

Research Brief Series

THE PRACTICE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION A LOOK INSIDE ORGANIZATIONS | Part 1

Global Research Report

The Next Level

The Business Value of Good Internal Communication

October 2019



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 eight communication professionals from six industries - Airlines/Aviation, Automotive, Building Materials, Chemicals, Computer Software and Construction - to find out what the practice of internal communication look like in their own organization. The full report is available at ickollectif.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?

Tom Murphy

Experiment. Measure. Adapt.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Tom Murphy is the Director of Communications at Microsoft Digital, Services, and Success (DSS), and he is based in the USA. His team is responsible for global communications for Microsoft Digital, Services, and Success, including executive communications, internal communications, employee engagement, PR, analyst relations, events, and internal intranet sites. Microsoft Digital, Services, and Success (DSS) employs 23,000 people and operates in 140 countries.

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

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

Alignment is critical

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

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

Embrace uncertainty. Take risks.
Learn from mistakes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Anchor IC to business priorities

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

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

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

The balanced scorecard for IC

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

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

Antonia Ashton

Battling acronyms, tech-speak and jargon

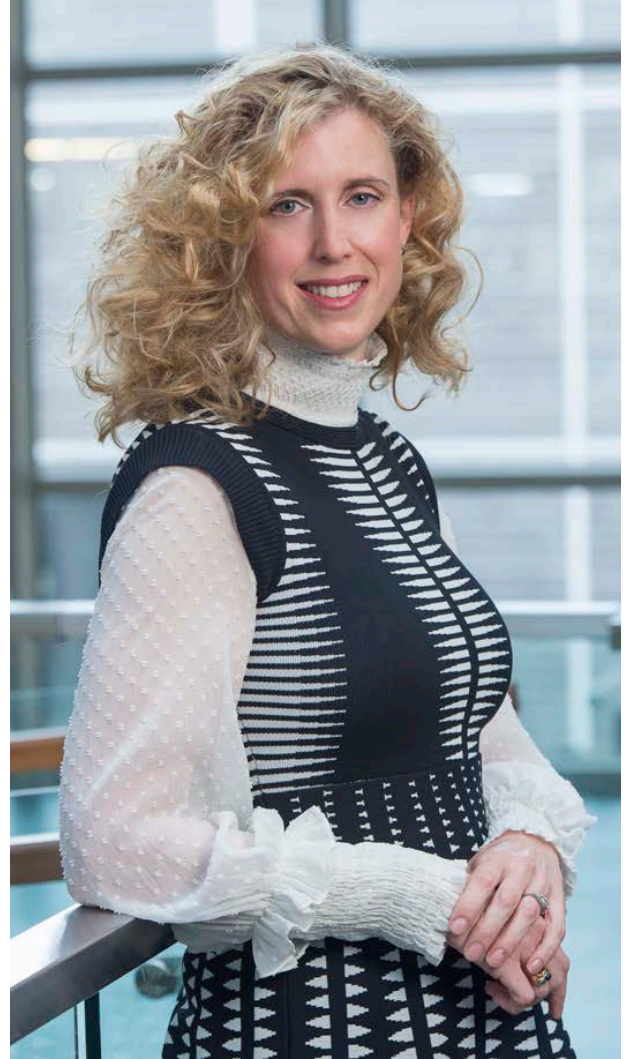
As one of the world's leaders in the enterprise software space and a complex German engineering heritage, SAP is by no means free of the tech jargon and messaging complexity that dogs the communication of many players in our industry. While we have made great strides in decluttering and fine-tuning our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

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

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

The virtual circle approach

People often talk about internal and external



Antonia Ashton is the Vice-president, Communications, SAP EMEA South. Based in South Africa, she is responsible for the entire communications portfolio for SAP in Africa, Middle East, and South Europe. This includes communications strategy, reputation management, executive thought leadership, employee communication, crisis communication, media and influencer management, corporate social responsibility communication, content creation, copy editing, speech writing, and event and project management. SAP SE, has 91,120 employees and operates in 180 countries.

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

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

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

All audiences expect to be heard

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

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

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

Creating value, growing competencies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Speaking the language of business

