effective at helping the organisation achieve its business goals

The quality and ability of the IC team are higher than those of companies considered as a benchmark

Low effectiveness ▬▬ High effectiveness

Source: *Internal Communication in Europe* 2018

Conclusion

The findings of this research confirm that the presence of a dedicated Internal Communication department plays a decisive role in contributing to the overall effectiveness of IC. Indeed, companies with a dedicated IC department showed significant differences compared to the other companies for all the examined aspects:

- **IC objectives**: Companies with a dedicated IC department pursue almost all of the objectives that were analyzed to a greater extent.
- **IC assessment**: In companies with a dedicated IC department monitoring and measuring of IC effectiveness is performed more systematically, increasing awareness on both strategic and operational IC aspects.
- **IC effectiveness**: In companies with a dedicated IC department there is a higher consensus on the role of IC as a contributor to the strategic goals of the organization. Also, a higher level of perceived effectiveness in helping the organization achieve its business goals is attained. In these companies, IC activities are primarily focused on advising management on how to manage specific communication challenges, providing information/insights for decisions, and enabling managers to recognize the communication aspect in their decisions.

Finally, a brief note on future trends and challenges. The majority of respondents are convinced that IC will gain greater importance in the next three years, an assumption confirmed by the actual increase of financial and human resources dedicated to IC for more than 80% of respondents. The main focus will be to deal with digital evolution while coping with increasing speed and the volume of information flow. This finding is in a context where IC will have to be linked more and more with business strategies to support the decision-making process.

How to Build Efficacy in Employee Communications at Your Organization:
A Review of Best-in-Class Practices

Efficacy in employee communications is vital to the profession and to advance the purpose and value of an organization. To set a benchmark for best-in-class practices in employee communication, the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) published a two-part initiative with both qualitative and quantitative research (published in 2013 and 2014-respectively). In both initiatives, the IPR Commission on Organizational Communication (now the Organizational Communication Research Center) engaged KRC Research to help conduct the research.

The findings revealed a clear and wide gap between the knowledge of what best-in-class communicators reported is effective and what the majority of internal communicators reported to be practicing.

Sarab Kochhar, Ph.D, Director of Research, Institute for Public Relations

Mary Beth Perry, Research and Development Associate, Institute for Public Relations

Why is this research still relevant?

As anything changes with time, best-in-class practices will continue to evolve as new generations join the workforce and technology changes. You may ask, why is this research still relevant? The answer lies in the fact that many of these best-in-class practices are evergreen, such as keeping employees informed in a timely manner, using internal online forums, and adopting an authentic voice for the organization, to name a few. Sure, the specific ways that organizations keep employees informed and the different internal online forums used by organizations may change, but these aforementioned examples of evergreen practices will always remain important.

As this research points out, we must do more as a profession to connect what we know is effective, like these evergreen practices, and put them into practice within our organizations to close the gap between knowledge and action.

In this article, we will recap the findings from each research initiative that highlights how you can build effectiveness in employee communications in your organization.
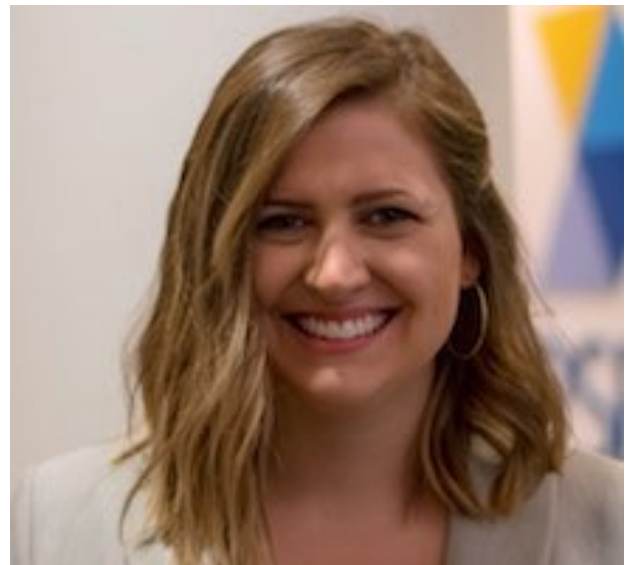
Best-in-Class Practices in Employee Communication: Through the Lens of 10 Global Leaders

In the first research initiative, <u>Best-in-Class Practices in Employee Communication: Through the Lens of 10 Global Leaders</u>, in-depth interviews with internal communications professionals at 10 leading global organizations were conducted to better understand internal communication methods and best-in-class practices. The 10 companies interviewed were chosen because of their recognition as the top global leaders in internal communications, as proven by placements on best-places-to-work lists, awards, and other industry recognition. The companies interviewed were: GE, FedEx, Johnson & Johnson, Cargill, Chevron, Navistar, McDonald's, IBM, Petrobras, and Toyota.

10 Best-in-class practices in employee communication: '10-from-10'

In this paper, there were 10 best-in-class practices compiled from interviews with 10 global leaders in employee communication. Below, we have summarized these practices:

1. Be a business leader first, a communicator second ("How do we make money?)

"To be truly successful, internal communicators (and we would hasten to add all communicators) must be seen as business people first, with an expertise in communications."

Internal communicators should aim to serve as a trusted advisor to senior executives, providing timely and proactive advice that shows expertise in communications while supporting business objectives.

2. Begin with the end in mind – remembering it's all about the"why?"

"An organization must be able to clearly and concisely articulate the purpose and value of change for its future success and for the employees."

A shared purpose allows for employee buy-in and greater trust to be built within an organization through collaboration. With that being said, to fully grasp an organization's purpose, employees must understand the "why?" behind it. Organizations must clearly map out what its environment must look like to meet the end goal of its shared purpose, namely the business benefits, changed culture, and business practices, etc.

3. Challenge – don't "cheerlead" – employees

"They want – and expect – to be challenged."

As new generations enter the workplace, savvy Gen X, Gen Y and Millennial generation employees are expecting to be challenged and are becoming more "democratized" through growing trends inside companies such as social media, online communities, and employee affinity groups.

4. Create a roadmap for change, but expect detours on the road ahead

"Alignment is neither easy nor linear; ironically, being prepared for bumps in the road will accelerate the journey."

Creating a successful shared purpose within an organization requires the development of a clear and measurable path to the desired future state. Communicators must not only help develop this "roadmap," but also creatively communicate it – through ways such as dynamic storytelling, strategic learning maps, and online communities – to the collaborative community.

A successful collaborative community must align shared purpose across projects throughout the organization and prepare for the unexpected, as organizations are ever-changing. While it is impossible to know exactly what will happen, organizations that prepare to adapt their "roadmap" when the unexpected occurs will see greater success.

5. Build a detailed internal stakeholder map

"Each employee constituency has a different concern and a different role in supporting change."

To successfully implement organizational change,

you need an engaged workforce supporting that change, and one way to engage and better communicate with employees is to develop an internal stakeholder map. This map should better integrate employees and specifically identify the needs of leaders, front-line employees, sales professionals, customer support teams, functional support personnel, and others.

6. Don't vacate your seat at the table, advocate a point of view

"Communicators must come prepared and have a point of view that they actively voice."

Involving internal communicators in decisions that shape change within an organization can help achieve better implementation and adoption of the desired changes much more than simply involving internal communicators after decisions are made.

7. Adopt an authentic voice: Sustainability and green-friendly practices are still in, but they are no longer it

"Authenticity which calls for demonstrating integrity, telling employees the truth even if the news is bad, being consistent in what is said and done internally and externally, and acting in an honest, trustworthy way, is the new "green" among best-in-class companies."

While environmental stewardship is of course still important, employees are now looking for a total values alignment with their employer that is transparent. The new "green" is authenticity – listening to and addressing employee concerns and ideas, and creating opportunities for dialogue.

8. The power of line-of-sight managers as communicators

"Empowering key leaders and front-line managers to deliver messages is essential. Simply put, any significant change effort will fail without them."

Line-of-sight management through a direct supervisor remains the most trusted resource for information, and they should be used as a communications tool to directly connect with employees.

Four factors that contribute to internal communications driving business value

Based on findings from the qualitative survey, four factors that contributed to internal communication teams driving business value were revealed:

1. An organizational structure that connects internal communicators with the rest of the company up and down the chain of command
2. An innate understanding that strong internal communication will have a positive return for the brand and the company that need not be proven at every juncture
3. An arsenal of tools and practices for both listening and communicating a message
4. A strong commitment to keeping employees across the company informed in a timely fashion, often before stories break in mass media and digital channels

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9. Content and content strategy is king:

"If you think your company controls the message in this brave new world, think again. Employees increasingly are driving communication at their levels."

Employees are a driving force in an organization's communications efforts, and internal communicators must work to help all employees gain understanding and commit to key messages. Internal communicators should keep key messages at the forefront, creatively building interest and engagement around those messages in an effort to keep initiatives fresh among employees.

10. Always and measure and track strategies, tactics, and channels

"Our interviews tell us that best-in-class companies relentlessly track and measure strategies, tactics, and channels. They intentionally treat their employees like customers."

It is important to constantly measure strategies, tactics, and channels observing how the message is getting through and its effectiveness. It is important to answer questions like: **"**What's the total cost of engagement and internal communication?" "Are our messages getting through?" "Are people acting on them?" "How is that message affecting their view of the company, or the level of advocacy they have on the company?"

The 22 Factors of Success

1. Periodic assessment of employee perceptions

2. Have "listening posts"

3. Having a roadmap of organizational changes and developments

4. Having an internal stakeholder map

5. Having internal social media sites/platform

6. Internal communications lead having oversight of all key internal communications in the total organization

7. Team leaders participate in total organization strategy session

8. Having an internal communications team leader report to the leader of corporate communications, or the company

9. Keeping employees informed in a timely manner

10. Keeping employees informed of the context of current issues

11. Keeping employees apprised of organizational change and development

12. Adopting an authentic voice for all internal communications

13. Communicating the impact of organizational change

14. Utilizing messaging platforms consistently

15. Having measurements/metrics to benchmark strategies

16. Gauge employee engagement

17. Utilizing line-of-sight managers as communicators

18. Challenging the next generation of employees to contribute to organizational growth

19. An organization should be able to clearly and concisely articulate the purpose and value of change for its future success and for employees

20. Internal communicators should be seen as business people, with an expertise in communications

21. Strong internal communications will have a positive return for the total organization that need not be proven at every juncture

22. There are shared viewpoints up and down the chain of command

Common Practices in Communicating Internally

Internal communicators use various practices in their work that aim to help address challenges like complex organizational structures, digitizing the message, and retaining employees. The following displays several communications objectives and the common practices associated with delivering on those objectives:

Objective	Practices
Sending a well-received message that is internalized and absorbed	• Attention paid to tone: Convey respect and appreciation with words. • Focus on content: Ensuring that the content of the message is relevant to the recipient and that the message itself conveys what is important and why the topic matters. One participant shared that a prior practice had been to simply forward on press releases after they went to the media. Employees did not know how to interpret the release, what to make of the information, or if it even related to them. A new practice of explaining the topic and reason for the release, what it meant to employees, and what they could expect helped make messages feel more relevant across the board.
Stay on-message with the rest of the company/present a unified message	• Consensus building: Gaining agreement and buy-in for an approach or action throughout the company. • Alignment behind mission: Utilizing mission to ground actions. • Messaging architecture: Alignment behind an adopted messaging architecture to guide communications. • Executive visibility: Some shared that they endeavored to have leadership visible and delivering messages where possible. If it is spoken from leadership, it feels more applicable and more universal. There are challenges with this, of course, mainly being availability given intense schedules.
Targeting messages/managing flow of information	• Subject line conventions: Utilizing tags that signal prominence: Important information, breaking news, nice-to-know, of interest regularly can signal an employee as to what is essential to read, and what can wait. • Standard publications: Leveraging regularly scheduled newsletters, or email updates as a vehicle for relevant information helps legitimize their purpose, and gives an employee a reason to read.
Reaching hard-to-reach employees (including without email access)	• Multi-channel publications: Companies leverage closed-circuit TV and digital signage in warehouses or plants to convey messages that others might receive via email. • Multi-language: Headquarters often work with the regional offices to ensure proper translation. • Liaisons: Knowledgeable individuals who can deliver messages.
Being the first to inform employees of breaking news	• Streamlined approval process: Ability to quickly disseminate breaking news without obtaining multiple approvals. • Setting expectations: Conditioning employees to know that the company will endeavor to inform them of breaking news first.
Building engagement with company/brand	• Social media platforms/Intranets. • User-generated content.

Based on participant responses, findings revealed several topics as being key to internal communication. While these topics are addressed throughout this article and the report, they are presented here, as well, for a more concentrated examination:

Topic Area	Observations
Strategic Planning	• Policies and Procedures: Some companies place the idea of highly structured policies and procedures very high on their priority list. • Corporate strategies = Communications Strategies: Staying "on the same page" as the company at large is an effective approach for communications, keeping the company's goals and objectives in mind at all turns.
Digitization	• Intranet: Several companies utilize an Intranet system, and reviews are mixed. One participated noted the importance of striking a balance between using this to convey information the company wants to share and the information that team members need. • Digital signage: A valuable tool particularly for companies within which many employees are not necessarily at a desk or with a computer (especially delivery and manufacturing people), and some don't go home and immediately go online. One participant noted that digital signage is used to convey a range of messages to this audience: including celebrating success, sharing important information, and communicating safety-related updates (particularly as it may relate to manufacturing). • Internal/satellite TV stations: Used to deliver content to certain audiences—again, particularly those not working at a computer. • Live Webcasts: It's OK to be less "polished" in this age of "tell it like it is"—a straightforward and "as is" presentation of information is acceptable and actually embraced. • Social media: Addressed in several interviews, as reflected in comments included in comments on where improvements can occur.
Reflecting Brand Perspective In [Internal/Employee Comms/ Employee Engagement]	• Annual goals: One approach to maintaining engagement is making it part of the Internal Communication group's annual goals. One participant said, "We contribute to the business's success by making sure we increase the effectiveness and engagement of the [company] workforce in a way that's measurable so we kind of put it right out there."

