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Volume 12

Celebrating ten years as the go-to internal communication agency

10 YEARS OF GATEHOUSE

gatehouse

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It's hard to believe that Gatehouse is 10 years old!

Thinking back to a decade ago, Facebook was a social network linked to a few colleges in the United States and Canada. Apple was still the 'iPod' company. The most popular mobile phone was the Motorola Razr.

In September of that year – Simon Wright and Lee Smith (that's us!) got together and decided to launch a brand new internal communication agency.

The name we sketched on the back of a napkin: Yellow Day.

The next morning, we emailed each other, having come to the same realisation at almost the same time: it was very important that the name of our company be anything but Yellow Day.

Then the realisation hit us. What we were doing was setting up an agency that was specifically designed to help support internal communicators – the organisational gatekeepers.

So Gatehouse was born.

With the name in place, we had everything we needed to provide strategic consultancy to the internal communication functions of the land.

What we discovered – pretty quickly actually – is whilst our clients appreciated the sound strategic thinking, they also needed the support to turn the insights into actions, the creative solutions and assets needed to bring communications to life. And so creative services were introduced to the Gatehouse offer.

As Gatehouse grew, so did the requests for new products and services – in particular learning and development solutions, as well as providing dedicated and skilled consultant resource. By 2009 we had launched our training services and a year later, our recruitment services.

Today, Gatehouse is proud to be the go-to internal communication agency – providing a full range of services, including Research & Evaluation, Strategy & Planning, Creative & Delivery, Training & Development and Interim & Recruitment solutions – to some of world's largest and most complex organisations.

It's been a really amazing journey so far for us over the past decade – and of course, for the profession as a whole.

Thanks for joining us for the ride, and we hope you will continue to be part of it in the weeks, months and years to come.

We hope you enjoy the issue – our 10 year anniversary special.

Lee Smith
Director, Gatehouse

Simon Wright
Director, Gatehouse

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Deborah Brambill discusses how the shift
in the workplace has changed the way we
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progress internal communication further
along its maturity continuum.

Sarah Robinson of Shell describes
how a platform allowed employees to
have open conversations about a new
innovation, enabling the organisation to
listen in and respond to both employee
and customer concerns.

Professionalising
internal
communication,
one step at a time

The BBC's Heather Wagoner is, in her own words, "dedicated to the continued professionalisation of Internal Communication industry". In this interview, she explains to us how she set out on this path and what her aims for the profession are.

How did you get to where you are today?

I began my career in sales and marketing, then decided to return to university as an adult and obtained a degree in journalism. I briefly worked in copywriting before joining Rolls-Royce as part of their Corporate Communications team. I took on roles of increasing responsibility and I then moved on to Transport for London and the BBC, where I'm now Director of Internal Communication and Engagement. I've enjoyed several development opportunities along the way, serving as Director of Communicate for Success for nearly two years and even publishing my own book, 'The Secret 360.'

Your book is all about keeping your finger on the pulse of perceptions. How relevant is this in the internal communication profession?

It's imperative that internal communicators keep on top of our profile, both internally and externally to our organisations. Our profession really is niche – one of the smallest 'professional services' occupations out there. And because organisations are looking for us to be conduits of best practice, we have to demonstrate that we are consistently keeping in touch with the industry, maintaining our own relevance and picking up on external best practice that we can turn around and apply in our own organisations.

You can go to any given organisation and ask them if they need to improve their communication, and they will say "yes". Every single time. Communication is a job that's never done. And that actually provides us opportunities to continually improve and if there's one thing I've learned about our industry is that it's full of lovely, super smart people who love to try new things. However, I do think that we need to make sure we're not just chasing trends in an effort to bring 'something shiny' back to our organisations. Best practice has to be applied judiciously.

And on top of that, we find ourselves communicating the biggest changes and challenges in organisations. And so often, in an effort to get to the best possible communication solution, we have to ask lots of questions and challenge decisions to make sure they'll stack up for employees.

Sometimes unfairly, organisations personalise these conversations. They sometimes forget that you're asking on behalf of employees. So we have to be politically savvy, understand the perceptions and motivations of others, and proceed delicately at times. All in an effort to get the best possible comms solution.

"There's a real opportunity for internal communicators to be recognised as a key business function."

What are the implications of this for the profession?

Internal communication is all too often seen as the underdog – and we sometimes see ourselves that way which can feel a bit disempowering, if we're not careful. I've seen other industries in similar positions turn their reputation around, like HR, and this journey begins with individual practitioners. HR managers have really made the jump from 'pay and rations' and 'tea and sympathy' to a strategic space where they're shaping the organisational design, closely supporting leaders, and bringing solutions that are really relevant to the business. They've become key partners for their organisations. There's a real opportunity for internal communicators to take our reputation into our own hands and continue our journey to be recognized as a key business function.

For some businesses – that's quite a jump. For those who don't yet see the value of a professional IC industry, they tend to wonder why they should

take advice from someone who "just uploads to the intranet". But once you start to get momentum in a business, and once you really start turning things around, they understand quickly. Suddenly you're in the right room, having the right conversation, with a place at the table. Once you start to gain that credibility in the business, it's like a snowball effect – it just keeps improving.

What are the tenets of your approach to the professionalisation journey?

It's a very interesting journey that I've done a couple of times in organisations now and my main takeaway is that you have to build a holistic approach to internal communication, but focusing on skills and infrastructure to begin with. The reason is that, while channels come and go, trends come and go, and people come and go, skills and infrastructure last forever in an organisation and that's where the limited resources that we have can be best applied.

My goal is to tell a transcendent story of the organisation, as opposed to a transactional one. Unfortunately, some of our stakeholders still think internal communicators are just here to hit the send button. They expect to need to do all the thinking themselves, so their communication requests are very often transactional and in the form of an instruction.

I really want to elevate that, and to help an organisation tell that transcendent transactional story around purpose and meaning. I insist on doing the thinking right alongside stakeholders. Then I simply need to decide on the messaging principles and match the channels to the desired outcome. As time goes on, internal stakeholders begin to see that the advice and guidance I give are sound and are activating employees to deliver the business strategy and elevate their own performance.

As a Director, a huge part of my role is to build relationships across the organisation and to wave the flag for the internal communication team. I work to roll out the red carpet across the organisation but especially with leaders, because that gives my team the license to operate with the backing of leadership because they know they're dealing with a professional team who really know their stuff.

"My goal is to tell a transcendent story, as opposed to a transactional one."

How does one go about developing the necessary skills to achieve that position as a trusted partner?

I approach this in two ways: building the skills of the business to communicate (though managers and leaders) and investing in the skills of the comms team, as practitioners. For the business, there's no point in me sending out a management briefing tool and turning our managers into a channel as they communicate with their teams, if they themselves don't have the skills and ability to deliver communication in a way that's right for the business, right for their teams and right for individuals. Businesses need to invest in communication skills and I think this needs to be coming through the internal communication team.

I also think it's worth investing in the internal communication team's skills. For instance, I'm putting my team through media training. It isn't a traditional internal communication skill, but it's vital to understand message shape and impact and also the potential for it to go wrong. Additionally, it helps us coach the leaders we work with on these same skills. And my team is influencing and building the messages that are used externally. We couldn't do that if we didn't have the right skills, as holistic communicators.

And how can an organisation develop its internal communication infrastructure?

The way I see things, organisations focus on providing the best communication and marketing products externally and – our people internally deserve exactly the same level of quality. We need to show our respect for employees by providing world-class channels, and making sure we have the right channel mix. Each individual channel has to have its own distinct personality and you need to know what it is there to do – each channel needs to be matched to an outcome. This is what I refer to as infrastructure.

For example, when I worked for Transport for London, my team and I noticed a channel gap for a hard-to-reach audience. We filled it not with a home-spun letter in the pigeon hole for every train driver, but with something amazing. We installed iPads into the environments of the audience, and this infrastructure will be there long after we practitioners have left. We took the business internal communication infrastructure to a new level; we modernised it; and we left it better than we found it.

I think that's what every internal communicator should aim for – to leave their organisations and, everything they touch there, better than they found it. I've found that the most effective way to do this is through a holistic approach involving improving stakeholder relations, developing skills across the business – including the internal comms team - and embedding modern and efficient internal communication infrastructure. If every internal communicator put their all into these three objectives, the internal communication function will definitely be right there at the top table.

"That's what every internal communicator should aim for – to leave everything better than you found it."