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

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

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

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

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

Mark Dollins

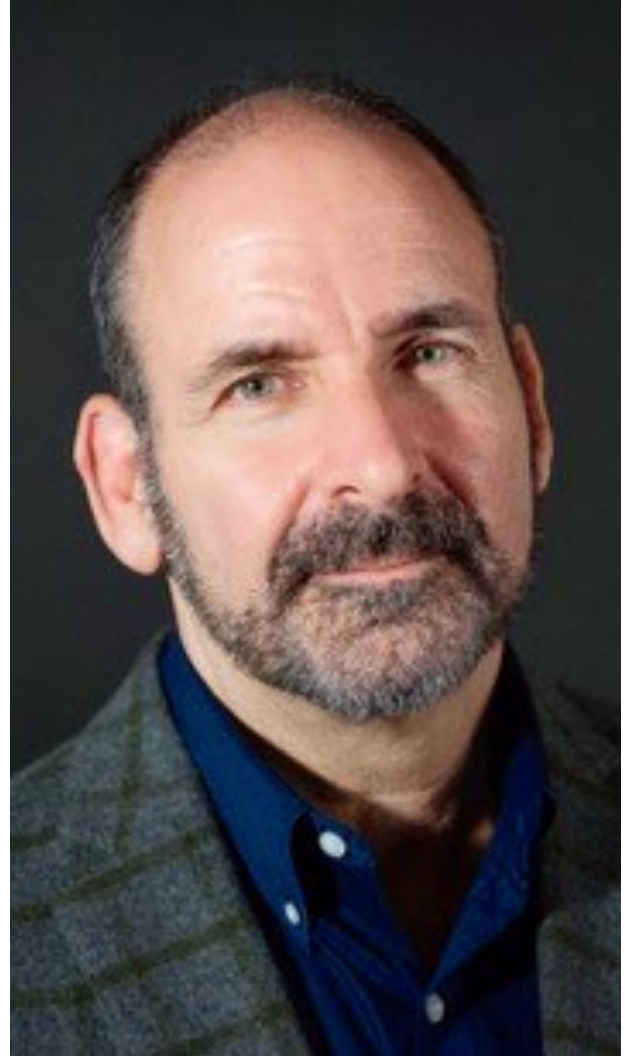
Doing more with less

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

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

Working outside in/inside out

My global internal communications work with PepsiCo and DuPont has been rooted in a concept I've come to call 'outside in/inside out.' Essentially it's assumed that any internal communication can have external implications, and vice-versa. We don't look at this dynamic as something to deal with. We look at it as an opportunity to drive clear and consistent messaging for whatever business initiative or result it's designed to drive. Internal and external sub-functions were aligned under one communications structure, which is the right way to do it. It affords regular interaction between communications professionals who manage internal and external stakeholders. We partner on messaging, align on strategy and metrics, and remain in lockstep for execution. Clearly, everything from messaging



Mark Dollins is based in the USA, and he was formerly the Head of Executive & Global Employee Communications, at DuPont. He is currently the President of North Star Communications Consulting, LLC. At DuPont, his key responsibilities included global employee communications, executive communications, communications talent management, and change management communications. DuPont has 35,000 employees and operations in >90 countries.

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

Building leader communication competencies

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

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

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

Connecting internal communication and business results

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

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

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

Terhi Kivinen

Doing more with less, teaching others how to communicate

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

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

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



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

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

Managing communication is a team sport

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

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

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

Using big data and more tools

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

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

Leaders support internal communication

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

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

How we demonstrate the impact of IC on organizational goals

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

Selva Carbajal

IC practitioners must assume their role as business partners

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

The integrated communication function

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



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

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

IC is among 12 factors evaluated against employee engagement

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

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

Measuring the impact of IC

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

Strategy, roles, and results

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

1. Every year we develop a strategic plan with objectives totally aligned with the business.
2. We segment the audiences and implement a strategy we call 'glocal' with 70/30 content: 70% customized actions for special audiences by location and 30% standardized actions to ensure alignment and consistency in the message.
3. We act at all times not only as a trusted advisor with communication expertise but as a business partner that participates in decision processes from scratch. It is important to know the business and speak the language of the business.
4. We measure our results through the same metrics used by the rest of the company (EBIT, Free Cash Flow, Market Share), but we also implement our own KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) through ad hoc measurement tools such as opinion polls or data analytics that allow us to understand the impact and assessment of the different actions.

Iwona Burzyńska

Holistic, organic communication

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

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

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

Structure and process are keys to success

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



Iwona Burzyńska is the Director of Communications and External Relations at Lafarge Poland and VP of WSPÓLNIE LafargeHolcim Foundation. She is responsible for advocacy, public affairs and influencer strategy, public relations and media relations, including spokespersons, marketing communications and integrated marketing communications campaigns, internal communications, digital and social media, corporate and marketing events, CSR, strategy of WSPÓLNIE LafargeHolcim Foundation, team management, and project management. Lafarge Poland employs 1500 employees and operates in 50 locations in Poland. Lafarge Poland is a member of LafargeHolcim Group worldwide.

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

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

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

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

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

Irreplaceable mindsets, behaviours, and processes

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

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

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

A seat at the table

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

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

KPIs to track our impact

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

Susan Blundell

Customization, speed, budget

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

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

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

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

Strong communication and shared process mark integrated communication

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Values guide thinking and behaviour

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

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

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

Using data, running pilot projects, and multiple channels

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reinforcing business strategy

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shel Holtz

Building IC from the ground up

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

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

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

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

- Supervisors are not communicating corporate priorities to their teams, which means they're also not explaining what those priorities mean for their teams or how they'll work differently to support them.
- Most communication is face-to-face, contained within micro-tribes that have formed as the company has grown. Not a lot of information gets in or out. Each micro-culture has created its own narrative based on the conversations that take place within it. Each sees itself as different from the others and the company as a whole. Success stories and innovative practices are not shared.
- Because of these micro-cultures, employees don't recognize that their colleagues at other sites share the company's core values the same way they do.



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

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

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

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

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

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

Limited external communication focus

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

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

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

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

Strong face-to-face communication supported by IC media

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

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

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

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

Leading and lagging indicators of IC impact

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

Measuring impact as the plan unfolds

Our strategic plan includes specific targets which we will update regularly using a dashboard that business leaders will be able to access. We also will produce a monthly report to leaders that summarizes the key information from the dashboard.

Editor Note: This interview is based on a mid-2018 internal communication audit.

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.

About the Research Brief series - 'Research Brief' is a publication series based on the findings of the global research report The Next Level. Each edition of the series is available at ickollectif.com/next-level-research-brief.

About IC Kollectif - IC Kollectif is an award-winning global organization dedicated to the strategic management of internal communication as a business function. The independent non-profit is based in Montreal and shares knowledge, insights and research from around the world on the practice of IC with people in more than 163 countries. For more information on IC Kollectif, please see our website ickollectif.com.

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

© IC Kollectif, October 2019. Quotes from other published reports, respective publishers. See full copyright notice inside the [global report](#). All rights reserved. No part this document may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from IC Kollectif.

The local version of spelling is used out of respect for the contributors and in recognition of the global community.

The global report is supported by **IABC**, the **Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management** and by **The Conference Board**.

We acknowledge the financial support of SocialChorus for the Research Brief series.

Industry Partner | Gold Level