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Balancing Local Regional And Global Communications And Communicating In Diverse Languages	• Customization: Customizing for country and regional levels is considered a best practice. • Translation: When appropriate, content is translated for offices that speak a language other than the language in which the content was created (usually English). However it was noted that there is a point at which translating everything into multiple languages can become impractical. • Video broadcasting: Closed-captioning content is an option for addressing an audience that doesn't all speak one language. Scripts are translated into all necessary languages before content airs. • Information age: One participant noted that information travels quickly, even on a global level. With that in mind, it's key to be ready to communicate both internally and externally with ALL audiences with a sense of immediacy whenever there is an issue or crisis to be addressed. • Alignment: Global corporations must leverage communications so that all levels and regions are disseminating messages that are in concert with one another.
Attracting, Nurturing And Retaining The Right Talent For Employee Engagement	• Retention overview: Senior executives strongly believe that talent retention is vital to any company's success. • Reasons to stay: There is recognition that over time, employees have become less likely to stay at one company for their entire career—there's more bouncing around within, and even across, industries. With that in mind, it becomes even more important for companies to make sure employees have a reason to stay. • Description from one participant: "There's a big focus on recruitment and continual development and always looking ahead on the horizon." • Engagement of employees: Critical, as employees who are engaged will want to stay. There is great value in keeping knowledge and expertise within the company where it was cultivated. • Feeling valued: Employees appreciate it when they feel like their company is looking out for them in their professional growth. This can be a big factor in ensuring retention. • Human resources: Recruitment and retention are often the responsibility of HR, but are still seen as priorities throughout the company.
Establishing Common Knowledge, Purpose Across Company	• Balance is key: As noted under *Digitization*, there is strength in striking the right balance between giving employees information the company wants to share and the information that team members need. • Sensitivity: Timing and purpose of messages going out to employees should always be taken into consideration. For example, if layoffs were happening on a particular day, it would be most appropriate to hold off on an announcement of a high-level promotion (or other positive internal news) on the same day.

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What Does Good Look Like?

A Quantitative Perspective on Best-in-Class Practices in Employee Communication

Following the first initiative's qualitative findings, the second part of the initiative, published in 2014, <u>What Does Good Look Like? A Quantitative Perspective on Best-in-Class Practices in Employee Communication</u> quantitatively surveyed a sampling of the population of companies' internal communication practitioners, which was designed to put the qualitative theories to test.

Key takeaways shows gap between knowledge and action

Key takeaways from the study showed most of the "Best-in-Class Factors" identified in the first study were widely recognized as important. However, few of these factors were widely implemented. Respondents were also hesitant to claim they contribute to the success of the organization, are as effective as they could be in evaluations, and even that they have goals that align with the total organization, meaning perceived efficacy in internal communications is limited.

Overall, results displayed a clear and wide gap between what internal communicators knew to be important to build efficacy, and what they were doing in their organization. Findings also showed that putting important tools, practices, behaviors, and ways of thinking into place builds efficacy.

Factors of Importance

Nearly all respondents identified 13 of the "22 Best-in-Class Factors" as important. Most of the 13 factors identified as widely important are seen as foundational to internal communications:

1. Keeping employees informed in a timely manner
2. Keeping employees informed of the context of current issues
3. Periodic assessments of employee perceptions
4. Keeping employees apprised of organizational change and development
5. Adopting an authentic voice for all internal communications
6. Utilizing messaging platforms consistently
7. Having oversight on all communications tasks and people
8. Communicating the impact of organizational change
9. Communications leaders participate in strategy sessions for the company
10. Gauge employee engagement
11. Having an internal communications team leader report to overall corporate or communications leader
12. Have "listening posts"
13. Measurement to benchmark strategies

Additionally, there were five of the 22 factors that were not as widely seen as important. Only about half of respondents were utilizing line-of-sight managers and only about two-in-10 were challenging the rising generation of employees. Based on the respondents reported use (or lack thereof) of these factors, it suggests that communicators did not see the value of these factors to contribute to internal communications effectiveness for their organization, or did not understand how the practices can be implemented. These five factors are seen to be more strategic and present a new way of thinking in internal communication including:

1. Utilizing line-of-sight managers as communicators
2. Having a roadmap of organizational changes and developments
3. Challenging the next generation of employees to contribute to organizational growth
4. Having an internal stakeholder map
5. Having internal social media sites/platform

All in all, very few of the 22 Best-in-Class Practices were in place at more than 75 percent of respondents' companies, regardless of whether the factors were more widely seen as important.

Possession

(% each statement is met)

Statement	Currently Have Element	Considering Acquiring	Don't Have/ Not Acquiring
Keeping employees informed in a timely fashion	76%	14%	7%
Communications leader reports to the leader of corporate communications	72%	8%	15%
Inform employees about current issues	71%	16%	10%
Employee perceptions assessment	68%	17%	12%
Communicating impact of organizational change on employees	68%	16%	9%
Keep employees apprised of organizational change and development	65%	18%	15%
Adopting an authentic voice for the organization	62%	21%	14%
Utilizing messaging platforms consistently	56%	28%	12%
Internal leader oversees all key internal communications activities	52%	19%	25%
Utilizing 'line-of-sight' managers as communicators	49%	29%	15%
Internal social media sites/platforms	40%	37%	20%
Employing analytics to regularly gauge employee engagement	40%	40%	18%
Communications leaders participate in organizational strategy sessions	40%	21%	35%
Internal stakeholder map	35%	29%	30%
Organization can articulate the value of change for its future	32%	52%	13%
Using measurements and metrics to benchmark strategies	31%	44%	19%
Utilize 'listening posts'	29%	42%	24%
Organizational roadmap of changes	27%	33%	33%
Strong internal communications provide positive return	26%	49%	21%
Next generation of employees contribute to organizational growth	23%	32%	35%
Internal communicators need to be seen as business people	19%	42%	29%
Shared viewpoints up and down chain of command	16%	48%	29%

Scale

Legend
- Color coded yellow : Tools & Resources
- Color coded blue : Organizational Structure
- Color coded green : Practices
- Color coded orange : Mindset

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Best-in-class mindset

While nearly all respondents agreed on the importance of clearly articulating the purpose and value of change for future success and for employees, only one-third of respondents said their organization clearly and concisely articulated its purpose and value. This gap, between what internal communicators believed and what they practiced, is also visible in regard to the need for internal communicators to be seen as business people within the organization, as less than 25 percent of respondents claimed this occurred within their organization. And, fewer than one-in-four said there were shared viewpoints about how to communicate across the organization.

Mindset

Organization can articulate the value of change for its future — 32% / 52% / 13%
Strong internal communications provide positive return — 26% / 49% / 21%
Internal communicators need to be seen as business people — 19% / 42% / 29%
Shared viewpoints up and down chain of command — 16% / 48% / 29%
Scale: Currently Have Element | Considering Acquiring | Don't Have/ Not Acquiring
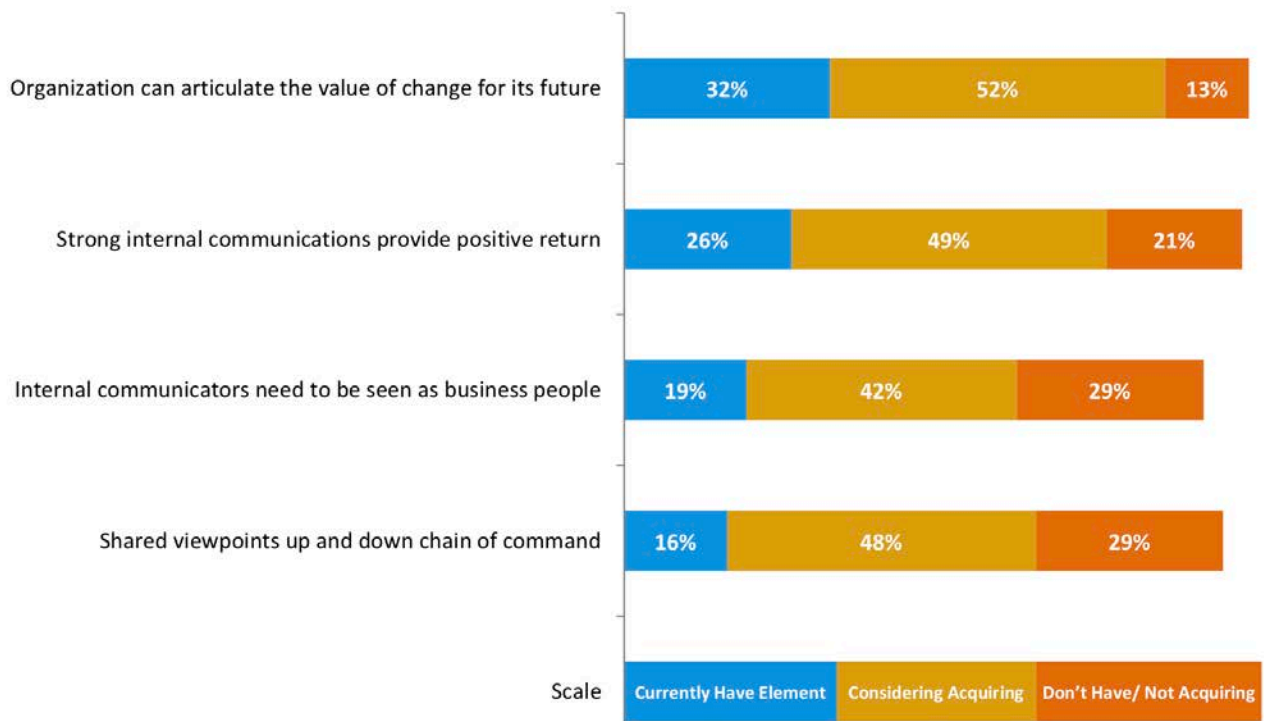
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Best-in-class tools and resources

Findings revealed that most of the useful tools and resources identified by our best-in-class communicators were rarely used, with the exception of gauging employee perceptions. There is very limited use of internal social media sites (only four-in-10 respondents reported use), stakeholder mapping or listening posts (only one-third of respondents), and use of a roadmap outlining organizational changes (less than one-third of respondents). Additionally, most respondents reported they were not looking to incorporate these tools at this time.

Tools and Resources
(% finding each belief to be of high importance (top two box))

87%	76%	69%	64%	44%
A periodic assessment of employee perceptions.	A way to listen and learn from employees across the total organization, sometimes called 'listening posts.'	A roadmap outlining organizational changes and developments.	A listing of all internal stakeholders within the total organization, sometimes called an internal stakeholder map.	Internal social media sites/platforms.
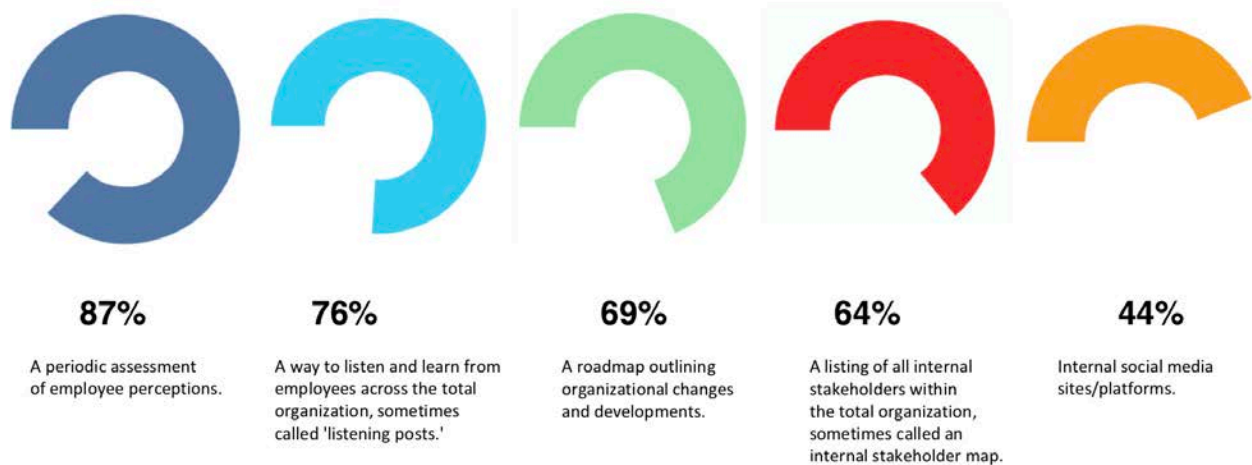
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Best-in-class organizational structure

Internal communications placement within an organization will determine what sort of a "voice" internal communicators have with key corporate communications officers and other functions within the company. The three important structural factors seen as important or very important by the majority (more than eight-in-10) of respondents are:

1. Team leaders participate in total organization strategy sessions
2. Having an internal communications team leader report to the leader of corporate communications
3. Internal communications has oversight of all key internal communications in the total organization

While the majority of respondents validated the belief stated by best-in-class communicators that the placement of internal communications within an organization's structure is critical, outside of internal communication reporting to the leader of corporate communications, these structural factors were not reported to be common practice. Only four-in-10 participated in total organization strategy sessions and only half have oversight of all key internal communications in the organization.

Organizational Structure

(% finding each belief to be of high importance (top two box)

86%

Internal communications team leaders participate in total organization strategy sessions, including strategic corporate decisions for the organization.

84%

Having an internal communications team leader report to the leader of corporate communications [or similar role] for the company overall.

82%

Your internal communications team leader having oversight of all key internal communications and internal communication employees in the total organization.