Biography:
Heather Wagoner

Heather has a decade of experience as an internal communicator. She has made her mark on the profession through top-notch internal campaigns for multinational organisations including Rolls-Royce, Transport for London and the BBC, involvement in not-for-profit professional organisations, and the publication of a book, entitled 'The Secret 360'. **@Heather_Wagoner**

Are your internal comms hitting the spot?

Research is a critical part of the internal communication mix. Without it you can't demonstrate your value to senior leaders, build a robust strategy or know whether your channels or messages are really making a difference.

Over the past decade Gatehouse has conducted internal communication audits for some of Europe's biggest businesses – from Bupa to GSK; TfL to Virgin Media – as well as a host of public and third sector organisations.

The insights we deliver help our clients get a handle on their internal comms and drive through improvements.

gatehouse

Call us today on **+44 (0)20 7754 3630** or visit **www.gatehouse.co.uk** to find out more.

Using communication to mobilise employees around a new strategy

Paul Tester, Corporate Affairs Manager at Roche, explains how he reshaped his communication approach in order to pioneer a new corporate strategy – asking questions rather than delivering instructions.

Looking ahead at the new challenges and opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry, Roche's UK leadership decided to embark on a new strategy.

We wanted every employee to buy into the new strategy, but wanted to engage and inspire, rather than dictate and regulate.

In the absence of absolutely specific direction and exact metrics, we wanted to find a way to inspire engagement across all levels.

The framework of a new corporate strategy

In 2015, our Pharma Leadership Group (PLG) came together and decided to roll out a new corporate strategy, shaped by the employees themselves. All 600 employees in the affiliate, both field- and office-based, travelled to Dublin for a three-day conference in February 2016 to launch 'Ambition 2020', a vision of where we wanted to be in five years' time.

During this first event, the Managing Director set out his vision for the company and explained how he and the board planned to achieve it. Next, he outlined four Strategic Objectives and painted a picture of what our organisation must look like in five years' time – all in very simple terms.

The big difference was the emphasis on ownership. Each person across the company would be responsible for making the corporate strategy happen. While the previous strategy was very prescriptive with lots of metrics and targets, it was clear that the board didn't want Ambition 2020 to follow the same structure. They wanted to paint a broad picture but let employees figure out how to actually make it happen.

The board arranged for four working groups to get together, one for each of the Strategic Objectives, to come up with some further thinking, which became known as the key priorities – a little more detail and nuance to the overall vision presented by our MD.

> **"We turned the traditional prescriptive model on its head by asking: This is where we need to be. Now what will you do to help achieve it?"**

Asking questions rather than delivering instructions

A few months later, those same working groups presented the Strategic Objectives along with their associated Key Priorities at a town hall event attended by the whole company. At this point, we used the occasion to turn the traditional prescriptive model on its head by asking: "This is where we need to be. Now what will you do to help achieve it?"

The board continued to ask questions rather than deliver instructions, which is a cultural shift for us at Roche. In the pharmaceutical industry, there is a lot of regulation, instructions and procedures, so some colleagues were a little unfamiliar with this approach. Occasionally, we'd get the feeling that people were thinking, "What do you mean what am I going to do? I'm waiting to be told what to do!"

Storytelling is quite an important part of this. Since we've explained the detail around the Strategic Objectives, we've been talking to colleagues and helping them share their stories through publishing news articles, recording videos, and inviting colleagues at all levels in the business to present their stories at subsequent town-hall events.

At the most recent event, where speakers from across the business shared their stories about contributing to Ambition 2020, we got some strong feedback that the audience really enjoyed being inspired by their peers – rather than listening to a 'top-down', more 'directing' approach.

This was the best possible confirmation that the approach of empowering everyone to own the strategy and participate in the sharing of successes was the right path.

A shift in mindset

In December, nearly a year after the launch of Ambition 2020, we are delivering a big company-wide event. This will be a milestone event and allow us to reflect on what we've achieved – together and individually – across the business.

One of the key achievements this year is the beginning of people changing their mindset. People are still adjusting and getting to grips with the idea that they can just say, "We should do this (or we shouldn't!) because it aligns (or doesn't!) with our Strategic objectives and our key priorities."

Empowering people to make decisions – initiating projects or stopping them – by referring to the principles of Ambition 2020 rather than having to consult or wait to be told what to do is a shift in mindset that is still underway.

Using Trendsetters to inspire engagement amongst peers

From a communications perspective, our challenge has been to move away from simply articulating instructions from the board to the business, toward ensuring systems are in place for colleagues to take ownership of inspiring others by sharing their stories.

While the event in Dublin at the start of the process was 'high impact', we needed to make sure that the energy

and enthusiasm would be sustainable throughout what is a five-year process. One way we did this was through the concept of Trendsetters – a group of well-respected peer-nominated individuals that could help embed Ambition 2020 by 'living and breathing' the values of this new corporate strategy.

To underpin the idea of moving away from the typical top-down approach, the role of the Trendsetters is to help embed the principles of Ambition 2020 and to keep it at the forefront of people's mind. They weave Ambition 2020 into their team meetings and internal discussions to help guide decision-making, and prioritisation.

Every couple of months, the Trendsetters get together to share stories and ideas with each other so that they can each go back to their teams and say "Have you heard about this? How about this for an idea?" We rely on them to use their initiative and find different ways of getting their respective teams to engage with the strategy, and make Ambition 2020 a reality.

Trendsetters are helping us achieve our Ambition 2020 goals by inspiring their peers, reminding their teams about the Strategic Objectives and occasionally challenging cynicism. Advocacy at all levels of the company – rather than just from the PLG – is working well.

Over the next few years, we will continue to evolve the way we embed Ambition 2020 in the business, but the sharing of stories and the use of Trendsetters have certainly given us a strong start.

"A group of Trendsetters will help keep the principles of Ambition 2020 at the forefront of people's mind. "

Biography:
Paul Tester

Paul Tester has worked as Roche Product's Corporate Affairs Manager since March 2015. Formerly an internal communications contractor working for clients in the private and public sector, Paul's main background as an internal communications specialist is in the military environment. He was formerly a Regular Officer in the RAF.
@paul_tester

Enterprise Social Networks: The gift that keeps on giving

Tanya Burak, Group Internal Communications Manager at Savills plc, explains how she implemented a new intranet to connect her colleagues across the globe – reinforcing the perceived value of the internal communication function in the process.

Savills plc is a global real estate services provider, listed on the London Stock Exchange. We have a network of more than 700 offices and associates throughout the Americas, the UK, continental Europe, Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East. We advise corporate, institutional and private clients, seeking to acquire, lease, develop or realise the value of prime residential and commercial property in the world's key locations.

In recent years, we have seen a shift in the way our clients wish to work with us. In order to meet this change, we have adopted a global approach to provide services to clients where they are or want to be, rather than a geographic approach. To meet client expectations, and as part of our overall internal communications strategy, we needed a platform to allow our global workforce to find the people and information they needed to best serve our clients, and to collaborate from anywhere in the world. To achieve our goal, we decided to take a digital approach, opting for a global intranet. When we started the

project in 2011, we had four separate intranets used by the UK, Ireland, Germany and Australia & New Zealand that we needed to join up. Outside of these countries, there was no intranet capability. So we adopted a long-term approach to ease the company into the new way of working, progressively rolling out the new intranet to replace the existing, out-of-date platforms from 2013 onwards.

Implementing the new intranet

With our end goal of creating a truly global workforce in mind, we defined four objectives for our soon-to-be created global intranet: connect people with one another (and give

what is **connect?** connect is the Savills intranet, for use by all Savills people, worldwide

them the tools to find out more about one another); circulate and celebrate company announcements and successes; be able to search and quickly find key company information and research; and increase collaboration. Given our objectives, we chose Jive as the platform to help us achieve these goals – which was a change in platform, but kept our existing intranets' name: Connect - familiar, simple and memorable.

We launched Connect to the UK in February 2013 after retiring the existing SharePoint intranet, then progressively launched to nine European countries – those that had an existing intranet, but also other countries for which this was a brand new initiative – at the end of 2013 and the start of 2014. We launched to the US at the tail end of 2014, and most recently launched to Australia and New Zealand in July 2016.

