

Research Brief Series

THE PRACTICE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION A LOOK INSIDE ORGANIZATIONS | Part 3

Global Research Report

The Next Level

The Business Value of Good Internal Communication

December 2019



IC
Kollectif

The report, [The Next Level](#), by IC Kollektif, examines the value and practice of internal communication (IC) from many angles around one central theme: the business value of good internal communication. This publication is part of a series on topics and issues addressed in the 164-page global report. Following are interviews conducted mid-2018 with ten communication professionals from five industries - Pharmaceuticals, Retail, Telecommunications, Utilities & Energy, Automotive - to find out what the practice of internal communication look like in their own organization. The full report is available at ickollektif.com/report.

INSIDE ORGANIZATIONS THE REALITY ON THE GROUND

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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

INTERSECTION OF INTERNAL & EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

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?

EFFECTIVE IC: MINDSETS, BEHAVIOURS & PRACTICES

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

VALUE OF IC

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

IMPACT OF IC

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

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 communications don't



Guy Britt is the Global Head of Internal Communication at IKEA Group, and he is based in Sweden. He defines his key responsibilities as inspiring and engaging many co-workers across the IKEA global network. He is based in Sweden. IKEA employs 150,000 people across 30 countries.

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.

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



Alicia Martínez Venero is the Head of Communications Peru, at Enel Peru. She is responsible for internal, external, branding, and digital communication. Enel Peru employs 1,100 people. As of March 2018, the Enel Group employs around 63,000 people and operates in 34 countries across five continents.

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.

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.

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 Research¹, 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.

¹ Note: Some findings of the research are presented on page 94.

"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).

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.

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.

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.

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. . .

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. This facilitates consistency and efficiency.

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



Vija Valentukonyte-Urbanaviciene is the Acting Head of Communications and CEO at Telia Lithuania. 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.

About the report - The Next Level is the first publication of its kind bringing together C-suite leaders, in-house communication professionals/executives, and academics across all continents. Based on primary and secondary research, the report takes the conversation about internal communication to the strategic management level. Via solid insights, advice, frameworks and resources, *The Next Level* covers critical topics and issues dealing with today's challenges and future needs to truly help practitioners better position themselves as trusted counsellors and advisors and communicate on the same strategic level with senior management. Find out more and download the full global report at: ickollectif.com/report.

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Contact: Email info@ickollectif.com | **Twitter** @IC_Kollektiv | **LinkedIn** | **Facebook** | **Website** ickollectif.com

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