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Organizational Structure

	Currently Have Element	Considering Acquiring	Don't Have/ Not Acquiring
Communications leader reports to the leader of corporate communications	72%	8%	15%
Internal leader oversees all key internal communications activities	52%	19%	25%
Communications leaders participate in organizational strategy sessions	40%	21%	35%

Scale: **Currently Have Element** | **Considering Acquiring** | **Don't Have/ Not Acquiring**
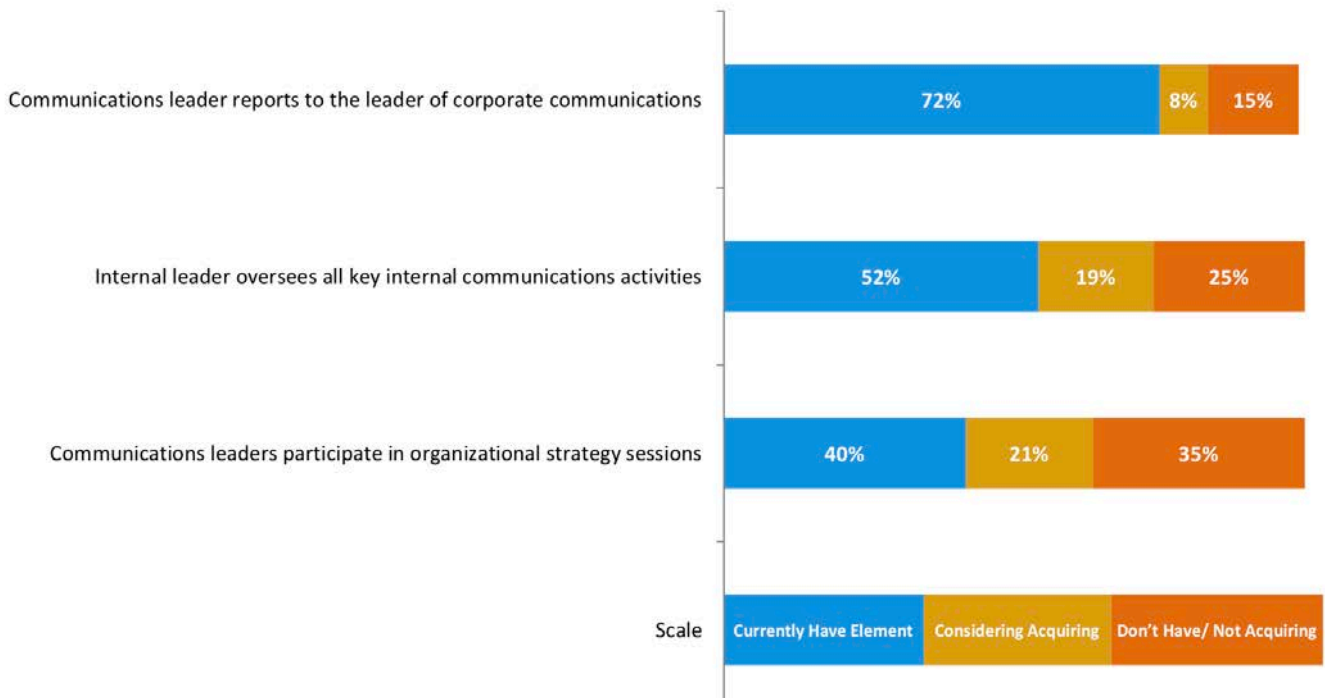
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Best-in-class practices: Gap between belief and action

In our qualitative study, best-in-class communicators reported that effective internal communication is dependent upon implementing both basic and more forward-thinking practices. However, results from our quantitative study found that more forward-thinking practices like utilizing line-of-sight managers as communicators and challenging younger employees to contribute to organizational growth, were not yet widely viewed as important and few were putting these into practice.

Additionally, while there was widespread agreement on the importance of basic internal communication practices from respondents in our quantitative research, like keeping employees informed in a timely fashion, providing context around the issue at hand, having an authentic voice, and utilizing measurement were not universally utilized.

Practices
(% finding each belief to be of high importance (top two box))

93% Keeping employees across the total organization informed in a timely fashion

88% Keeping employees informed about the context of the issue at hand

87% Letting employees know what to expect when it comes to organizational change and developments

87% Adopting a voice that is authentic to the total organization for all internal communications

83% Communicating impact of organizational change and developments on departments and employees

81% Utilizing messaging platforms consistently

74% Using measurement and key metrics to benchmark strategies and programs, to prove that they are enabling the workforce to achieve key objectives

72% Employing analytics to regularly gauge employee engagement

71% Utilizing 'line-of-sight' managers as communicators

62% Challenging the next generation of employees to contribute to organizational growth

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Only about three-quarters of respondents felt their company kept employees informed in a timely fashion, and even fewer felt their company communicated in an authentic voice. Only three-in-10 reported measuring employee engagement or program outcomes.

Practice

Practice	Currently Have Element	Considering Acquiring	Don't Have/ Not Acquiring
Keeping employees informed in a timely fashion	76%	14%	7%
Inform employees about current issues	71%	16%	10%
Communicating impact of organizational change on employees	68%	16%	9%
Keep employees apprised of organizational change and development	65%	18%	15%
Adopting an authentic voice for the organization	62%	21%	14%
Utilizing messaging platforms consistently	56%	28%	12%
Utilizing 'line-of-sight' managers as communicators	49%	29%	15%
Employing analytics to regularly gauge employee engagement	40%	40%	18%
Using measurements and metrics to benchmark strategies	31%	44%	19%
Next generation of employees contribute to organizational growth	23%	32%	35%

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Implications for communicators and how to build effective employee communications within your organization

Based on the findings from both initiatives, the gap between internal communicators' mindset and behaviors are clear. So where do we go from here?

The following list identifies how you can build effective employee communications within your organization, turning the knowledge of best practices into action:

- Communications leaders should participate in organizational strategy sessions, and be seen as business people.
- Articulate the value of change for the future, roadmapping, and benchmarking strategies for change.
- Gauge employee engagement levels.
- Utilize listening posts.
- Accept the premise that strong internal communications provides a positive return, without having to prove it at every juncture.

Additionally, internal communicators should begin to utilize best-in-class communications tools and resources, which many respondents were not employing, including:

- social media platforms
- internal stakeholder maps
- engaging employees in organizational growth
- shared viewpoints up and down the chain of command

This research points to the fact that we must do more as a profession, and we must continue to share what we know with each other. While the foundational components of employee communications will remain the same, the best-in-class practices of employee communications will be ever-evolving as new generations join the workforce, technology changes, and new research is conducted. The industry must continue to collaborate and adapt as these changes occur, and begin to better implement the current best-in-class practices in our organizations.

THE LICENCE TO OPERATE

A GAME CHANGER FOR IC PRACTITIONERS

Actors from different horizons make the case for a solid understanding of the business as a non-negotiable prerequisite to truly be recognized as trusted advisors by senior management and drive business value.

A number of practical research-based resources are also presented to support practitioners in their daily challenges, help them explain the value of their work, and measure its impact more effectively. Combining these resources and business acumen, practitioners are better equipped to describe their contribution to organizations instead of simply saying what they do. This can further help to create a common understanding between communication professionals and senior management about internal communication and how it contributes to corporate success.

Why Business Knowledge Matters

Business acumen as an essential capability has been assessed by most communication surveys conducted over the last few years. Findings show that it is a critical capability for internal and external communication professionals. It is cited as the first of 10 best-in-class practices compiled from interviews with 10 global leaders in employee communication: "Be a business leader first, a communicator second,"[1] and it has been recognized as the second most important core competency to drive corporate value.[2] Business acumen is also included in the recent Global Capability Framework developed by the Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communication Management as a sub-capability to offer organizational leadership. "You demonstrate business and financial acumen through sound knowledge of the organisation's business and core processes."[3]

CEOs expect basic communication skills, but they want practitioners to have "a firm understanding of the business, how it works, how it's put together, and what its issues are."[4] This requirement applies not only to the most senior roles but to entry-level communication professionals who "need to improve their business skills and apply business acumen, including financial literacy, to their everyday job responsibilities."[5] Recruiters place business acumen among the top 10 most important skills/competencies for internal communication professionals,[6,7] and business acumen is the number one skill/capacity that candidates are lacking.[7] For 62 percent of recruiters, business acumen is the most valued specialist knowledge.[8] ·Another research study[9] indicates that 74 percent of IC professionals believe that to be successful, IC professionals should be seen as business people with expertise in communication. Among the respondents, only 14 percent reported having this competency in place while 42 percent were considering adding it versus 29 percent who didn't have or were not considering applying these criteria.

Two CEOs shared why they believe business acumen is an important capability for IC professionals working at their company. Jes Pedersen, President/

greater the business acumen, general to business or specific to the company, the better able communication professionals would intuitively know when and what to communicate," said Jes Pedersen. "This, however, can be gained over time as they see patterns or events repeat and get to know the desired effect of communicating it or not. Specific company experience certainly trumps general knowledge."

Amit Bajaj, commented, "Business acumen, co-existing with communications expertise, is the foundation of good internal communications. IC pros should know how the business works, its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. They should have an overall sense of everything that happens inside and envisage the future. I feel that good internal communications will bind people to the ideas, concepts, and values endorsed by the business. Another important characteristic that IC pros need is empathy or a deep understanding of the feelings of people. As a function dealing with a range of content, media, platforms, and audiences, it is critical for IC pros to be able to curate the message to enable employees to align and work together cohesively."

"Entry-level communication professionals need to improve their business skills and apply business acumen, including financial literacy, to their everyday job responsibilities."

Views from in-house practitioners

In-house practitioners who participated in this report all agree business acumen is an important capability for their communication team, including IC professionals. Why? It is literally the licence to operate as a strategic adviser, get the ear of business leaders, and make a real difference. The level of business knowledge may vary among practitioners in their communication team, but members at all levels must be able to help support the communication leader. We present some of the key perspectives that they shared, followed by verbatim comments from all contributors for more in-depth insights.

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References p. 159.

Key Perspectives | Why In-House Practitioners Believe Business Knowledge Matters

- For some, business acumen is considered a baseline element for being a successful communication professional as the ultimate goal is to secure business and win in the marketplace. Communication techniques and tactics alone bring limited value to the business. If practitioners fail to understand their entire business and how the pieces work together, leadership will call upon them only when they need something crafted, usually reactively.

- Business knowledge is the quickest way to show your credibility. Expertise gets you to the table, but credibility keeps you there.

- Communication is a discipline, not an industry. Just like finance or law, communication is a business function. The role of practitioners is to help the business do what it needs to do, which is typically to achieve reliable and sustainable net income. Practitioners who don't have a deep understanding of how their business does this are out of the game. If they work in oil and gas, they need to understand the hydrocarbon value chain. If they work in investment banking, they need to understand the fundamentals of finance.

- For IC to be viewed as a vital leadership process and IC professionals as business partners who are called upon to help address business issues, practitioners need to have a thorough understanding not only of their business but of the industry in general and, even higher-level, the principles of business.

- The maturity of the IC function now requires moving beyond the transaction state towards much more transformative work. IC professionals have to invest their time and energy into achieving a deeper understanding of the business and what the people inside the business know and understand about the strategy and direction of the business. Helping the business to understand how employees will react to change and transformation is one of the most important roles that communication professionals can play.

- Understanding the challenges that the company is facing is imperative as the pressure on leaders is intense, society's expectations are rising and employees want honesty and transparency.

- It's up there with strategic and critical thinking skills and insight into emerging trends and issues and how they affect the organization on a strategic level. Without business acumen and this insight, our counsel can never strategically be linked to advancing organization goals and objectives. It will always be seen as a 'nice to have' or an afterthought.

- By speaking the language of leaders, practitioners can add real value, even to the point of helping to shape some of the policy and decisions.

- The current market is so dynamic that leaders are looking not only for experts in their field, but also for business partners and problem solvers, proactive activists who will spot upcoming trends and opportunities, and help to develop the whole business, whether it's increasing profits or excelling in customer service.

- Tactically, it sets the organizational tone and helps you create a compelling and consistent narrative to weave through the many messages and stories you tell every day. Practically, it translates as elegant simplicity – how we transform complexity into clear communication that employees can easily understand.

- It prevents practitioners from constantly focusing on the challenge immediately before them and be able to connect what they are doing and saying with the larger context of their organization.

- By having a clear understanding of how business works, practitioners can get a better comprehension of the challenges and opportunities the business faces, why the company might make certain decisions, anticipate the impact and how specific news will affect future corporate goals. They can foresee the communication priorities and the impact of their work on employees and company results. They can have informed conversations with stakeholders, ask better questions, and make better decisions.

- Practitioners must be able to speak about ROI an accounting formula with only one meaning: the benefit of an investment divided by the cost of the investment presented as a percentage. Those who speak about the ROI of IC as "more engaged employees" or "better morale" are laughed at when they leave the room.

So how to get there? Some advice from contributors.

- Have strong connections in the finance function and find safe havens to ask questions as you build your financial acumen.
- A bachelor's degree in Communication and an MBA, or a bachelor's in business and a master's in communication.
- Get some experience in your business outside of communications.
- Learn to read and manage a P&L (profit and loss) statement.
- Get a job in operations.
- Get close to the revenue generators.
- Read industry trade publications.
- Take management courses related to your industry, for instance, via LinkedIn Learning and others.

Do you consider business acumen as an important capability for your team, including IC professionals, and why?

Verbatim comments from in-house practitioners who contributed to this report

"Business acumen is a baseline element for being a successful communicator on my team. The ultimate goal is to secure business and win in the marketplace. If all we can discuss is communication techniques and tactics, our value to the business is limited. By being able to speak the language of our business leaders, we can add true value, even to the point of helping to shape some of the policy and decisions. In talking to many of my counterparts at other organizations, most communicators are no longer talking about "getting to the table" as they were several years ago. But the hard reality is that we may not be able to *stay* at the table without business acumen skills. Said another way, expertise gets you to the table, but credibility keeps you there. Business knowledge is the quickest way to show that credibility. That's something that's a must for my team, and having business acumen allows us to provide real and wanted counsel to leaders."