To help us keep track of how well Connect was performing in each of these locations, we defined some goals to aim towards – including expecting

PEOPLE

PLACES & SPACES
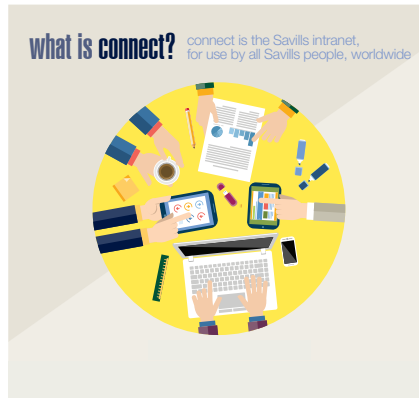
CONTENT

users to log in daily, and to complete their profile. To do this, we had to create a content plan to keep Connect fresh and interesting, and work with key stakeholders in the business, including Public Relations, Marketing, HR, Learning and Development, as well as key business leadership.

Getting people to connect with Connect

With such ambitious goals, it was imperative that we put all our effort into promoting Connect. We established

a network of community managers – one in each of the countries where the platform has been launched – and a team of key ambassadors to help myself and two colleagues on the IC team manage the platform and promote it locally through adding content and training.

On launch to the UK and Europe, we visited each country and office, and held team meetings to show people the benefits of Connect. As follow-up to the in-person meetings, we provided our colleagues with various resources,

including an online guide called Getting Started with Connect that all users could access, as well as an overview presentation to ensure all Savills employees knew what Connect is, how it works, and what they can get out of it. These resources were also used in team meetings and seminars to boost their impact. We also gave them a direct line to us – by way of our Connect Feedback email address.

Over time, the resources have been repurposed and used when we have acquired new business and partners –

and Connect features prominently in all new employees' welcome kits.

Post-launch

Once we had tackled the launch, and people were comfortable with the new platform, we decided to focus on profile completion. Making the most of our colleagues' ambition and competitiveness, we organised a World Cup of Profiles in tandem with the 2014 World Cup. Profile completion rates for every country were tracked and pitted against each other to encourage users to both log in and complete their profiles. Combined with our other internal marketing activities, the campaign was a success, boosting log-in and profile completion rates, with roughly 200 people adding their Roles & Responsibilities, 183 adding their Biography, and 236 their Expertise – a fantastic result over the four week-campaign.

One of the most active sections on Connect are the country message boards, which employees can use to post whatever they like – from welcome posts for new joiners, to business won and deals done, to IT Tips, to tickets for sale, to calls for support with charitable activities. We created this section to allow employees to feel comfortable with posting to Connect and understand that it is not purely a central admin task, and to cut down on mass emails, to keep inboxes free from non-essential messages.

Since introducing Connect to the UK three years ago, we have observed some successes but also some disappointments. Positively, we are very close to achieving our goal of daily log-in, and can also boast a 60% profile completion rate, meaning our employees have ample resources to identify key colleagues and connect with them on a day-to-day basis.

On the flip side, while employees can easily connect with each other, we find that they often resort to email for communication, rather than using the more social aspects of our intranet, such as status updates and discussions. We would also like to see more activity, with people commenting or liking content. We are seeing a slow change, however, especially where teams are cross-border, and prefer the efficiency of a discussion thread, rather than email.

Only 10% of our workforce actively contributes to the platform, which I'd like to see increase in the coming years, but we need to encourage people to participate, breaking the perception that adding or creating content is an 'admin' role.

Next steps

Though we've seen some brilliant results since introducing Connect, we realise there is still a lot more to be done. Now that the platform has been delivered, we are looking at increasing its adoption and usage, and are planning to introduce the Jive mobile app as well, giving employees further opportunities to access the platform on the go.

To improve employee buy-in, we plan to benchmark our progress with an

annual survey (in addition to our monthly reporting), and develop best practice guides for specific functions and roles in the business, as well as communicate case studies showing how Connect has allowed people to make connections and helped us win business. Employees need a good reason to participate, and by sharing our case studies with more than 8,000 users, we hope to encourage our people to see new ways that they can use Connect.

Impact on internal communication

Overall, over the last three years, Connect has contributed positively to our channel mix, and allows us to more accurately measure the success of our communications and campaigns. Having the benefit of measurement, we have been able to raise the profile of the IC team within the business.

More importantly, we are able to engage with our users and let them know how many people saw their article on Connect - and really enable them to get more out of the platform, in terms of raising their own personal profile and their department profile, contributing to the overall success of the business. Since implementing the platform, we've had people come to us from a very strategic angle, asking us how we can help them communicate a message rather than just giving us an email to send out.

As technology improves, and when it is integrated successfully within an overall internal communications strategy, it becomes easier for internal communication to support the business, helping it achieve its goals.

Previously, it was difficult for us internal communicators to prove our worth, but now, with email open rates and engagement rates on new technology, we can prove just that.

Internal communication as a whole is being given a new lease of life with new technology, and my advice to any IC practitioner is to use that technology to their advantage.

> **"Having the benefit of measurement, we have been able to raise the profile of the IC team."**

Biography:
Tanya Burak

Tanya Burak is an experienced business communicator. She began her 20-year career in research and marketing before shifting to change communications and internal communication. She has been Group Internal Communications Manager at Savills for five years.

improving communication in healthcare

we're proud to have helped reinvent communication channels which now influence thousands of patients and health employees.

Saturn is one of the UK's leading providers of digital and visual engagement. Saturn has worked closely with 14 NHS trusts and has seen a considerable increase in the size and number of digital signage solutions employed. Adam Clifford, BDM, Healthcare for Saturn, states "Digital posters are a proven method of informing and educating patients within a hospital environment. It is now used in a wide variety of areas particularly reception, waiting rooms and restaurants where information can be tailored to welcome, re-assure and entertain. More healthcare organisations are adopting innovative technology as they witness instantly the benefits to both the patient and employee experience."

Healthcare TV
- Keep patients informed
- Bespoke branded healthcare channel
- Promote NHS initiatives
- Publish waiting times, weather and traffic updates
- Poster cases can be customised

External patient information point
- Entrances
- External dwell areas
- Broadcast car park tariffs and directional signage
- Floor or wall mounted

Internal patient information point
- Reception areas
- Waiting areas
- Promoting initiatives
- Directional signage
- Floor or wall mounted

Digital menu screens
- Easily manageable
- Update menu pricing instantly
- Schedule menu updates for specific times of the day
- Improve cross-selling and upselling of products

Saturn are in partnership with 14 NHS Trusts:

• Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh • The Pennine Acute Hospitals • University Hospitals of Leicester • Lancashire Teaching Hospitals • CMUH • Leicester City Clinical Commissioning Group • Cumbria Partnership • University Hospitals Birmingham • Derbyshire Healthcare • Wallsall Healthcare • Birmingham Community Healthcare • Surrey and Sussex • Burton Hospitals • Heart of England

How digital signage streamlined hospital communication

Andy Savage, Multi-Media Specialist at Wrightington, Wigan & Leigh NHS Foundation Trust, describes how he used digital signage to clean up hospital communications and ensure information is transmitted immediately to those who need them most.

Wrightington, Wigan & Leigh NHS Foundation Trust is a district general hospital in the northwest of England. As with any hospital, it is a large institution spread across four different sites and distinct clinical services within each. With many thousands of patients, visitors, staff and other stakeholders using all hospital sites, there was a perceived need to be able to communicate quickly, effectively and clearly to these audiences.

Posters on top of posters on top of posters

Hospitals are complex organisations with people constantly coming and going. We were looking to make our hospital a better place to be, to create a more pleasant environment.

A common issue that affects all hospitals are the number of posters that individuals and departments create to get information out about their particular service. We found that as it could not be proactively

managed and controlled, posters were appearing everywhere. Although there are designated poster areas, we found them appearing everywhere there was white space.

A poster audit was one of our first initiatives in changing how we communicate. We went around taking posters down, at the same time looking at how we can improve our communications, specifically thinking about how we can use technology

> **"Some of the posters we were removing were 10 or 12 years old. This was something clearly telling us that we've got to take action."**

to get more information out to the patients and staff.

Some of the posters we were removing were 10 or 12 years old. They'd been put up many moons ago. This was something clearly telling us that we've got to take action.

Incremental roll-out of digital signage

To replace the poster culture, we looked to digital signage as a more manageable, more modern solution. Working with Saturn, the implementation of our digital signage was done in increments. As we were working with a very fixed budget, we prioritised improvements to the areas that need it most.

In common with all hospitals, we have some large outpatient departments and within these, many patient dwell areas. These areas were the prime spaces for us to install the digital signage because we were able to get our message out to large numbers of people very quickly. Instead of our

patients and visitors looking at a three year old magazine that's on the table, why not give them something that's new and current that might be of use to them.

We aim for very engaging, interesting and informative communication to place in front of our patients. We create the content so it catches people's attention. We learned from the mistakes of the posters, where we found people were putting posters on top of each other, creating white noise on top of information overload. This is why we now deliver messages in a straightforward manner. People process it and retain it quicker.

Every 6-12 months, I would see if I could gain access to more available funding to roll out digital signage in another area. We've recently opened a new orthopaedic hospital at one of our other sites, and factored into the costings were the new screens for that area. I'm pleased to have gotten it to the point where if anything new is built, the cost of the new screens is automatically factored into the overall cost.

Benefits and feedback

One of the major benefits of digital signage has been in relation to time-sensitive information. Using Saturn's Connect Software, we are able to put out and remove communications straight away, we don't have to go across all four sites putting posters up and then taking them down a few days later.

This has helped us minimise paper collateral, namely posters and

"Digital signage will have an immediate impact wherever it is implemented, with direct benefits attached to it."

magazines. The policy now is that there are no posters to go onto walls around the organisation without approval. The environment around the hospital is now much better than it was.

The general response has been very good. We see people waiting and looking at the screens, as opposed to their phones – it's changing how people behave. We know we're getting information across to people in the right way at the right time. Hospital staff find it useful, their service communications can be displayed quickly and effectively reducing reliance on paper and the time taken to prepare and distribute.

We're fortunate to have a very forward-thinking organisation. A lot of the staff are really responsive to new ideas and have embraced this fully. They are proactive in approaching us with information they want to get across, and are grateful that they no longer need to create and put up posters themselves.

Finding new ways to implement digital signage

We've further extended the digital signage in our outpatient clinics with a dedicated patient clinic information board. Our central outpatient clinic is a big space with many patients coming in and out daily; a lot of clinics, a lot of doctors, a lot of information. The clinic information board helps manage this, updating in real time, very similar to an airport flight departure board.

Patients arrive and can check on the status of their appointment – the clinic location, suite number, name of the consultant, and time are all updated in real time. If there are any changes, like Mr. Jones' clinic is running late, for instance, it would be up on the information board. We want to show this information to help our patients as much as we possibly can to be in the right clinic at the right time.

This idea came from the staff in the outpatient area themselves and we conceptualised it. They are very pleased with the result. It is a distinctive

way of using digital signage for an additional benefit.

We are five years in, and still find the digital signage just as effective. Digital signage will have an immediate impact wherever it is implemented, with direct benefits attached to it: immediacy on information, cleanliness of environment and ability to put varied and different information into different hospital areas.

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Biography:
Andy Savage

Andy Savage has worked at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust for the last 10 years specialising in Web Services Communications Platforms. He is currently working on secondment as part of a hospital-wide software implementation.

Top 10 tips to create a failsafe intranet

Intranets – some people love them, others loathe them.

While there are many different types of intranets (collaborative/social, policy-driven, corporate, function-specific, etc.), there are a few key elements that can make even the dreariest subject matter more engaging and guarantee your audience visits again.

Here are some tips from Gatehouse...

1. Define its purpose

Seems obvious, doesn't it? Unfortunately, this is why many intranets fail. If the purpose of the intranet isn't clear, it cannot become essential. If you nail this, you've nailed the intranet.

The first thing you need to understand is your audience and what their needs are. The purpose needs to focus on user needs while never losing sight of business objectives. It is important to strike a balance.

Once you've found your perfect mix, it's critical that you re-evaluate it regularly. Using pulse surveys to assess relevance and user interest must become a regular task.

2. Initiate shared ownership

While you are developing your intranet, it is critical to have a distinct, over-arching owner and administrator who will manage 'all things intranet.' Clear owners of specific sections should also be defined, if relevant.

> **"The purpose needs to focus on user needs while never losing sight of business objectives. It is important to strike a balance"**

Appointing an executive sponsor, a respected senior leader, to champion the intranet will boost credibility. Keep on the executive sponsor to ensure they, themselves, are engaging!

3. Incorporate business processes

A great way to make the intranet essential is to integrate business-critical processes. Identify one or two processes that can be enhanced by using the intranet, for instance logging expenses or sick days, and you will notice a boost in visitors.

4. Create engaging content

Content is king. Start by giving your intranet a short and memorable URL – make it easy for employees to type it into the address bar from memory. Allow this to set the tone for the content style of the entire intranet. Keep content relevant, short, snappy and fresh. Use interesting headlines with links to further details, rather than clunky text. Highlight subheadings to break up content and use bullet points where applicable.

5. Encourage feedback and collaboration

All employees want to be heard. Make sure you have a space for users to comment, or to highlight content that needs correcting.

Another easy way to do this is to allow users to rate content with 5-star buttons or thumbs up/down icons. Incidentally, this is also a quick and easy way to find out which content is working and which needs improvement.
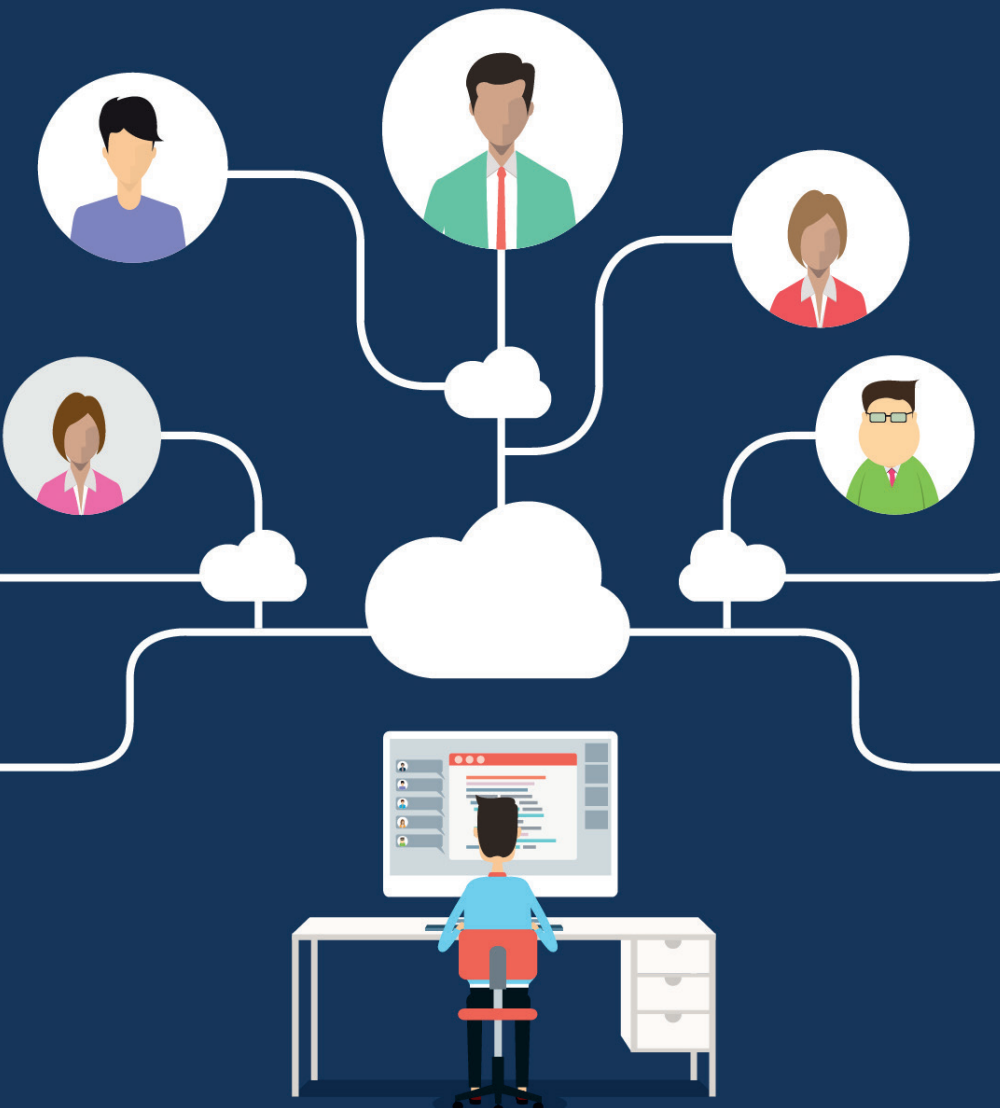
6. Streamline navigation

You can have the best content in the world, but if it is difficult to find, what's the point? Create an intuitive structure to your intranet, with logical menu titles and subtitles, designing a consistent flow to your information. If this is done correctly, the number of clicks to get to information should be minimal.