Rick Phillips recently retired as Chief Communications Officer at Nationwide, USA

"Business acumen is an absolute must for any communicator. The depth and need might differ depending on the role but an overall understanding of the sector and audience is a must. How else does one design the communications plan? Rarely do we realize that the impact of our work is huge. Be it a merger and acquisition, integration or change, culture is paramount. Ultimately the culture growth of the company results in creating shareholder value and corporate accountability. All of this is only possible if the communications teams understand their role and impact. "

Rachana Panda, Chief Communications Officer, GE South Asia, India

"Without an appropriate understanding of business, business strategy and the wider impact of business on economies and society, an internal communications team is only able to transact. Business acumen isn't a substitute for knowledge. No sales director will welcome your constructive criticism of their latest campaign. However, an authentic understanding of the business strategy and dynamics that underpin that sales campaign can bring employee communication insights to the table. The maturity of internal communications functions now requires us all to move beyond the transaction state and towards much more transformative work. And if we are to support transformation, we have to invest our time and energy into achieving a deeper understanding of the business and what the people inside the business know and understand about the strategy and direction of the business. Helping the business to understand how employees will react to change and transformation is one of the most important roles that we can play. "

Paul Osgood, Global Head of Internal Communications, Clifford Chance LLP, UK

"Everyone in communications needs three things. In no particular order they are:

- comprehension of the function of communications within a company and their role within the team
- good understanding of the business their company is in
- how business works

This last point means knowing why the company might make certain decisions and anticipating how specific news will affect future corporate goals. Communicators who don't have a rudimentary understanding of how business works will constantly focus on the challenge immediately before them and be unable to connect what they are doing and saying with the larger context of their organization. The good news is that this skillset can be learned and by being alert and engaged. IC professionals can ramp up their knowledge and understanding of their business and the sector it operates in."

Leslie Quinton, Vice-President, Global Corporate
Communications and Events,
BRP (Bombardier Recreational Products), Canada

"Business acumen is critical. Why would a business leader think we are credible if we can't understand the challenges they're facing and provide smart advice on how we can help them achieve good outcomes? The business environment today is very dynamic and challenging, which means that companies need to be one step ahead and agile to be successful. The pressure on leaders is intense, society's expectations are rising and employees want honesty and transparency.

Against this reality, internal communicators must have strong business acumen and the ability to understand what's helping or hindering business performance, together with great external awareness, strong strategic thinking and an ability to connect the dots. If we're not impacting the business results and able to prove it, we don't really deserve a seat at the table and risk becoming a 'nice to have' rather than a true strategic partner."

Joss Mathieson, former Vice President, Global & Corporate
Internal Engagement, GSK,UK

"Having a solid business acumen means that you understand how the business operates. Until such time as internal communication professionals confidently demonstrate that they have a strong grasp on at least the big picture of the organisation's objectives and can speak the language of the business, they will never truly be seen as strategic advisors.

As the world of internal communications evolves, demonstrating this kind of business acumen has never been more important. It's up there with strategic and critical thinking skills and insight into emerging trends and issues and how they affect the organization on a strategic level. Without business acumen and this insight, our counsel can never strategically be linked to advancing organization goals and objectives. It will always be seen as a 'nice to have' or an afterthought.

If you can demonstrate that you understand not only the objectives of the organisation but how XYZ executive's objectives are aligned to master organisational goals and how the various facets of the internal communications portfolio can support those objectives, you're on a winning ticket. That's assuming that you meet your internal communication objectives and your outcomes are exemplary!

This topic is top-of-mind for internal and external communication professionals at SAP. The learning and HR teams have come a long way in recent years to provide training that helps communication professionals confidently take their seat at the boardroom table."

Antonia Ashton, Vice-President Communications,SAP
EMEA South, South Africa

"All communications people working with business leaders should understand the business strategy, target setting and objectives to add value in reaching those targets. A common language is important in creating better understanding both ways. Continuous dialogue helps both sides to understand each other's objectives and align them together. It is an increasingly important capability for business leaders to be effective communicators so there is the shared interest here and not only the other way around."

Terhi Kivinen, Senior Director Internal Communications,
Royal DSM, Netherlands

"Without question. If internal communication is to be viewed as a vital leadership process and internal communicators as business partners who are called upon to help address business issues, we need to have a thorough understanding not only of Webcor's business but of the construction industry in general and, even higher-level, the principles of business. Can members of the IC team read a P&L? We need to understand and speak the language that leadership speaks.

Since I am new to the industry, I am taking steps to get up to speed as quickly as I can, reading industry trade publications and taking courses, mainly on LinkedIn Learning at this point, that includes many courses on construction management. It has long been my belief that communicators who speak with executives about the ROI of internal communication as "more engaged employees" or "better morale" are laughed at when they leave the room. ROI is an accounting formula with only one meaning: the benefit of an investment divided by the cost of the investment presented as a percentage. If we cannot grasp a basic accounting formula and position other benefits of communication as something other than ROI, leadership simply will not take us seriously.

Similarly, we need to understand our entire business and how the pieces work together. If we do not, leadership will call upon us only when they need something crafted, usually reactively. Understanding the business, we can serve the needs of leadership, proactively identify and recommend communication solutions, and serve as a trusted counsel to the members of a company's executive team."

Shel Holtz, Director,InternalCommunications, Webcor, USA

"It's obviously important to have an understanding of how the business works, and this should be covered during the induction process for new joiners. Clearly, the more an IC pro knows the better, but you can't be expected to know everything and there are shortcuts. Much is to be able to talk their language. Few real people like using phrases like 'agile, robust or hackathon', but if this turns your stakeholders on use it in their presence to engage with them.

IC pros should be encouraged to ask probing questions to understand what is trying to be achieved on a project. There is no shame in saying 'help me understand'. If anything, it can get people onside as you're showing an interest in their work, which is usually flattering. A great crime is to pretend to understand when you don't. You will get found out and not only will this affect your personal credibility, it could have disastrous consequences for the project."

Nicholas Wardle, Former Global Internal Communications Lead, at Alshaya Retail, based in Kuwait, now Head of Employee Engagement & Communications at One Housing, UK

"If we can't talk about the business in ways that leaders do, we're automatically pushing a boulder uphill. Every internal communicator should be fluent in conversing about his/her business with a CFO, CHRO or any other corporate officer. It demands that we understand the metrics used to define financial success or the failure of business performance. I often tell team members that if they can't explain any text or table in a quarterly earnings release, they need to get educated – and fast. It's ironic that the same communicators who complain they can't influence leaders often are the same professionals who don't understand what foreign exchange rates are or margin expansion/contraction is. If we want to be more influential, we have to invest in business acumen as a core communications competency.

Financial literacy isn't optional, and financial communications isn't an external communication thing, contrary to what some internal communication professionals often say. To communicate quarterly and yearly performance internally, employee communications practitioners have to understand the business. Townhall content on business performance and quarterly emails shouldn't be written by external communications folks. As internal communications pros, we should help take that story and frame it appropriately for internal stakeholders. To do that, we've got to understand the business. We need to have strong connections in the Finance function and find safe havens to ask questions as we build our financial acumen."

Mark Dollins, former Head of Executive & Global Employee Communications, at DuPont, and currently President of North Star Communications Consulting, LLC, USA

"Business acumen is a critical capability for internal communications professionals. The difference between a good communicator and a great one is the ability to understand the business environment and apply the right strategies to drive the right outcomes. In a world where things change so rapidly, understanding the implications and being able to build communications to support change is critical. It's something our leaders value and it's something they expect.

Communications is often a horizontal function in a vertical world giving us the opportunity to connect the business, share insights and drive clarity. Business acumen is essential for that."

Tom Murphy, Director of Communications at Microsoft Digital, Services, and Success (DSS), USA

"These days it is a critical competence! The current market is so dynamic that leaders are looking not only for experts in their field, but also for business partners and problem solvers, pro-active activists who will spot upcoming trends and opportunities, and help to develop the whole business, whether it's increasing profits or excelling in customer service.

Every communicator must be able to have meaningful conversations with their leaders, linking communications outputs, outtakes and outcomes to a business result. A good tool for this is provided by AMEC. By not doing so, communications professionals run two risks. First, they may end up working in their own "echo chambers", doing a good job in their function but failing to prove their value and justify the cost, especially when the going gets tough. Second, even if the conversations do happen, it is critical that they reach the strategic level, and steer away from "vanity measures" such as "influencer X is good or bad since his post got Y likes and Z comments". Again, we have to talk strategic, outcomes not outputs."

Vija Valentukonyte-Urbanaviciene, Acting Head of Comms, CEO, Telia Lithuania

"It is impossible for internal communicators to effectively support the organization's strategy if they don't have a full fiscal understanding, and in our case, an operational understanding of the business. Our internal communicators have an in-depth understanding of our organization's master plan and update our internal scorecard that identifies how well we are doing with our corporate goals each month. To advise business units on the best approach for a communications campaign, they need a thorough understanding of how all business units function, how it will impact all of our stakeholders, and what the outcome will be.

We use design-based thinking to ensure that our projects, campaigns, and initiatives hit the mark with our stakeholders. We need to be able to quickly assess the current landscape and identify risks. Because our environment is so operational, our internal communicators must also have an in-depth understanding of everything from crisis communications to day-to-day operations. To know their stakeholders and understand how key messages will land effectively, they must understand how each segment is unique."

Susan Blundell, Director, Internal Communications and Communication Services, Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA) Canada

"Whether organizations are large, medium or small, across all sectors there is no place for those who do not understand the business in which they work and can not demonstrate how they add value based on their expertise. This applies to internal communications as much as any other area of the company, although in our case the challenge is greater for two reasons. First, in most organizations, we are still on the path to being recognized and accepted as a business partner. The speed with which we pass from simple transmitters of messages to protagonists at the main table does not depend only on us but also on the importance that leaders of the company give to our role. Secondly, as part of our role, we have the responsibility to transmit to the rest of the organization the results and challenges facing the organization and motivate them, so that each one is able to make the best possible contribution to the achievement of the company objectives. That is why it is even more important for our teams to understand the business and be able to speak the language, design strategic communication plans aligned to the business objectives and demonstrate that good communication gets results. This requires a business mentality and training that should start in the universities and continue within the same organizations. Access to relevant and updated information and close contact with the first line of the company's leadership are essential elements for the internal communication area to be effective in its role."

Selva Carbajal, Internal Communication Manager, General Motors, Argentina

"As employees and communicators, we're all working for the same organisation. It's important for the Communications team to understand what we do as a bank and how trends in the external world will impact the way we do business today and in the future. If we don't truly understand the organisation and what it is trying to achieve, we won't be able to create effective communications. You'll find our team members spending a lot of time with the business, sitting on executive committees, embedded in strategic project forums and advising on strategy delivery.

I also firmly believe that you have to feel that the values of the organisation match your own and understand and support the purpose of the business to be truly effective at communicating it."

Patrick Humphris, Head of Communications, Asia Pacific, The Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, Hong Kong
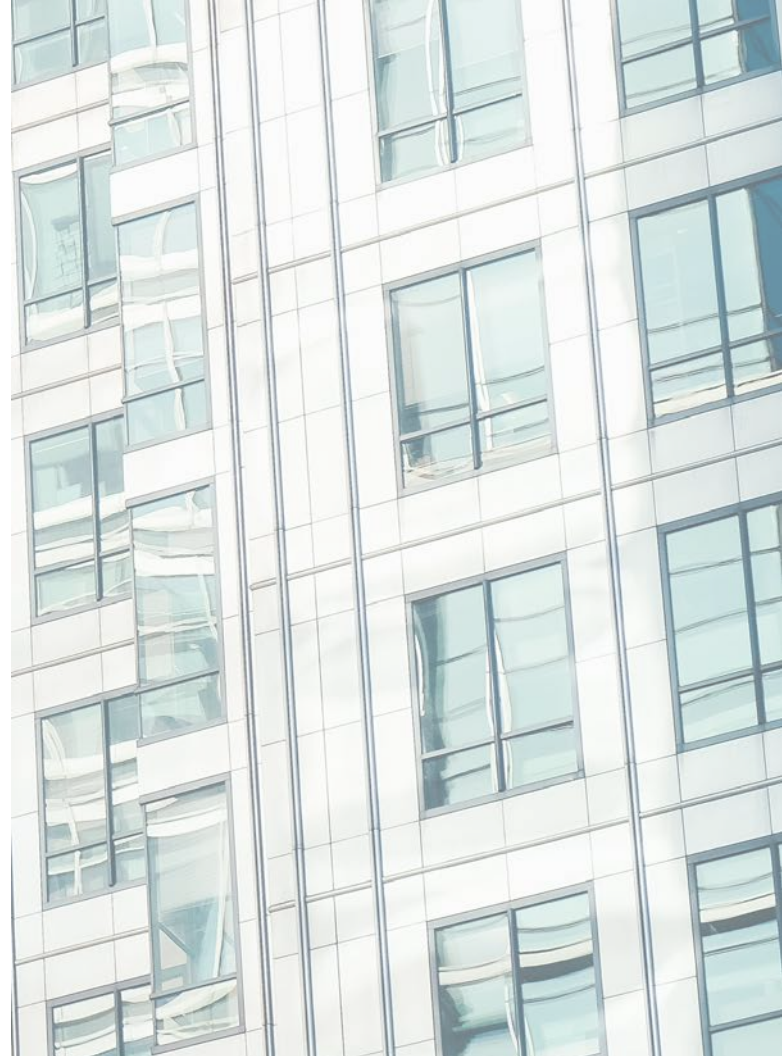
"An IC professional must develop a market perspective, financial acumen, and business systems thinking. Without a clear understanding of how business works, we cannot foresee the communication priorities and the impact of our work on employees and company results.