A key component to successful navigation is an enhanced search functionality. Make sure content is tagged, sorted, and archived correctly to enable the most relevant search results. Keep a vigilant eye on taxonomies – this can make or break a search function!

7. Sustain promotion

Don't assume employees know you have an intranet – no matter how good you think it is! Create regular promotions from roll-out to mature phases of the intranet. Some ideas are to have an inclusive process to name the intranet, to celebrate milestones

(e.g. 1-year anniversary of launch), and to collaborate with other teams for cross-promotion and referrals.

8. Facilitate trainings

Enable users to get the most from the intranet by hosting training sessions to allow them to familiarise themselves with all of the functions. Develop short videos on best practices and 'how-to's (e.g. changing email settings, finding specific information, etc.). Integrate intranet trainings into onboarding orientations to ensure this is adopted early on.

9. Measure, measure, measure

What will determine whether your intranet is successful? Frequent and accurate measurement. Select pre-determined indicators and analytics for success (e.g. clicks per page, star ratings, etc.) and monitor these regularly to continuously improve your intranet. Set goals and challenges between page owners to maximise page hits.

10. Establish governance

An over-arching piece that is necessary for any of the last 9 tips to succeed is governance. Site guidelines should be established and shared with those who are contributing to the intranet to ensure consistency across all pages. A clear hierarchy around content submission and ownership will also determine success or failure. Designing and following an editorial calendar will help maintain timely updates, keeping your intranet fresh and relevant.

Remember to think of your audience in everything that you do in order to create a successful intranet. If you're not sure where to start – ask them first!

Biography:
Katarina Vrkic

With five years of international experience in some of the most esteemed global organisations, Katarina has led many employee engagement and induction projects. Her experience includes auditing and creating internal and external websites, and designing global internal communication plans. She has been with Gatehouse since early 2016.

> "Don't assume employees know you have an intranet – no matter how good you think it is! Create regular promotions from roll-out to mature phases of the intranet."

Creating an IC "Centre of Excellence"

Montreal's Lise Michaud identified a gap in the internal communication landscape for a practitioner-generated community of practice, and has begun to bridge it by creating a global online community for professionals, IC Kollectif.

"IC Kollectif brings the brightest people and the best ideas together in a unique way that is inspiring and enlightening to the profession."

All your IC and Business Communication sources under one roof

We are **IC Kollectif**

IC Kollectif was founded with the purpose of connecting communication professionals and encouraging knowledge and resource-sharing, creating a global centre of excellence in the IC community. The initiative was launched in early 2016 with the support of the Montreal chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators.

Supporting internal communication practitioners to make an impact

The function of internal communication in organisations and the role of IC practitioners has changed dramatically in the past few years. We've gone from being seen almost exclusively as newsletter writers and poster hangers, to playing a much more strategic role as trusted advisors. Of course, the status of IC professionals varies from one organisation to another, dependent on a number of factors such as organisational type, size and culture, but overall the expectations from senior leaders continue to evolve.

To help empower communication professionals to help accelerate and take advantage of this shift, we have brought together the most comprehensive internal and corporate communication sources under one roof. Our focus is on the value of managing communication strategically and on providing access to a broad set of ideas and viewpoints under one umbrella.
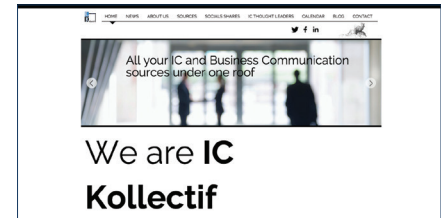
The development of an IC-specific global initiative was necessary to show the world how the practice of internal communication is becoming more and more important in our changing workplace. At IC Kollectif, we work to identify the best resources and facilitate access to global communication practitioners. Our aim is to help professionals make a difference in their organisations, their communities, and ultimately, their societies.

Support for all communication professionals

While IC Kollectif is intended for professionals working in the field of internal communication, the community is also relevant for other communication

professionals, as it has become imperative for all communication practitioners to understand how internal communication works differently from other communication disciplines, and how its effective use impacts and contributes to an organisation's success.

We are **IC Kollectif**

We **connect** communication professionals with **knowledge**, **resources** and our **global** community.

IC Kollectif is a Montréal-based global initiative that brings together the numerous sources of information and the community of expertise that are focused Internal and Business Communication from around the world.

We are a rapidly becoming a must-visit resource for communication professionals eager to stay on the cutting edge of their practice.

If you value a strategic approach and want to rely on highly relevant information and connections to empower you in addressing your day-to-day professional challenges, this space is for you.

Orgs, Agencies, Consultants · Associations · Publications · Comm Blogs

Research & Reports · Podcasts · Chats & Hashtags · LinkedIn Groups

Books · Resources · Glossaries · IC Thought Leaders

Comm Calendar · Blog · Shared on Socials · News

> **"It has become imperative for all communication practitioners to understand how internal communication works differently from other communication disciplines."**

Our website offers four main sections: Sources, IC Thought Leaders list, a calendar of global communication conferences and events around the world, and our Blog. Our Sources section includes a comprehensive list of organisations, agencies, publications, professional associations, research and reports, blogs of communication professionals, Twitter chats and hashtags to follow, LinkedIn groups, books, resources, and glossaries – truly a one stop shop!

Community engagement and feedback

One IC professional recently told me, "If IC Kollectif did not exist, we would have to invent it. We realise now that this is something that has been missing and it deserves all the support we can give it."

We have grown organically, bringing together in-house communication practitioners, IC thought leaders, consultants, professional associations, academics, and more from across five continents. Our list of IC thought leaders was built entirely through recommendations from professionals around the world. We are also extremely pleased with the response of IC professionals requesting to contribute as guest bloggers on our new blog.
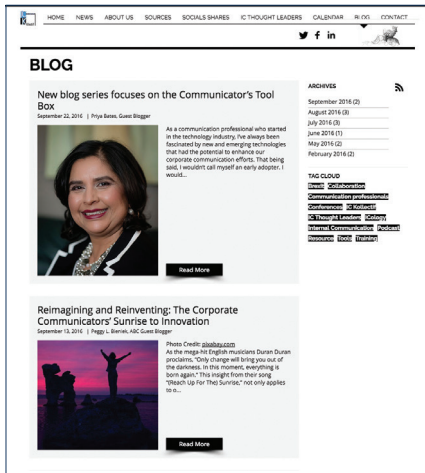
We've received endorsements from well-known communication professionals and organisations, such as Arizona's Paul Barton, Internal Communications Author and Consultant, who said "IC Kollectif brings the brightest people and the best ideas together in a unique way that is inspiring and enlightening to the profession."

We have forged alliances with US-based Advanced Learning Institute (ALI Conferences), as a partner for all of their IC conferences, and with Cropley Communications of Australia, for their worldwide Strategic Communication Management Training.

What's next for IC Kollectif?

Our ambition is to become the go-to reference in the IC space. We are uniquely positioned to develop into a global Centre of Excellence for Internal Communication.

We want to focus on the subject matter itself, internal communication, and provide distinctive high-quality content to support top practitioners. We're currently speaking with IC professionals and experts around the world to explore a number of collaborative projects to achieve this objective.

Biography:
Lise Michaud

Lise Michaud has over 25 years' experience in senior communication roles across public and private sectors in Canada. She is a Strategic Partner at Cropley Communication and serves as Vice President, Content and Social Media on the Board of IABC's Montreal chapter. She founded IC Kollectif in early 2016.

www.ickollectif.com @IC_Kollectif

How influencer marketing helped PCCA hit a home run with its culture

Jeppe Vilstrup Hansgaard of Innovisor discusses how his team of organisational diagnostics specialists partnered with Lizzie Harbin of the Texas-based PCCA to support their journey to sustain their culture, while growing organically and through acquisitions.

In 1981, a network of American pharmacists founded PCCA (formerly Professional Compounding Centers of America). Today, PCCA has become the independent compounding pharmacist's complete resource for everything from fine chemicals to business and pharmacy consulting. Its membership includes more than 4,000 independent community pharmacists across the globe.

Over the last 10 years, PCCA has expanded to become a company with more than 300 employees located across four countries – providing an interesting challenge in joining up all aspects of the organisation under one corporate culture.

To help emphasise PCCA's corporate culture, senior leaders created a Culture Team to lead the process to develop the core values and embed them into daily lives of all employees across all locations. In early 2015, Innovisor was brought in to ensure that the culture programme would be built upon a bottom-up, inclusive approach.

"Research shows that 90% of all decisions take place within these informal networks."

The power of informal networks and influencers

Over the last 10 years, the workplace has gone through a dramatic transformation. There's been a five-fold increase of employees engaged in cross-collaboration, which is rarely reflected in formal organisational charts. This cross-collaboration generates what I've called 'information networks'. Research shows that 90% of all decisions take place within these informal networks, and that you need to engage 30% of employees quickly in order to achieve any sustainable change/transformation.

Our objective was to identify and understand these networks, and leverage the few highly influential individuals within them to drive the corporate culture globally.

We launched a "Values & Culture Survey" based on an organisational diagnostic approach, which attracted feedback from an impressive 93.6% of employees.

The survey explored employees' perception of PCCA's values and culture and identified who their representatives should be in the process. This also provided extensive understanding of the connectivity across the organisation.

How the few right people connect you to the entire organisation

Lizzie Harbin: "The survey helped us identify the people who were most

trusted across the organisation – people outside the formal leadership structure who are sought out for advice, because their peers consider them to be both sympathetic and competent. We've called this group the "Voice of the People" – the critical 30% of employees who we knew we had to engage with for the corporate culture to be truly imbedded".

Jeppe Vilstrup Hansgaard adds: "In the case of PCCA, we identified that three percent of the employees (the red dots in the visualisation below) gave access to 90 percent of the organisation."

Developing the core values

Following the survey, the Culture Team led by Lizzie Harbin invited the 50 leaders and employees identified as the "Voice of the People" to an interactive offsite workshop. Attendees were asked to provide feedback on the keywords that had come out of the survey to articulate the culture.

The workshop helped to consolidate the survey output into six statements, which

aimed to define the core values of the company.

By involving the "Voice of the People" as well as key leaders, we were certain the core values were a true reflection of the culture as felt by employees every day. A dialogue with the "Voice of the People" provided instrumental feedback and ensured the Core Values were tailored in a way which could not have been achieved without doing so. The Core Values were shared globally in September 2015, and the buy-in has
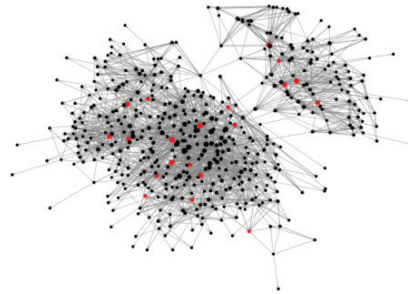
been incredible. Employees actively participated in a naming contest for the new monthly culture-driven newsletter, as well as an art contest to graphically represent the culture logo and each of the values. Simultaneously, roles and responsibilities have been more clearly formulated in the leadership team, making culture development a priority.

What's next?

To build on the momentum and ensure all of the great work done to this point is not lost, PCCA has now launched initiatives to develop the key infrastructure for sustaining the values in the long-term, including:

- **Recruitment:** Reviewing the process (including interview questions) to determine whether candidates align with the Core Values.
- **Onboarding:** Developing and implementing a structured two-day programme for new hires that introduces them to the Core Values and surrounds them with the culture from day one.

- **Health & Wellness:** Creating processes and programmes that reinforce the importance of health and wellness in building and maintaining a strong culture.

Outcome

The cultural journey has also engaged the entire organisation in articulating the culture as "Culture Ambassadors." Doing this has significantly paid off in terms of motivation and buy-in – two key drivers of effective change management.

Lizzie Harbin of PCCA: "We have managed to establish key facts, allowing the Culture Team to validate the business case for a demonstrative culture, and to align the leadership team around the need for doing so.

The "Voice of the People" continue to demonstrate value to PCCA as they carry on sharing and promoting various culture initiatives throughout the company, as well as providing valuable feedback."

"By involving the "Voice of the People", we were certain the core values were a true reflection of the culture as felt by employees."

Biography:
Jeppe Vilstrup Hansgaard

Jeppe Vilstrup Hansgaard is the CEO of the global leader in organisational network diagnostics Innovisor and has working experience in 20 different countries on three continents. He holds a master of business administration degree from Henley Business School in the UK and a certificate in strategic decision and risk management from Stanford School of Professional Development in the US.

@JeppeHansgaard

Biography:
Lizzie Harbin

Lizzie Harbin is the Chief Culture Officer of PCCA. She has been a prominent presence in the compounding world for the past 15 years, and a member of the PCCA team for nine years. She is a graduate of Tulane University with a BA in communication.

State **of the Sector:**
Brexit **special**

In a survey conducted in July 2016, Gatehouse explores how internal communicators prepared ahead of the referendum, what the impact of Brexit is likely to be on organisations, and what the 'Post-Brexit' future holds for IC.

Brexit and its impact on the workplace has prompted such a global reaction that Gatehouse undertook a special State of the Sector survey to shine the spotlight on this issue and explore what it means for professionals operating in this space.

We wanted to know: how internal communicators prepared ahead of the referendum? What will the likely impact of Brexit be on organisations? And what does the 'Post-Brexit' future hold for internal communication teams?

Who responded?

The fieldwork for this survey was conducted in early July 2016 – immediately after the result of the Brexit referendum was announced. It attracted nearly 250 respondents, with 82% of these based in the United Kingdom and a further 10% in mainland Europe.

Over a third (37%) of organisations had a workforce of more than 10,000.

We were delighted to see a broad range of organisations taking part, with twenty industries represented. The most sizeable representation came from five sectors: Financial Services (15%), Professional Services (11%), Charities and Voluntary Work (7%), Government and Public Administration (7%), and Transport and Logistics (7%).

The vast majority (88%) of respondents indicated internal communication as their main responsibility, while just over half (51%) also considered employee engagement a key part of their role. Other responsibilities included External Communication/PR (13%), General Management (7%), Marketing (6%), and HR (5%).

Internal communication before the referendum

Prior to the referendum, the majority of organisations elected not to release an official position (57%), although 17% admitted that senior leaders did share their personal views. Of those who did, nearly two in five supported the Remain

campaign (38%), against only a tiny 1% supporting Leave!

In terms of preparation in advance of the vote, around a third of respondents said their organisation had prepared communications for all outcomes, while only 3% had prepared for Brexit only. A whopping 59% hadn't prepared messages in advance for any outcome – which suggests an overconfidence in the result, or as we have seen in recent State of the Sector studies, a more likely result of poor planning and horizon scanning by communicators.

However, in some instances, this was a deliberate choice – with certain respondents from the Government and Public Administration noting that they were asked not to plan for Brexit and required to respond in line with government policy.

This reluctance to communicate was only partly abandoned post-Brexit. A quarter of respondents did not respond at all, while a third only broke their silence following the results.

Impact of Brexit

It was no real surprise that the word of the day following the referendum was "uncertainty", with two thirds of respondents saying their leaders are unsure about the impact Brexit will have.

More worrying though is the number of European employees based in the UK who are now having concerns about their future – with over 60% of respondents highlighting this as an issue.

However, there was more confidence around business strategy, with only 17% thinking their business strategy will become irrelevant post-Brexit, and a third declaring there is no risk of this happening at all.

Whilst there were relatively few big changes identified for the internal communication function in the near future, the biggest one was clearly the increased need for reactive communications, anticipated by
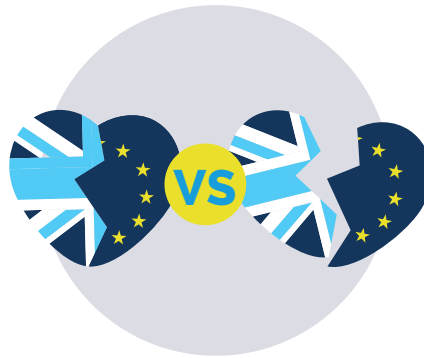
59%. Just two in five felt change communication skills will become more highly desired by employers, suggesting that the status quo is likely to remain in many organisations, for the time being at least. Positively, 28% think Brexit will give them more opportunities to connect with their leaders.