Culture, engagement, employee experience, and customer experience projects that aren't grounded in the business strategy, goals and objectives and financial metrics, will have a short life.

IC teams must know the organization and their position, understand how their work impacts the overall business system, and use metrics to monitor their performance."

Zeynep Arayıcı Korzay, Senior Manager, Global Internal Communications, Yıldız Holding, Turkey

"There is a slate of 'license to operate' competencies or capabilities that every communications professional must have. These include the basics like writing, editing, channel management, stakeholder management, speaking skills, and so forth. These are the bread and butter of our profession. They get us to the tactician level where most of us start. A communications professional who is going to make it needs to be good in all of these and fantastic in at least one.

To make a significant positive impact in business communications, project management and business acumen are critical skills. If you don't know the ins and outs of your industry, you are sunk. Let me be clear, communication is a discipline, not an industry. Just like finance or law, we are a business function. We exist to help the business do what it needs to do, which is typically to achieve reliable and sustainable net income. If you don't have a deep understanding of how your business does this, then you are out of the game. If you work in oil and gas, you need to understand the hydrocarbon value chain. If you work in investment banking, you need to understand the fundamentals of finance.

So how do you get there? A bachelor's degree in Communications and an MBA is a great start, or a bachelor's in business and a master's in communications. Get some experience in your business outside of communications. Learn to read and manage a P&L or get a job in operations. Get close to the revenue generators. If all you bring to the table is newsletters, social media, and a cool website, then you won't be at the table for long. Businesses need us to find solutions to problems that are holding the company back. Sometimes the solutions are communications related and sometimes they aren't. When they are, fantastic, we are there and ready. When they aren't, our critical thinking skills, business acumen, and ability to get things done are still needed."

Gary G. Hernandez, Head of HR Communications, at a company in the Middle East

"Engaged employees acquire business acumen when they are curious about the whole organization, not just their little corner of it."

Lina Jakucioniene is Head of Corporate Communication, ERGO in the Baltic States, Lithuania

"Internal communication is a function which closely mirrors the business, charting the direction taken by the organization, noting its achievements and mapping the challenges ahead. An ideal IC pro will need to know the intricacies of business, the nuances of work culture, core values, and its vision for the future. It's a hard task to know all the details and then break down the information blocks into bits while categorizing them for relevance and disseminating them in suitable formats and media to varying audiences.

For example, in the case of our primary published channel 'Connexions', a quarterly magazine distributed to around 50,000 employees, we ensure that the stories featured highlight our business messages and priorities. At the same time, we are careful to include information that is relevant or useful to employees. It's a hard balancing act to be business-centric and people-oriented at the same time, thus demonstrating the complexity of internal communications.

Invariably, the ideal IC pro brings together impeccable business acumen, outstanding creativity, superb relationship management/stakeholder relations, top of the line language skills, total mastery of tools and technologies along with the ability to adapt to the changing trends in business communications. While it is difficult to find an ideal communicator in every sense, all of us have many of these skills and qualities in varying capacities."

Sobha Varghese, Head, Internal Communications, Continental Europe, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Belgium

"The challenges faced in business, organisational transformation and technological developments require our company and people to be capable of successful change. For these reasons, internal communication is becoming more and more crucial as a means to inform, motivate and connect people. Business acumen is one of the most relevant capabilities since the business transformation and the increasing competition drive the company goals. Deployment begins and internal communication can guide and support the sense-making process by building a shared storytelling platform on which to liaise and discuss strategy and change."

Paola Foglia, Head of Internal Communication, TIM Group, Italy

"Both yes and no. Of course, the communications team of a global industrial goods company must inevitably develop a solid sense of the business. We need to have a certain expertise in our products and solutions, a sense of our customers' interests, and empathy for the needs of colleagues at the operational end of the business. After all, our task is to advise our colleagues and strengthen their ability to achieve their goals through the power of communication.

On the other hand, one must never underestimate the distance between any given employee and the various specialist areas of the business. A real strength of a good communicator is the ability to adopt an unbiased external view. This makes it easier to work out the core messages together with the specialists and identify communication traps to avoid when addressing the target group that an expert simply might not see.

This applies both internally and externally. As far as employee communication is concerned, the vast majority of our employees are not familiar with all of the many specialist topics or areas where other employees are working. So we must create and deploy contemporary narrative formats that explain current developments in the company in a nutshell."
Luis Ramos, Head of Communications, thyssenkrupp Elevator, Germany

"Alliance communications deals with very high-level corporate concepts that require a good deal of understanding of our companies and of the context in which they operate. It's necessary to understand the basic principles of vehicle manufacturing, engineering, and marketing, as well as the basic business indicators and the key concepts of technologies.

We operate in a shifting environment within very complex companies. Communications staff need to create a compelling synthesis of complex situations. Consequently, key qualities in our environment include not only business acumen, but also the capacity to formulate complex ideas and deliver content in a creative way."
Jean-François Berthet, Alliance Internal Communications Manager, Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi, Japan

"I believe it's essential. You need to be able to bring value and be involved in the business from the start, not just called in when it's time to communicate. When we consider a change, we first look at it from the business perspective, then the organizational perspective and finally, fine-tune the best way to communicate given all the parameters including the business need, sense of urgency, employee state-of-mind and ability to make the mindset change needed to truly activate the change.

I think we provide a critical link between the business needs and the people, so as professionals we need to understand both. Once a business decision is made, it impacts habits and ways of working, and it is essential that people are given the opportunity to be part of that process. When you do this well, you help create the focused energy and momentum needed to drive the business forward successfully."
Tali Dulin, Head of Corporate Internal Communications, Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd., Israel

"Internal communications is one of those great roles that gives you a view across the business. It also acts as an intersection for employees with the company so naturally, business acumen is an important capability for internal communications professionals.

By cultivating a deep understanding of the business goals, context, and purpose, you develop a framework to connect employees meaningfully to the organisation, each other, and the stories and beliefs that shape the culture of your organisation.

The more you understand, the better you can strategically advise and collaborate with the business. Tactically, it sets the organisational tone and helps you create a compelling and consistent narrative to weave through the many messages and stories you tell every day. Practically, it translates as elegant simplicity – how we transform complexity into clear communications that employees can easily understand."

<div align="right">Kerrie McVicker, Internal Communications and Employee Insights Manager, Nestlé Oceania, Australia</div>

"With good business acumen, we can be more than a valuable advisor to our leaders. We can be a strategic partner in identifying and capturing opportunities that strengthen our company's reputation internally and externally. Through integrated internal and external communications programs, we are positioning Henkel as an innovation leader in Indonesia and establishing it as a leader in sustainability in Singapore."

<div align="right">Maggie Tan, Head of Corporate Communications, Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Henkel Singapore</div>

"I have worked with plenty of talented communicators who have a fantastic grasp of language, digitalisation, brand, channels and communication flow but lack business acumen and even day-to-day professional courtesy. While the work they produce is of the highest standard, they seem to either miss or just not value basic emotional intelligence and often cause more issues then they solve from careless emailing or reckless engagement with colleagues and external stakeholders."

<div align="right">Guy Britt, Global Head of Internal Communication, IKEA Group, Sweden</div>

"Business acumen is very important and that is a true virtue of a good communicator to be able to learn the business quickly. It does not mean that communication professional has to know everything or have extensive knowledge on business operations, but they need to understand the business well enough to be able to ask the right questions and be a partner to business functions. We need to speak the same language as the business and we need to be able to know what is and what is not important. Therefore business acumen is a must and communications professional should never underestimate it. It helps you achieve the goals of communications which for me are: building community and engagement around the brand internally and externally, advocacy and reputation."

<div align="right">Iwona Burzyńska, Director of Communications and External Relations, Lafarge Poland</div>

"Business acumen is an extremely important capability for my team, both IC and external communications professionals. IC professionals must be able to see the big picture of the organization, analyze risks and opportunities for communication, and find the best approach to handling information as any mistakes can come at great cost. It is naïve to suggest that information distributed internally cannot reach external audiences, especially now in the digital age."

<div align="right">Nataliya Ratushinskaya is Head of Corporate Communications at Megapolis Group of Companies (FMCG logistics and distribution), Russia</div>

"Business acumen is a critical capability for an IC professional because it is important to know how to tailor your messages and advise senior leaders on the most effective ways of reaching and communicating with target audiences."

<div align="right">Jonas Bladt Hansen Former Director, Head of Global Internal Communications, at Arla Foods, now Senior Advisor at Bloch&Østergaard ApS.Denmark</div>

"Business acumen is fundamental for internal communication professionals. Internal communication was designed to contribute to better management. It can not be separated from the business objectives. Those who design and execute the strategies must have a clear vision of the business objectives so that those objectives are always present and reflected in the communication activities."

Alicia Martínez Venero, Head of Communications Peru, Enel Peru

"Business acumen is fundamental to succeeding as an IC practitioner and one among other key skills that the team is expected to demonstrate. In our organization, business acumen is a key skill that's needed in the job for all colleagues. It allows one to have informed conversations with stakeholders. It gives the individual a closer understanding of the challenges and opportunities the business faces. More importantly, with business acumen, the practitioner can make better decisions and be viewed credibly in the eyes of stakeholders."

Aniisu K Verghese, Senior Manager - Corporate Communications, Tesco Bengaluru, India

"Everyone needs to take responsibility for his or her job and work on our common goals while projecting a good image to customers. In support functions, we must bear in mind that every commercial company works on the basis of generating profit through providing products and services that customer need and want. As a customer-oriented company, communication professionals look at things from the customers' point of view. It is extremely important that we see our job strategically as a part of company business. The right perception of internal communication is far more than sending PAs or magazines. We support management in meeting their business goals and help employees to understand their involvement in company success."

Lucia Muthová, PhD., Director of Corporate Communication Dpt., Allianz – Slovenská poisťovňa, Slovak Republic

"Absolutely! A solid understanding of our business is a prerequisite for acting as a strategic advisor to our leaders, and we consider everyone to be in an advisory role, ensuring that communication links clearly to strategy."

Torben Bo Bundgaard, Vice President, Organisational Communication, Novo Nordisk A/S, Denmark

What the C-Suite Wants From Internal Communications:

Business Results

C-suite executives from Seattle to London are embracing internal communications as an essential management tool for improving their financial bottom lines. A growing number of business savvy internal communicators are being invited into "the room where it happens." In fact, top internal communicators increasingly are earning that proverbial 'seat at the table.'

While public relations pros have recognized the vital role of internal communications for years, perceptions of the function by management have been slow to materialize. Many blame silos within executive ranks, but others realize that too many communications pros simply lack the critical business knowledge that allows them to communicate on the same strategic levels with senior management.

The role of being both counselor and advisor rather than simply that of a skilled communications technician demands greater business acumen, not just for the chief communications officer (CCO) or senior agency professionals, but for mid-level and junior-level team members who help support these leaders.

Over the past few years, we have surveyed and interviewed more than 100 public relations executives and their counterparts in senior management, including chief executives, presidents and chief financial officers. The result of our efforts were two books aimed at helping PR students and professionals become more business savvy. The first book is *Business Essentials for Strategic Communicators: Creating Shared Value for the Organization and its Stakeholders*, and the latest book is *Mastering Business for Strategic Communicators: Insights and Advice from the C-suite of Leading Brands*. Brands endorsing the importance of business basics for their communications teams include Boeing, GM, MillerCoors, SAP, Southwest Airlines, Starbucks, Vodafone, and Walgreens Boots Alliance.

Here are three key takeaways that emerged from C-suite executives about the role and value they want to see from their internal communication teams:

Ron Culp, Instructor & Professional Director, Graduate Program, PR & Advertising, College of Communication, DePaul University, USA

Matt Ragas, PhD. Associate Professor, Public Relations and Corporate Communications, DePaul University, USA

Business people with an expertise in communication

A consistent theme shared by these C-suite leaders is that they need their CCOs and communication teams to demonstrate they're bona fide *business people with an expertise in communication*. How can someone provide strategic counsel if they are not an expert on the business, the industry, and the drivers of it? For example, Gavin Hattersley, CEO of MillerCoors, the U.S.

operations of global brewer Molson Coors, says, "whether you are a lawyer, an HR, finance, operations or communications executive, I expect that my team has a full understanding of their functional areas and our business overall." Adds Hattersley, "Any young communication professional should act as an *internal news reporter* to understand in-depth each function at the company."

Courageous counsel grounded in an outside-inside perspective

C-suite leaders said they value when their communications teams provide courageous counsel that incorporates a diverse range of stakeholder views. For example, Serpil Timuray, Chief Commercial Operations and Strategy Officer, Vodafone Group, one of the world's largest telecom companies, explains that, "*presenting the company to the world* is an important aspect of the communicator's role, but so too is the need to *bring the world into the company*, ensuring that managers fully understand and respond to the shifts in public sentiment." Timuray calls this the "dual-facing" role of the CCO and their team. Bill McDermott, CEO of SAP, the global software giant, echoes this, stating simply: "give [business leaders] candid advice, based heavily on a true 'outside-in' perspective." SAP's head of marketing and communications, Nick Tzitzon, confirms that expectations of top business leaders on their communications teams are higher than ever. "We in the communications profession are expected to be strategists that help drive business results."

"Give [business leaders] candid advice, based heavily on a true 'outside-in' perspective. We in the communications profession are expected to be strategists that help drive business results."

For the past decade, professional organizations like Page, a global association of senior communications pros and academics, have had considerable success in elevating the role of PR pros in the C-suite by enhancing their business acumen. An increasing number of universities have introduced business-oriented courses into their PR and strategic communications curricula, but many courses are electives too often avoided by right-brain oriented students.

Strategic storytelling consistent with corporate purpose and character

C-suite leaders also said their communications teams are critical to developing and communicating corporate strategy. Such a strategy should be consistent with corporate purpose and character. Many different stakeholder groups were mentioned, but employee engagement was often emphasized as being particularly critical. Tom Nealon, the President of Southwest Airlines, argues that "the success of a 50,000-plus employee airline adopting a single corporate strategy depends on each employee knowing the *what*, *why* and *how*," which is a "daunting task." Linda Rutherford, the CCO of Southwest, likens this task to taking on the challenge to "communicate the amoeba." To do so, Rutherford said she and her team had to take a "big, hairy audacious goal" and make it "real, real, real" for Southwest's employees. In a related vein, Steve Shebik, until recently the CFO of Allstate and since promoted to be its Vice Chairman, acknowledged that "translating complex business strategy into simple concepts isn't easy" but "strong communication pays off."

"A consistent theme shared by these C-suite leaders is that they need their CCOs and communication teams to demonstrate they're bona fide *business people with an expertise in communication*. How can someone provide strategic counsel if they are not an expert on the business, the industry, and the drivers of it?"

The role and need for PR and communications professionals as a strategic counselor to the C-suite are greater than ever, according to corporate and agency recruiters. Travis Kessel, head of recruiting at Jet.com, the innovative e-commerce company acquired by Walmart for $3 billion dollars, confirms that communications pros with business experience and knowledge get serious attention from corporate and agency executives. "Internal communications pros who are comfortable with business terms and are able to translate corporate strategy to inform and motivate employees are in high demand," Kessel said.

For internal communications pros with a high business IQ and the ability to link the work they do to achieving business results, the demand to have them 'at the table' has never been greater. Informed and motivated employees are a source of critical competitive advantage.

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Ron Culp and Matt Ragas, Ph.D. teach in the PR and advertising graduate program at DePaul University and are co-editors of the new book titled Mastering Business for Strategic Communicators (Emerald Publishing, 2017) and also Business Essentials for Strategic Communicators: Creating Shared Value for the Organization and its Stakeholders (Palgrave Macmillan US) 2014.

Note from the editor: The latest book offers a glossary and a comprehensive list of resources on the topic, including journal articles, books, trade and professional articles, white papers, reports, and more.

Definition of business acumen

Business acumen is keenness and speed in understanding and deciding on a business situation, according to the Financial Times (FT).

According to the FT, in practice, people with business acumen are thought of as having business 'sense' or business 'smarts'. They are able to obtain essential information about a situation, focus on the key objectives, recognize the relevant options available for a solution, select an appropriate course of action and set in motion an implementation plan to get the job done. When they discover that changes are required to adapt to unforeseen circumstances, they make the adjustments as necessary and keep the activity moving forward. They are more often right than wrong in their assessments and choices and are admired by others both for their acumen and business success.

Link to broader FT description:
http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=business-acumen

"Whether you are a lawyer, an HR, finance, operations or communications executive, I expect that my team has a full understanding of their functional areas and our business overall." Adds Hattersley, "Any young communication professional should act as an *internal news reporter* to understand in-depth each function at the company."
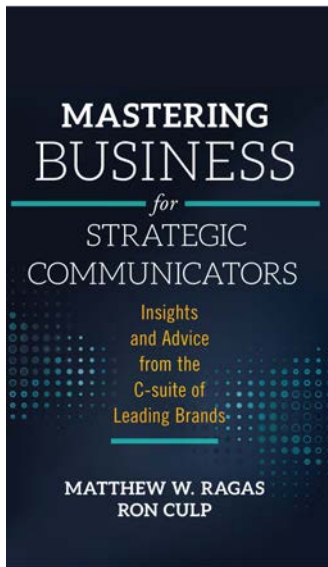
QUOTES FROM THE BOOK

"…it is important that the intended audience not only understand the news but see themselves in it. So, it's about more than just putting a comma in the right place, it's about understanding the business and how it makes money to turn around and communicate something to a group of employees that will help them be educated, inspired, and engaged. Understanding leads to engagement." Linda Rutherford, SVP, and CCO, Southwest Airlines.

"To every aspiring communications leader, I would remind you that trust is the ultimate human currency. To earn the trust of your leaders, prove to them that you understand the fundamentals of the business. Give them candid advice, based heavily on a true 'outside-in' perspective. If you deliver, they will welcome you into the inner circle and never want you to leave." Bill McDermott, Chief Executive Officer, SAP.

"Understanding how our businesses make money and impact society is relevant to creating messages for all our audiences . . . At any corporation, a communications specialist must have a real understanding of and deep appreciation for the business in order to be an effective communicator, influencer, and strategic counselor. Our ability to work in strategic partnership with business leaders is based on a deep understanding of our respective businesses and what they mean for employees, customers, investors, and communities." Stacy Sharpe, SVP, Corporate Relations, Allstate.

"Just as business leaders need to be excellent communicators, communicators need to have exceptional business acumen. If we're going to work together to make the right strategic decisions for our stakeholders, we all need a deep understanding of what we're trying to do." Steve Shebik, until recently the CFO of Allstate and since promoted to be its Vice Chairman.

If Only They Understood Us

We live in an increasingly VUCA world – Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous. First used by the American military to describe the extreme conditions encountered in Afghanistan, it is now applied more generally to the environment in which we all live.

Volatility means that the speed of change is increasing and its dynamic causes great turbulence and disruption. Uncertainty refers to the fact that there is a lack of predictability and the prospects for surprise are greatly enhanced. Complexity describes the nature of issues; their inter-relatedness, the lack of obvious cause and effect and the levels of confusion that surround governments and organisations. Ambiguity means that it is more and more difficult to grasp reality; there is fuzziness and haze about facts and it is very easy to misread situations and conditions.

More recently a D has been added to VUCA. It's now a VUCAD world, with the D meaning Deceitful. There are now 'alternative facts,' we live in a post-truth age. Politicians and other leaders tell lies which both they and the people they are speaking to know are not true.

In the middle of all this, there is the communication professional. Their role is to try and make sense of the maelstrom going on around them, interpret it and bring a useful analysis into their organisations to allow senior managers to make informed decisions. Their role is also to provide trusted advice to senior managers and other colleagues on how to engage both with their internal constituents and external stakeholders, so their organisation gains the support it needs to continue to survive and thrive. Maintaining the 'licence to operate' in this sea of complexity is the task at hand.

One of the things that really makes me angry is when people, sometimes within our own profession say that 'what we do is not rocket science'. It's absolutely

Anne Gregory, PhD, Chair in Corporate Communication, University of Huddersfield, UK

true. What we do is far more difficult and sophisticated. Rockets are complicated, but given a detailed manual and the right resources, it is possible for a non-specialist to build one. Communicators deal in VUCA, where the parameters are difficult to negotiate and the twists and turns of what might and does occur are as complex as the human minds that we engage with.

The communication profession is the living embodiment of complexity. Communication is complex, fluid and often misunderstood. It is a function, but it is also constitutive of organisations and organising in a way that other professions are not. It is perfectly possible for organisations to operate without buildings, money or products, but it is not possible for them to exist without communication.

It is little wonder then that one of the most common complaints of communication professionals is "if they only understood what I could contribute, I wouldn't be stuck with all this tactical stuff". However, a big challenge for communicators is the elevator test – describe in a paragraph what our strategic contribution is. Often the response is to describe what we *do* (tactics) rather than what our *contribution* can be.

In 2014 the Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communication Management (GA), the global confederation of professional bodies in the field, responded to a call from its members to develop a framework that described the *competencies* needed from practitioners working globally and in a complex environment. A key study was undertaken by the GA compiling a detailed Global Body of Knowledge (GBOK) which combined descriptions of public relations work from multiple sources and organised them into Knowledge, Skills, Attributes, and Behaviours (KSAB) required at junior, middle and senior levels of practice (Manley & Valin, 2017).

While this was welcomed by many as a move forward in helping to set boundaries for the profession, others in the GA-affiliated professional bodies found the lists too extensive, inflexible and culturally insensitive. Moreover, they described current and past tasks rather than anticipating developments in practice. In response, GA was further asked by its members to develop a Global Capability Framework, which would help to benchmark the *capabilities* needed by the profession worldwide.

The capability approach is different from the competency approach. *Competencies* tend to be extensive and build a picture of the profession from the bottom up, describing in great detail the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed by the practitioner and consider these in terms of what the *individual* possesses.

Capabilities build a picture of the *profession* in terms of the potential of the professionals who work within it. Capability frameworks recognise that the practice is different in various parts of the world and indeed, practitioners in the same country will choose different career paths and so different capabilities will be required and come to the fore depending on context. Capability frameworks have a limited number of statements that in total describe the work of the profession.

The Global Capability Framework was launched at the World Public Relations Forum in Oslo in April 2018. It was the combined work of academics in nine countries (Fawkes, J., Gregory, A., Falkheimer,J., Gutiérrez-García, E., Halff, G., Rensburg, R., Sadi, G., Sevigny, A., Sison, M.D., Thurlow, A., Tsetsura, K., & Wolf, K. (2018)) working across six continents along with their professional associations. Together, they agreed that the capabilities listed on the next page represent the profession globally, although each had a slightly different set of capabilities which were unique to their own country settings.

The framework (as shown on the next page) lists capabilities under three headings:

- those that describe the specific contribution of the functional specialism of communication (or public relations if this is the preferred term)

- those that describe communication's contribution to the organisation and finally

- those that describe the nature of being a professional. This latter group might be seen to be in common with other professions such as accountancy or nursing

Each capability has a list of sub-capabilities, as shown on pages 139 and 140, and which can be accessed via the full report at hud.ac/ect.

The framework itself has been widely welcomed.

For individual practitioners, it means they can assess their capabilities and plot their professional development depending on their needs.

Employers can use the framework to map the capabilities of team members and undertake a gap analysis for both team development and recruitment.

Academics will use it to inform curriculum design.

Universally it stands as a set of statements that define the profession irrespective of the individual specialism of any practitioner (note there is no reference to marketing communication or internal communication), or what kind of organisation they work for or wherever they work in the world.

Global Capability Framework

Communication Capabilities

- To align communication strategies with organisational purpose and values
- To identify and address communication problems proactively
- To conduct formative and evaluative research to underpin communication strategies and tactics
- To communicate effectively across a full range of platforms and technologies.

Organisational Capabilities

- To facilitate relationships and build trust with internal and external stakeholders and communities
- To build and enhance organisational reputation
- To provide contextual intelligence.

Professional Capabilities
(those expected of any professional)

- To provide valued counsel and be a trusted advisor
- To offer organisational leadership
- To work within an ethical framework on behalf of the organisation, in line with professional and societal expectations
- To develop self and others, including continuing professional learning.

Sub-capabilities are shown on pages 139 and 140. The full capability Framework can be accessed at hud.ac/ect. The author would like to acknowledge the work of colleagues in nine countries across the world and whose names are cited in the report.

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Fawkes, J., Gregory, A., Falkheimer, J., Gutiérrez-García, E., Halff, G., Rensburg, R., Sadi, G., Sevigny, A., Sison, M.D., Thurlow, A., Tsetsura, K., & Wolf, K. (2018). *A Global Capability Framework for the public relations and communication management profession*. Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management Research Report

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Global Capability Framework Communication Capabilities

CAPABILITIES	SUB CAPABILITIES
To align communication strategies with organisational purpose and values	You set clear communication objectives that are aligned to organisational objectives and then see them through You act as an architect of communication plans, enacting the purpose, values and policies of the organisation You understand how communication can – and cannot – help an organisation realise its objectives
To identify and address communication problems proactively	You create short and long-term narratives to facilitate communication with multiple organisational stakeholders You identify opportunities to design organisational communication, and outline core content You develop integrated communication operations
To conduct formative and evaluative research to underpin communication strategies and tactics	You use research to listen to and understand situations before, during and after communication and relationship-building activities You manage research design, data collection and analysis to improve communication outcomes You establish evaluation systems to demonstrate the impact of communication
To communicate effectively across a full range of platforms and technologies	You have command of communication specialties, such as investor relations, and understand the optimum channels for specific stakeholders You communicate effectively across paid, earned, shared and owned (PESO) channels You have or can source strong written and visual skills to create and tell stories that engage and connect with diverse publics You synthesise complex concepts and convert them to simple, clear and relevant content
To facilitate relationships and build trust with internal and external stakeholders and communities	You identify, analyse and listen to stakeholders and their communication needs You develop stakeholder engagement strategies and partnerships that are mutually beneficial You communicate sensitively with stakeholders and communities across a range of cultural and other values and beliefs

Source *A Global Capability Framework for the public relations and communication management profession* 2018

Global Capability Framework | Organisational Capabilities

CAPABILITIES	SUB CAPABILITIES
To build and enhance organisational reputation	You identify, analyse and strategically advise on key issues and risks for the organisation You help the organisation to define and enact its purpose and values You help shape organisational culture and its processes You understand and manage key intangible assets (e.g. brand, culture, sustainability)
To provide contextual intelligence	You see the bigger picture - socially, culturally, politically, technologically and economically You identify strategic opportunities and threats, issues, and trends You operate in a connected world, demonstrating broad understanding of local and global diversity in culture, values, and beliefs
To provide valued counsel and be a trusted advisor	You combine a long-term perspective with the agility to manage crises You offer strategic counsel to executive management, particularly regarding the interests of multiple stakeholders You influence organisational decision-making and development You negotiate with empathy and respect for all parties
To offer organisational leadership	You are part of or have access to, the executive management team and help build internal alliances within the organisation You demonstrate communication leadership by encouraging management based on dialogue You demonstrate business and financial acumen through sound knowledge of the organisation's business and core processes
To work within an ethical framework on behalf of the organisation, in line with professional and society's expectations	You consider business objectives in the light of society's expectations You clarify the consequences of a proposed action on others, ensuring potential outcomes are understood by decision-makers You understand and apply ethical frameworks You recognise and observe the societal obligations of professionals
To develop self and others, including continuing professional learning	You take responsibility for your own continuous professional development, through a range of activities including training and education You participate in industry events, represent the industry in public, and educate others on the role and value of public relations to employers and clients You are able to offer professional guidance which involves, motivates and contributes to personal and team development

Source *A Global Capability Framework for the public relations and communication management profession* 2018

Explaining to Your Boss How Your Work Contributes to Corporate Success

Communication professionals are often asked exactly what they do and in times of tight budgets, they are expected to prove their contribution to corporate success. The problem is that communication professionals use numerous and multi-faceted rationales to explain the value of their work ranging from building reputation and brands to boosting sales and fostering employee motivation.