When asked what their top communication priority will be following the vote, almost half highlighted the importance of timely and clear internal communication going forward, with a third (34%) wishing to tackle uncertainty through reassuring internal audiences that it will be business as usual for their organisation. A small 7% prefer to

use the "pull" approach, citing listening to employees' concerns as their top priority.

Looking to the future

In the longer term, respondents' views on the impact of Brexit are mixed. A third say Brexit will give communicators a chance to influence the direction of the business going forward. Futhermore, nearly one in five consider it an opportunity to turn the internal communication function into a trusted and valued partner for their organisation. With this in mind, nearly half (49%) have designed a clear plan to communicate regular updates to employees and, interestingly, over a third (37%) have even set up a Brexit task force to help coordinate efforts across various departments in their organisation.

In spite of these ambitions however, only 21% truly believe Brexit is a game-changer and will have any significant impact on the way they operate as a function. Over two thirds

(67%) believe their current channel mix is sufficient to identify and listen to employees' concerns.

In terms of personal impact, some issues were anticipated – but by fewer individuals than we might have expected. The biggest fear is that of economic uncertainty, identified as a pressing issue by over a quarter, whilst 16% think the job market will be impacted, meaning fewer business and job opportunities in the future. A similar proportion believe existing positions will be affected, citing an increase in workload as their primary concern.
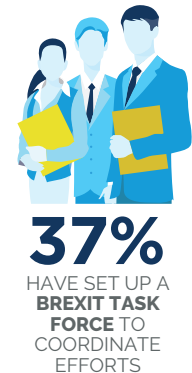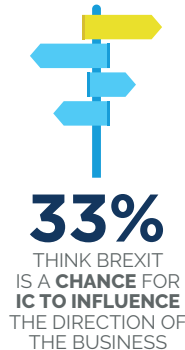
Conclusion

Overall, this State of the Sector: Brexit Special suggests internal communicators are clearly feeling the effects of uncertainty in the wake of the referendum. Demand for change communication expertise is expected to increase and internal communicators must be quick and decisive in their actions when details of the exit process

and timings emerge. All of this only goes to underline the general sense of confusion.

The future is not bleak however: relatively few believe the internal communication function will be significantly impacted by Brexit and a third say it will give communicators a chance to influence the direction of the business going forward. This points towards internal communication being of at least as much importance as it is now in years to come, if not more.

With this in mind, we encourage any internal communicator, no matter their views on Brexit, to turn this ground-breaking political event into an opportunity and to establish themselves as key players in their organisation's growth and development.

33%
THINK BREXIT IS A **CHANCE** FOR **IC TO INFLUENCE** THE DIRECTION OF THE BUSINESS

21%
THINK BREXIT IS A **GAME-CHANGER** AND WILL HAVE A **MASSIVE IMPACT** ON HOW THEY OPERATE

37%
HAVE SET UP A **BREXIT TASK FORCE** TO COORDINATE EFFORTS

How transparency has transformed the workplace

Deborah Brambill discusses how the shift in the workplace has changed the way we think about communication and placed more importance on transparency.

When we look at the wider landscape, the changes over the last few years, not just in the internal communication profession but in society as a whole – the economy, the way people converse with each other, the way they go about their daily business, the ready accessibility of information – what is evident is that it has been transformative. There is now a remarkable degree of openness, information-sharing and collaboration in every aspect of our lives. It's up to communication professionals to react to it.

Behavioural changes have prompted changes in our profession

When I first started working in communications, it was still very focused on traditional top-down cascade messaging; throwing something out there and very much in 'tell' mode. It was about tightly controlling the message. Over time, people have come to the realisation that actually, it's not an effective way of getting things out.

If we translate the changes in the broader landscape to our profession, what it means is a much more conversational style. There's been a shift in our role to one of facilitator, creating opportunities for colleagues to share. There is a much better environment in the workplace now, where employees are willing and encouraged to speak up. Social tools have helped with that, though I think the major change is that people no longer feel deferential in the way they once did. Employees don't wait any more to be told by their line manager or make do with second-hand information. Increasingly, their first instinct is to seek out the truth from wherever they feel they will get it.

Leadership communications

Leaders are now having to be considerably more transparent than they used to be because it's extremely difficult to keep things secret; we have all gotten very good at hunting out information. More than that, increasing scrutiny of corporate management teams is forcing greater transparency whether they like it or not. The onus is on us as communicators to advise leaders and say "you have to view this like it's telling the outside world, and you're better off shaping the story rather than somebody else writing it for you."

When we have leaders who feel uncomfortable sharing anything other than the bare minimum of information, or worse nothing at all, my best advice is to recommend that they should always be upfront with people. Employees expect their bosses to look at them in the eye and tell them the truth, especially in difficult situations. The loss of trust when those at the top fail to be open and honest is so damaging.

It's how we manage it. The more transparent we can be, the better. If we don't know something, we should say so and say when we'll have the answer. Or explain why something has to remain confidential. All those things are so important. It matters a lot when we play that into a change environment and when we look at how

much change there has been in the workplace over the last decade or so. So many companies have been in a cycle of reactive behaviour for so long and have learnt the hard way that you have to be transparent to keep the trust of your people and take them with you on the way.

If you do a good job of treating people decently and communicating with them as if they're human beings rather than just numbers, you will have their loyalty and they will be proud to work here. It's about respecting colleagues.

How employees act and react

Good leaders don't sit in an ivory tower sending out pompous announcements where they are worried about the nuance of every single word. Instead, what they do, if numbers and logistics allow, is get off their chair, leave their office and actually go out and speak with people.

Good leadership comes down to the small things as well: stopping to say hello to people instead of stomping past with your head down over your mobile - resolutely ignoring everybody. Or picking up the phone and having a conversation with someone, instead of sending an email. A lot of it comes down to behaviour and being authentic, matching actions to words.

In an environment where they feel trusted, employees generally give more of themselves. They're willing to invest in the company more – that magic discretionary effort that everybody's after. Whereas, if they're in an environment where they feel like nobody gives a thought about them, then they're not going to be as invested. It becomes a work-to-rule mentality where they come in, do their minimum, and then they leave – and they couldn't care less once they shut the office door behind them. That's the difference, and you see it a lot in different places.

Feedback and transparency

Feedback adds to a climate of transparency and we should always seek it out, but it's important not to set false expectations; the workplace is not a democracy and it's never going to be. But we do have to make it clear to colleagues that their views count; it's an important part of building trust.

We've all worked in companies where they keep banging on about wanting feedback. Then that feedback goes into a black hole and seemingly nothing happens, so employees develop the view that negative opinions are just being swept under the carpet.

If something employees have suggested is not possible, then we should say so rather than leaving them thinking their voice wasn't heard. We must do our best to go back and say "thank you, this is where your feedback has gone and this is what we're doing about it." Otherwise, the next time we ask, it's highly likely "why should I bother?" will be the answer.

Biography:
Deborah Brambill

Deborah is currently interim head of internal communications at Gala Coral Group and is part of the integration team working on the merger with Ladbrokes. She has gained wide-ranging experience of internal communications over 20 years supporting large organisations through change. She has built her career in a number of industry sectors, including professional services, financial services, energy, retail, manufacturing and commercial real estate.

@dbrambill

Generating true value through internal communication

In order to progress internal communication further along its maturity continuum, positioning internal communicators and our function in the right way is now more essential than ever. Practitioners need to get even closer to senior leaders, but how do we close the still visible gap?

In this article – a summary of a new paper from the Ignite Alliance, a collaboration between Gatehouse and Copenhagen-based internal communication agency Open – we outline our research findings and suggestions for tackling that challenge.

A more modern and discerning employee, expanding and more complex organisational structures and blurred lines between internal and external communications are just some of the obstacles organisations are currently battling with. The transforming global business landscape is demanding internal communicators take a fresh look at how to continue to add true value and be a vital ingredient to organisational success.

The Ignite Alliance, a strategic collaboration between two leading internal communication agencies, Gatehouse in the UK and Open in Denmark, set out to discover how internal communicators can gain a seat at the top table and move even closer to the action.

During 2015, multiple focus groups were run to consider the value and role of internal communication to international businesses today, what skills are needed to further develop the function and how we can remove the barriers practitioners are currently facing.

Three core questions were posed to communication leaders:

"What are the personal traits and qualities of those we see operating successfully at this level?"