Communicators seldom share a consistent understanding of the multiple dimensions of communication value. Many different stories are told that culminate in confusion among the top management, business partners and colleagues.

Addressing the lack of consistent storyline in theory and practice

What is a prevailing story? To answer this question, a team of researchers from the University of Leipzig analyzed more than 800 scientific publications from disciplines like public relations, marketing, and management. Interestingly enough, we found that many approaches, measurement methods and concepts for evaluation already exist. They predominantly focus on measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of communication. However, they are not coherent and have never been combined to draw a big picture of how communication is linked to corporate strategy.

We then interviewed the Chief Communication Officers in ten large organizations to learn about their understanding of communication value. The

Karen Berger, Project manager of the research programme *Value Creating Communication*, Academic Society for Management & Communication / University of Leipzig, Germany.

CCOs reported that their work is focused on building intangible assets such as reputation and brands and supporting tangible assets such as influencing customer preferences and publicity. They often disregarded aspects such as innovation potential or legitimacy that are central to top management and can be found in almost every business strategy.

Based on these findings, we developed a new interdisciplinary framework: The Communication Value Circle. This new tool can help communication professionals explain the value of their work more effectively. It can also support the process of aligning a communication strategy with the overarching corporate strategy to ensure a good fit.

The Communication Value Circle

The Communication Value Circle (CVC) identifies twelve dimensions that corporate communications can directly influence that help to achieve corporate success. At the core of the framework sits the corporate strategy, which should be the starting point for all organizational decisions. The four generic corporate goals were derived from the classical distinctions in management theory. Tangible and intangible assets create corporate value, whereas room for manoeuvre and opportunities for development help to enable value creation.

CURRENT VALUE CREATION

1 Enabling operations

3 Ensuring flexibility

CREATING VALUE

ENABLING VALUE CREATION

Employee commitment

Customer preferences

Publicity

Tangible assets

Room for manoeuvre

Relationship

Trust

Legitimacy

CORPORATE STRATEGY

Reputation

Intangible assets

Opportunities for development

Crisis resilience

Brands

Corporate culture

Corporate management

Thought leadership

Innovation potential

Corporate communication

2 Buildings intangibles

4 Adjusting strategy

FUTURE VALUE CREATION

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Similar to every other business function, corporate communications must support these four dimensions of corporate value and should align activities accordingly. Communication can add to corporate value in twelve dimensions that we have grouped into four areas:

Communication enables business operations

Communication supports business operations, for example, through stimulating *publicity*, *customer preferences*, and *employee commitment*. By disseminating content and messages and raising awareness of strategic issues, products or services, communication keeps an organization running and enables the creation of material assets. By managing dialogues with employees, suppliers, and customers on a daily basis, communication builds the basis for delivering value to key stakeholders.

Communication builds intangible assets

Communication helps create intangible assets, such as *reputation*, *brands* or *corporate culture*. Intangibles are part of the overall company value. A positive reputation and a strong brand create a strong corporate identity. Integrating the specific culture and the history of a corporation into its internal and external communication is a basic task of any communication department.

Communication ensures flexibility

Being flexible as a corporation means having relationships that are based on trust or, at the very least, based on a perception of the legitimacy of the corporation's values and actions. Communication can build stakeholder networks that ensure room for manoeuvring, especially in times of change and crisis. If the licence to operate is questioned by relevant stakeholders, every other value dimension will be affected negatively.

Communication helps to adjust corporate strategy

Communication supports the strategic positioning of the corporation by fostering thought leadership, identifying and communicating innovation potential, and building up crisis resilience. This value dimension is based first and foremost on the capacity to listen. Systematically monitoring public opinion in mass media, social media, markets, politics, and

society helps adapt strategies to upcoming socio-political and economic developments. Thus, corporate communications contribute to identifying competitive advantages.

Proving the value-add in the twelve dimensions

Demonstrating the value contribution of communication is certainly somewhat more challenging for communication departments than for others. The value of communication is difficult to express in financial terms. It requires multi-indexed approaches as well as non-financial measures. A selection of possible KPIs and research methods have been defined for each of the twelve dimensions and can be found at Communication Value Circle (EN).

Applying the Communication Value Circle

- Explain the value-add of communication: The CVC identifies the most important value dimensions that can be influenced by corporate communications and that are particularly relevant to corporate success.
- Derive and align communication objectives: The CVC can be used to align communication targets with overarching corporate strategy.
- Test communication strategies: The CVC provides a useful tool for testing existing communication strategies. By analyzing gaps between corporate and communication goals, communicators can detect misalignments and refocus their activities.
- Optimize communication measurement: The CVC can be used to match all communication goals with performance indicators, which helps to reflect on existing measurement activities. They can be integrated into a consistent performance management system focused on communication and business objectives, alike.
- Set the right priorities: Not every single goal is relevant to each communication department or situation. For example, employee commitment or corporate culture become more relevant during restructuring, while trust and legitimacy are critical goals during a corporate crisis. It is the responsibility of the communication executive to set the right priorities without losing sight of the other contributions.

Key perspectives

- Many communication executives complain about a lack of appreciation from top management. Even though most board members and top managers recognize the critical importance of communication, they are unclear about the role and precise contribution of corporate communications.

- One reason is that most communication practitioners lack a consistent understanding of how their work contributes to business goals. There are various rationales such as building intangible assets, influencing attitudes, and so forth, but they often tend to focus on soft factors. However, there has been a lack of a coherent and integrative approach.

- The Communication Value Circle (CVC) is a new tool to help communication professionals explain the value of their work more holistically. It identifies twelve major communication goals that directly benefit the general corporate goals, thus ensuring alignment between business and communication strategy.

- To prove the value-add of communication, each communication goal in the CVC can be measured using established key performance indicators (KPIs) and research methods.

Do's and don'ts

- Reputation is often considered the most important goal of communication but linking the success of the communication department to the company's reputation is risky. There are too many influencing factors that are not driven by communication.

- Communication leaders often underestimate the importance of relationship building and crisis prevention despite these principles being at the core of prominent PR theories. However, they are crucial as they ensure the corporation's licence to operate.

- Promoting innovations through communication and establishing thought leadership activities are seldom mentioned as communication goals but they are central aspects of most business strategies and should receive more weight.

- Communication managers ought to pay more attention to corporate listening. By detecting trends and anticipating critical issues, such as those in social networks, they can help to adapt corporate strategies to external challenges.

About the research project

A team of researchers at the University of Leipzig headed by Ansgar Zerfass, Professor of Strategic Communication, explored how communication adds value to a company. The project was advised by the Chief Communication Officers from BASF, Bosch, Deutsche Bank, Osram, and Roche. The Communication Value Circle is one of many outcomes generated by the research program *Value Creating Communication*, which was initiated by the Academic Society for Management & Communication in Germany. It is the most comprehensive research programme to date in the discipline of corporate communications with regard to the scope, content, budget, and number of experts involved. More information at www.academic-society.net.

Further helpful communication tools developed by the Academic Society for Management & Communication.

How do communication departments contribute to success?

The Communications Contributions Framework

Corporate communication departments perform a wide range of activities and deliver multiple services for top management and other business units. The Communication Contributions Framework helps communication leaders reflect and report on their department's activities, allocate resources, set and prioritize goals for sub-units, and develop job descriptions for themselves and for team members. Presenting multiple contributions in a consistent way helps to position and profile the communication department within the company.

	1 CONVEY & MULTIPLY	2 ALIGN & CONTRIBUTE	3 STEER & MANAGE	4 ADVISE & COACH
Strategic	Conveying the corporate strategy and positioning to key stakeholders critical for the long-term success of the organization	Defining overarching communication goals and a communication strategy aligned to the corporate strategy and positioning	Steering key resources and critical processes of the communication department (building potential for future success)	Consulting and advising on the strategic development of the organization and its functions (independent from the communication function)
Operational	Multiplying the corporate strategy and positioning to all stakeholders and interested publics	Delivering professional communication activities that support all functions of the organization and secure day-to-day operations (messaging and listening)	Managing day-to-day operations of the communication department (harnessing its potential through planning, budgeting, resource allocation, measurement)	Coaching and partnering with all members of the organization and enabling them to communicate professionally

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For more information:
The Communications Contributions Framework

How to align communication with corporate strategy

The Strategic Alignment Process

Aligning the communication strategy with the overall business strategy is a key prerequisite to creating value for the organization. The Strategic Alignment Process visualizes an ideal process of linking communication targets to overarching corporate goals. Strategic alignment must start with analyzing business goals and deriving communication targets systematically. From the outset, communicators should reflect on the starting situation of the corporation and the communication department, i.e. where are we now and where do we want to head to?

ANALYZE
» Reflect on the organization's current situation and strategic direction for the future
» Use the Communication Value Circle to analyze where communication can add value

DERIVE
» Identify and prioritize business goals (inner circle of CVC)
» Derive core communication targets (outer circle of CVC)

DEFINE
» Break down communication targets into concrete measures
» Define KPIs and measurement methods

VERIFY
» Ensure that all projects are linked to your targets
» Verify that communication goals are aligned with corporate goals

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For more information:
The Strategic Alignment Process

How can communications be managed and steered?

Toolbox for Strategic Communication

Management science and consultancies have developed many tools for the management of business processes and workflows that are widely used within corporations. Communicators would benefit from applying established management tools to steer and optimize their activities. Using the same tools as business executives also helps to demonstrate the department's effectiveness and efficiency. The Toolbox for Strategic Communication Management offers a comprehensive and structured overview of the most popular tools from management and communications for each phase of the communication management process.

MANAGEMENT TOOLS

ANALYZE
» Strategic analysis
» Life-cycle analysis
» Portfolio analysis
» Means-end analysis
» ABC-Analysis
» Cost utility analysis
» Resource analysis
» Materiality analysis
» Budget analysis
» Customer portfolio analysis
» Customer journey
» Sales funnel analysis
» SWOT, PEST
» Benchmarking
» Competitor analysis
» Positioning analysis
» Gap analysis
» Scenario technique
» Five forces model

PLAN
» Strategic planning
» Balanced scorecard
» Product market matrix
» BCG matrix
» Strategic dice
» 4 P's of marketing
» Vision statement
» Mission statement
» Disney method
» Osborn method
» Brainstorming
» Mind mapping
» Design thinking
» Agile planning

EXECUTE
» Performance management
» Lean management
» Change management
» Project management
» Customer relationship management
» Business process reengineering
» Team management
» Conflict management
» Negotiation management
» Knowledge management
» Innovation management
» Management by objectives
» Complexity management

EVALUATE
» Strategic controlling
» Performance measurement
» Profit, service und cost center
» Multi-level contribution margin accounting
» Target costing
» Activity based costing
» Due diligence
» Total quality management
» Six Sigma
» Process audit
» EFQM excellence model
» Intangible capital reporting
» Integrated reporting

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

ANALYZE
» Stakeholder analysis & mapping
» Relationship-based target group identification & segmentation
» Communication touch points analysis
» Media richness analysis
» Communication benchmarking
» Situation analysis
» Communication gap analysis
» Marketing portfolio analysis
» SWOT
» Forecasting, scanning, scenario technique, trend analysis
» Issues monitoring, listening
» Cost benefit analysis
» Competency analysis
» Communication audits
» Communication Value Circle

PLAN
» Communication scorecard
» Target house
» Strategic house
» Value link models
» Brand iceberg
» Brand wheel
» Corporate branding tool kit
» Corporate reputation management
» Corporate identity
» Integrated communication planning
» Communication / cross-media / advertising budgeting / modelling
» Reflective communication scrum
» Communication Manager Roles Grid
» Communications Contributions Framework

EXECUTE
» Corporate design manual
» Code of conduct guidelines
» Social media guidelines
» Issues management handbook
» Crisis communication management
» Change communication management
» Campaign plan
» Content management
» Key messages toolkit
» Message mapping
» Channel management
» Cross-media management, media planning
» Open innovation toolkit
» Stakeholder / social customer relationship management

EVALUATE
» Dashboards, cockpits
» Evaluation frameworks (DPRG/ICV, AMEC)
» Brand valuation
» Reputation analysis
» Media content analysis
» Employee survey
» Relationship / network analysis
» Public opinion polls
» Credibility analysis
» Journalist survey
» Customer survey (NPS)
» Advertising impact analysis
» Website usability test
» Recall / recognition test
» Social media analytics (big data)
» Process analysis

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For more information:
Toolbox for Strategic Communication

Which roles are performed by chief communication officers?

Communication Manager Roles Grid

Communication leaders have manifold responsibilities, ranging from reputation management to steering communication teams as well as advising top managers in decision-making processes. The Communication Manager Roles Grid systematizes these roles in eight dimensions. It introduces a clear distinction between strategic and operational roles known from management research. This helps communicators speak the same language as top management. The tool can be used for setting and reporting personal targets, developing job profiles and reflecting on the prioritization of daily tasks. It can also help to assess individual competencies and to build a team with a diversity of skills.
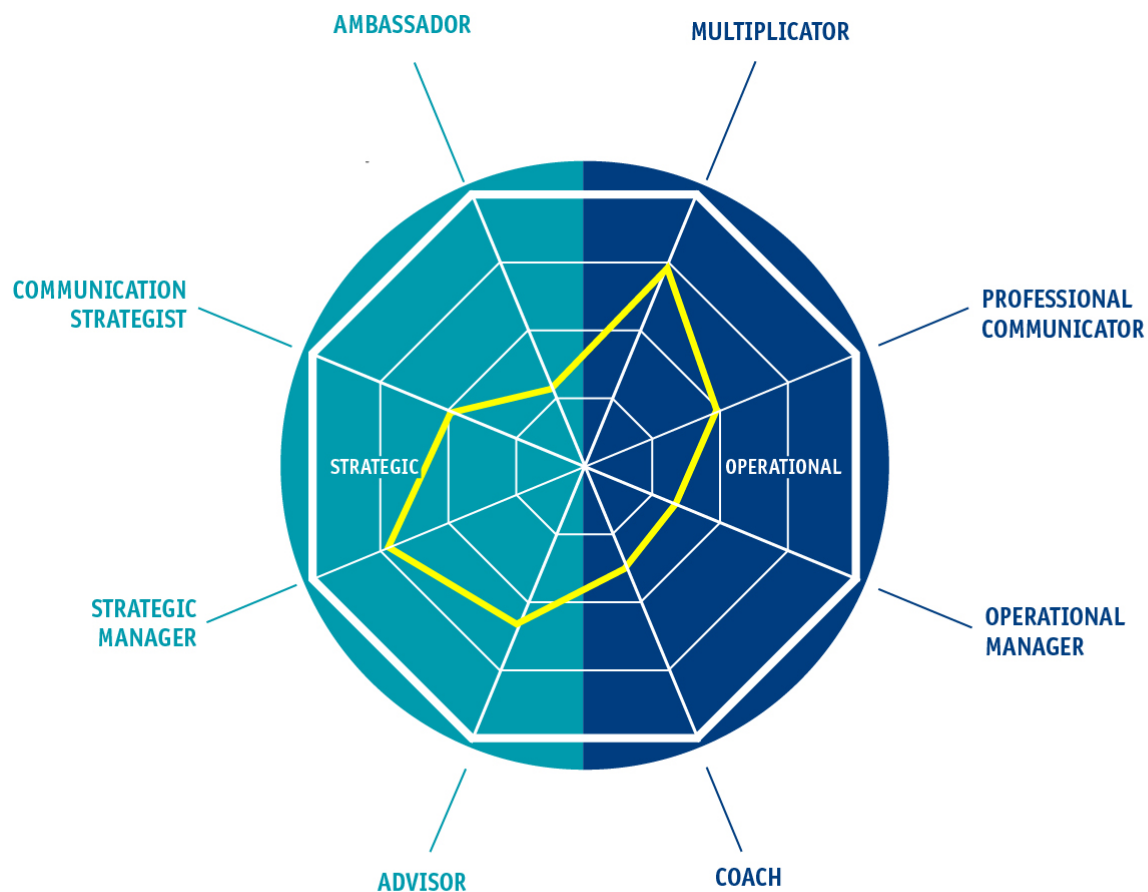
For more information:
Communication Manager Roles Grid

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Measuring Internal Communication
Applying Standards to Help Link Communication to Business Results

How does your organization define success? Tracking outstanding profits or donations? Customers seeking popular products or services? Earning a stellar reputation? The best way to achieve any of these or other indicators is to have an employee base committed to the organization and its success.

Since employees play a critical role in an organization's success, effective internal communication is key. It is extremely important to measure communication effectiveness and the link between communication initiatives and business results. However, this level of measurement has presented a real challenge to the public relations practice. In recent years, many organizations have focused on employee engagement as an end measure for internal communication. While analyzing employee engagement is a start, it does *not* provide deep insight into identifying gaps and developing informed communication strategies.

Identifying industry standards

In 2015, four public relation professionals, two practitioners, and two academics began a conversation about identifying industry standards at the International Public Relations Research Conference (IPRRC). Julie O'Neil, Ph.D. of Texas Christian University, Michele Ewing, Associate Professor of Kent State University, Sean Williams, M.A., True Digital Communications, and Stacey Smith, Jackson Jackson & Wagner, agreed to tackle this challenge under the auspices of the Institute for Public Relations Measurement Commission. This team of four organized a worldwide steering group from corporate, agency, and non-profit organizations.

Following a deep dive through academic literature, much discussion, and arguments, the team conducted a two-round Delphi study with leading internal communication professionals

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(those with 10 years plus of practice in the field and known as thought leaders in the profession) in which participants were asked to comment on, criticize and polish the committee's work. From there, the preliminary standards were presented for comment, discussion and further criticism at numerous venues including PRSA and IPRRC conferences.

22 standards identified

Twenty-two standards were identified and clustered into three areas:

OUTTAKES, whether employees received, paid attention to, comprehended or retained particular messaging, include:

- awareness
- knowledge
- understanding
- relevance
- retention of Information

OUTCOMES, evidence of changes to or reinforcement of opinions, attitudes or behaviors, include:

- attitude
- advocacy
- authenticity
- empowerment
- collaboration
- teamwork
- discretionary effort
- trust
- satisfaction
- transparency
- fairness

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT, if and how internal communication has influenced organizational performance, include:

- productive
- innovation
- continuous improvement
- reputation
- employee retention
- safety

"In recent years, many organizations have focused on employee engagement as an end measure for internal communication. While analyzing employee engagement is a start, it does *not* provide deep insight into identifying gaps and developing informed communication strategies."

Outputs and engagement discarded

Outputs were discarded as a measurement standard. Such basic public relations activity like the number of click-throughs, number of employees in attendance, and so forth, were considered to be indicators of activity around a particular tactic, but not a result.

After careful consideration, engagement was also discarded as a standard. The consensus was that engagement is a function of several other standards, including knowledge, understanding, discretionary effort, trust, and satisfaction. By measuring engagement's components, organizations would be able to pinpoint issues that influence engagement. What specific factors influence change in employees' perceptions and behaviors? If communicators can better understand these influencers by independently measuring them, they can then more effectively address the root cause of the engagement problem.

The proposed standards suggest an operational model that *outtakes* lead to *outcomes*, which in turn, lead to *organizational impact*. The standards suggest that a successful internal communication program must *fulfill the standards associated with outtakes and outcomes to achieve standards of organizational impact*. These causal links will be tested in future research studies.

Using the standards to measure and create organization change/improvement

While studying all 22 standards at the same time would be the gold standard, research is always a function of time and money. Communicators can apply the standards through a variety of ways and timeframes for measurement:

- Hold a few focus groups with employees to discuss the standards and identify which might be most problematic within your culture. Then, conduct a smaller survey (dipstick) focused on just those topics with a sample of employees.

- Pilot-test the standards with an employee group or division, then design programs to deal with issues that are identified. Implement programming to address, then conduct a study to measure progress.

- Talk with leadership to identify which standards are most problematic and/or important. Then, ask a sample of employees the same. This "gap" type of study can start a meaningful dialogue that can jumpstart change.

- Identify behavioral markers that might reveal action on these standards. Behaviors are the most solid form of measurement because they go beyond what employees "think" or "want" to do, and measure what they are actually doing.

- Minimally, sort what you have been asking to date among the standards. Are you covering all areas? What have you been missing that you might want to address? Does the analysis of your findings sorted in this manner shed a different light on their feedback or change priorities for your employee relations work?

Any foray into asking employees for input on these standards prepares a culture for change. Identifying individual problem areas and working on them can improve a culture immensely. Even if the attempt is not 100 percent successful, it shows you are trying. However, tread lightly, for if senior management is not open to change, then asking about these areas only hardens feelings and solidifies what might be an already difficult culture to manage.

Our next steps in the process involve identifying and testing a series of valid and reliable questions for each of the 22 standards. These questions were drawn from the literature and professional practice. We hope to have a prototype survey questions ready for distribution sometime in 2019.

We encourage internal communication practitioners to adopt these standards to effectively and efficiently guide measurement and evaluation of communication initiatives. Feedback about how your organization applied the standards is welcomed. Ultimately, the more the standards are used, the more we can demonstrate the value of internal communication.

The final 22 standards with definitions are shown on page 152.

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The final 22 standards with definitions

Outtakes

Awareness	Whether employees have heard of an organizational message, issue, or topic
Knowledge	Employees' level of comprehension about organizational messages, issues, or topics
Understanding	Employees' ability to relate their knowledge to their work in a way that helps the organization achieve its goals
Relevance	Degree to which employee communication from the organization is meaningful and useful
Retention of Information	Degree to which employees can recall key messages or topics when asked after an x timeframe
Outcomes	
Attitude	A way of thinking or feeling about a subject (an organization, topic, or issue) ranging from very positive to very negative
Advocacy	Employees' discretionary effort and time to promote or defend an organization and its products and services
Authenticity	Perception that an organization is transparent, honest, and fair, especially regarding the pursuit of its organizational objectives
Empowerment	Employees have the information, rewards, and power to take initiative and make decisions to solve problems and improve performance
Collaboration	The process of employees coming together across different divisions and or units to solve a problem and/or create something successfully
Teamwork	The process of employees coming together within the same unit to successfully achieve a common goal or objective under the leadership of an appointed manager
Discretionary Effort	The amount of effort employees give to an organization, a team, or a project, above and beyond what is required
Trust	A belief in the reliability, truth, and integrity of the organization's leadership, decision-making, and communication
Satisfaction	Extent to which employees are happy or content with their job or work
Transparency	The willingness of the organization to share positive and negative information with employees in a timely fashion
Fairness	Employee perception that organizational processes that allocate resources and resolve disputes are impartial and just
Organizational Impact	
Productivity	The quality and quantity of work output based on resources
Innovation	Thinking differently and experimenting with new approaches, ideas, or behaviors related to the organization
Continuous Improvement	The process by which employees offer small or large improvements to improve efficiency, productivity, and quality of a product or process in the work environment
Reputation	Stakeholders'—both internal and external—evaluation of an organization based upon personal and observed experiences with the company and its communication
Employee Retention	The number or percentage of employees who remain employed after X period of time
Safety	Employees' freedom from physical and emotional harm, injury or loss

- List of Contributors With Page References

- List of of Industries, Companies, and Countries Represented via Communication Professionals

- Communication and Research Organizations Represented via Teachers and Researchers

- References, Notes, and Sources

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Amit Bajaj, CEO, Tata Consultancy Services Europe	11, 121

Industries and companies represented via interviews with in-house practitioners and countries where communication professionals are based

Industries	Companies	Countries
Airlines/Aviation	Allianz – Slovenská poisťovňa	Argentina
Automotive	Alshaya Retail	Australia
Chemicals	Arla Foods	Belgium
Computer Software	BRP	Canada
Construction	Clifford Chance LLP	Denmark
Consumer Goods	DuPont	Germany
Dairy	Enel Peru	Hong Kong
Electrical/Electronic Manufacturing	ERGO Insurance	India
Financial Services	GE	Israel
Food and Beverages	General Motors	Italy
Information Technology and Services	Greater Toronto Airports Authority	Japan
Insurance	GSK	Kuwait
Law Practice	Henkel Singapore	Lithuania
Logistics and Supply Chain	HSBC	Netherlands
Management	IKEA	Peru
Mechanical or Industrial Engineering	Lafarge Poland	Poland
Oil and Energy	Megapolis Group of Companies	Russia
Pharmaceuticals	Microsoft DSS	Saudi Arabia
Retail	Nationwide	Singapore
Telecommunications	Nestlé Océana	Slovak Republic
Utilities/Energy	Novo Nordisk A/S	South Africa
	Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi	Sweden
	Royal DSM	Turkey
	SAP	UK
	Tata Consultancy Services	USA
	Telia Lithuania	
	Tesco Bengaluru	
	TEVA	
	TIM Group	
	thyssenkrupp Elevator	
	Webcor	
	Yıldız Holding	

Communication and research organizations represented via teachers and researchers

Academic Society for Management & Communication / University of Leipzig
European Association for Internal Communication (FEIEA)
Institute for PR (IPR) Organizational Communication Research Center
Italian Association for the Development of Internal Communications (ASCAI)
Page Society (Arthur W. Page Society)
Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations
The Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communication Management (GA)
University of Huddersfield

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[1]   Volk, S. C. and al. 2017
[2,3] "European Internal Communications" is a research project of the Università Cattolica of Milan, promoted, coordinated and financed by ASCAI (Associazione per lo Sviluppo della Comunicazione Aziendale in Italia), with the high patronage of FEIEA (European Association for Internal Communication).
[4]   Set of questions on page 12
[5,6] Two of our in-house contributors were able to get their CEO to answer the question: *What are your views on the importance and impact of internal communication on your organization objectives?*

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Communications Contributions Framework (p. 145)
http://www.akademische-gesellschaft.com/en/forschung/topics/subthemen/communication_contributions_framework/

Strategic Alignment Process (p. 146)
http://www.akademische-gesellschaft.com/en/forschung/topics/subthemen/strategic_alignment_process/

Toolbox for Strategic Communication Management (p. 147)
http://www.akademische-gesellschaft.com/en/forschung/topics/subthemen/toolbox/

Communication Manager Roles Grid (p. 148)
http://www.akademische-gesellschaft.com/en/forschung/topics/subthemen/communication_manager_roles_grid/

Further reading

Volk, S. C., Berger, K., Zerfass, A., Bisswanger, L., Fetzer, M., Köhler, K. (2017). *How to play the game. Strategic tools for managing corporate communications and creating value for your organization (Communication Insights, Issue 3). Leipzig,* Germany: Academic Society for Management & Communication. Available to download at http://www.akademische-gesellschaft.com/fileadmin/webcontent/Publikationen/Communication_Insights/Communication_Insights_Issue3_DS.pdf

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