"How do you manage your relationships with senior stakeholders?"

"What practical things should internal communicators do to build more respect with the top team?"

Our discussions soon revealed, that although the status of internal communication has continued to rise over the past decade, the clear value proposition – the straightforward answer to what it actually does for a business and why – is all too often still missing.

The new Ignite Alliance paper, how internal communication generates true value, aims to offer some thoughts, ideas and suggestions about how, as communicators, we can increase the value we add as we push the profession forward into its golden age.

The 4-3-5 Model

The 4-3-5 model aims to equip practitioners with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate through a changing business environment, and be seen as an invaluable resource underpinning organisational strategy.

The 4-3-5 Model is made up of three elements:

4 Macro Influencers

3 Value Generators

5 Enablers

Four Macro Influencers:

The world is changing and four trends are transforming the global business environment.

1. Organisations are continuously changing; reacting to external forces and anticipating trends. Consider the wealth of research which evidences how so many change programmes fail due to the lack of employee engagement – one can immediately define the role of the internal communicator.

2. Businesses are growing, spanning vast geographies and industries. Being able to communicate efficiently up, down and sideways around strategic direction, projects and market insight is essential.

3. The world is more transparent, due to social media and the flow of information. The definition of internal communication is evolving, and it's not just limited to the internal workings of a company.

4. Employee expectations and demands of their organisations are rising, and expectations are of continuous interaction, engagement and feedback.

As such, organisations will be increasingly turning to internal communications to be the guardian of their organisation's identity and culture – and maintain a strong internal defence against these macro influencers.

Three Value Generators:

The internal communicator is in the ideal position to help guide organisations through this new world order by:

1. Clearly and meaningfully communicating an organisation's purpose and connecting employees to a strong narrative. Employees are increasingly driven by engagement and purpose in order to perform optimally and drive innovation and change.

2. Breaking down barriers between teams and functions. Organisations only benefit from their size if they are able to facilitate real collaboration – across teams, geographies and cultures.

3. Empowering employees by giving them a voice. Employees who make choices in line with business targets, purpose and strategy, propel the business forward at maximum speed.

Five Enablers:

Communicators can adjust to this true value-adding role by:

1. Getting closer to all parts of the organisation. Listen to what people say, ask stupid questions, get a feel for the mood, understand what makes the business tick and what keeps your CEO awake at night.

2. Getting back to basics – developing and practicing our core skills. A key element in building trust with your senior management – and eventually bridging to the boardroom – really comes down to delivering every time. It often starts with writing that great speech.

3. Acting with confidence to gain the right influence and a strong reputation. If leaders don't exactly know how internal communication contributes – tell them, show them, and tell them again.

4. Talking numbers – learning the language of ROI and demonstrating the value of IC through evidence. There is a tendency in our profession to focus on

output rather than outcome. Shift your focus to measuring outcome.

5. Know the business – its markets, clients and financials. Being a trusted advisor means always keeping up to date and educating yourself when you need it.

Every organisation is unique, and this core recipe for internal communication success needs to be adapted and customised to fit. That's why we recommend developing your own clearly articulated value proposition.

The Ignite Alliance is a strategic collaboration between Gatehouse and Open, two leading internal communication agencies based in London and Copenhagen respectively, working in partnership to push the boundaries of internal communication. Together, we set out to better understand how the field can be propelled into the next stage of its evolution and maturity.

To learn more, please visit ignite-alliance.com

In the meantime, download the full paper at www.gatehouse.co.uk/signup.

How social media provided a path to humanitarianism

Sarah Robinson of Shell describes how they provided a platform for employees to have open conversations about a new innovation, enabling the organisation to listen in on how people are reacting and use the information they gathered to respond to both employee and customer concerns.

When Shell had introduced an innovative mobile app to be used to pay for petrol without going inside of the station, there was some concern around the safety aspect of using a mobile phone on the forecourt.

Rather than shy away from the few negative comments, we decided not only to face them head on, but to encourage concerns to be voiced and feedback to be heard. We wanted to learn all about people's hesitations with the innovation so we could address them directly.

Success and the inevitable struggle

John Lloyd is a TV and radio producer as well as a writer.

One of his first shows was 'The News Quiz' on Radio 4. He co-wrote a number of radio scripts for 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy', produced 'Not the Nine O'Clock News' and all four series of 'Blackadder', and created 'Spitting Image'.

As if that wasn't enough, he also created 'Have I Got News For You' and co-produced the quiz show 'QI'.

WOW. That is a huge body of successful work.

When a presenter once asked him if any of this had been a struggle, he replied that obviously it had. Behind this amazing catalogue of work were fallouts, multiple sackings and missed opportunities. He became depressed, wondering why he was always starting great projects, then getting fired from them by the people he worked with and respected.

> **"Leaders and managers would rather let sleeping dogs lie. The trouble is, they are rarely sleeping."**

Until he came to realise that what seemed like disaster each time was actually opportunity in disguise.[1]

Shying away from open discussions

We've all heard stories about how there is no success without failure and about how companies have turned failure into successes. Remember the one about 3M whose failed adhesive became the key ingredient in the Post-it note?

So why do most companies shy away from talking about every day mistakes in their internal channels? I am often being asked to write internal articles featuring 'Best Practice' but every time I put out a call for examples of where things have gone wrong so we can share what people learnt, I have to dodge the tumbleweed rolling across the office. It is often the same when I suggest that we tackle known internal issues head on. Leaders and managers would rather 'let sleeping dogs lie'. The trouble is, they are rarely sleeping.

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[1] This story is taken from Dave Trott's book, One + One = Three

This is one of the reasons why I love our internal news channel's comment feature. At the bottom of every article published on 'My News' readers can post a comment. Often they are words of agreement, sometimes they are opinions and occasionally they are direct challenges.

Addressing concerns to provide a platform for discussion

Last year, our Shell Retail Network in the UK piloted a mobile app. called 'Fill Up & Go'. A number of test stations would allow pilot users to fill up their tanks, then, from inside their vehicles, use the app to pay for their fuel. I wrote an article about it which picked up on research about changing customer demands.

We found that it generated a lot of comments, some voicing their support of the move into mobile channels but others voicing their concerns over the safety aspects of using a mobile phone on the forecourt (you've probably all driven up to a petrol pump that has a

sign telling you not to use your mobile phone).

I knew that if people were commenting on the article online, it was a sure bet that others were thinking the same thing. I suggested that we should write an article directly addressing the safety concerns. My argument was that this would allow us to get on the front foot in demonstrating to employees how we had taken all the relevant safety considerations into account whilst also being at the forefront of meeting changing customer demands. Plus, doing nothing wouldn't mean that no one would talk about it. There is no such thing as a vacuum[2] – the grapevine will fill any gap in communication.

Even I was surprised at the discussion it generated, a lot of it very positive. What was interesting was the way that employees moderated the discussion themselves, posting their own answers to comments in direct challenge of the mobile payment system and even quoting external safety research in support of it. They corrected each other,

challenged each other and entered into a healthy debate. Just as they would have done if they had been discussing it while waiting for their coffee. Only this way, we could see the conversations that were taking place.

The project team found it incredibly useful and it helped them shape the ongoing roll-out communications.

Conversations will drive success

What I learnt through this was that human nature is human nature. Employees will always find ways to talk about things going on inside their company, whether it is round the coffee machine, over the photocopier or by posting comments online. As internal communicators, I believe it is part of our job to tune into these conversations and even encourage them.

As Dik Veenman and David Cannon said[3] in The Strategic Importance of Conversations, "Businesses, in fact, run on conversations. And really understanding what is going on inside

an organisation requires leaders to be able to tap into these conversations." P.S. For anyone wondering about how safe it is to use your mobile phone to pay at the pump, it is safe to use a mobile phone from inside your car on a forecourt, but not outside the vehicle. Once you've activated the pump at a Shell Station, you should leave your phone in the car.[4]

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Biography:
Sarah Robinson

Sarah Robinson is an Internal Communication Manager at Shell. With over 20 years' experience in communications across various organisations, she has spent the last 10 years in the oil and gas industry.

@robbo391

[3] The Strategic Importance of Conversations" http://www.therightconversation.co.uk/pdfs/The_Strategic_Importance_of_Conversations.pdf
[4] Taken from the Shell UK Fill Up & Go FAQs http://www.shell.co.uk/motorist/shell-fuels/fill-up-and-go.html

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