

Internal Communications

# Inform, Support, and Listen



## Shaping the Employee Experience: The Power of Proactive Internal Communications

Dramatic world events — whether economic, social, health-related, or as we are seeing in 2020, a combination of all three — have magnified the importance and value of effective communications on a number of fronts. In this regard, effective internal communications can act as the glue that holds the workforce together — **building culture, informing and engaging employees**, and **keeping the workforce calm and focused** in times of crisis.

Over the past few months, COVID-19 has drastically changed the modern work environment. Now more than ever, timely, credible, and thoughtful communication is paramount to your employees. Messaging needs to be consistent across all communication channels and levels of management to avoid conflicting information that could create unnecessary stress and anxiety.

A strategic and adaptable internal communications approach can mitigate this risk and elevate the employee experience to bring substantial value to the organization.

# Internal Communication and the Employee Experience

While the pandemic has turned a number of management, human resources, and communication practices upside down, communication has suddenly become core to both the strategic and operational reality for most organizations.

This new reality is now increasingly focused on the concept of the “employee experience.” The employee experience is the intersection of an employee’s expectation, their environment within the organization, and the life and career events that shape their journey.



## Why is communication key to the employee experience and how can it help keep the workforce calm, focused, and productive in uncertain times?

The employee experience is broad and ever changing — that is why it is important to create an **internal communication strategy** that is thoughtful, adaptable, and grows with the needs of your employees. Your communication strategy will drive the employee experience, shaping your employee’s perception of the organization, its culture, and where and how employees fit in.

**Proactive communications** can empower and guide employees, creating a solid foundation for growth and adaptability. This can be especially important during times of uncertainty when employees have a heightened need for credible, consistent, and aligned information to help them perform their duties, achieve success, and stay connected to the organization and its broader goals.

## What are the elements of a proactive communication strategy?

When looking at your approach to internal communication, consider the four following questions:

**1**

**Are you consistent?**

**2**

**Are you building engagement and culture?**

**3**

**Is there alignment throughout the organization?**

**4**

**Are you using meaningful delivery platforms?**

A thoughtful internal communications strategy builds on these four questions by developing a communication brand that is **enriching, embracing, empathetic, and efficient**. Having a strong and identifiable communication brand will help elevate the employee experience. To do this, your messaging and approach should:



**Be transparent**

Transparent communication builds trust between the employee and the organization. Providing a window into the leadership methodology can help employees feel engaged, informed, and valued.



**Provide context**

Decisions are not made in a vacuum; make sure you tell the “why” and have messages developed to support the decision.



**Provide consistent updates**

Build templates and establish communication channels so updates can be created and sent quickly to keep employees informed.



**Give employees a voice**

Put employees at the heart of the design and create channels for open two-way communication.



**Leverage credible sources**

Engage communication expertise and look for support tools and resources that can help ease the burden on your HR team.



**Embrace digital with traditional**

In today’s world, it is hard to reach all employees via one channel. Combine modern tools and technology with traditional options to engage the workforce.



**Let your leaders lead**

Empower people managers at all levels to communicate with confidence. Provide them with clear delegated authorities, training, tool kits, key messages, and FAQs to ensure all employees are hearing the same information in a timely way.



**Ignite purpose**

Foster a sense of community by tapping into virtual platforms to keep your work culture and team spirit alive.

# How to get started

- 1 Review and take stock of your current communication activities — both formal and informal.
- 2 Define your audiences.
- 3 Set clear goals and objectives with realistic timelines.
- 4 Explore communication channels that are user friendly and accessible to your audiences.
- 5 Measure your progress, and adjust as needed.

## How can building a communication network support your strategy?

Ensuring messaging is aligned and supported at all levels can help improved employee engagement, acceptance, and understanding. A poorly delivered communication strategy can have dramatic negative consequences for your employees, customers, the overall organization, and your brand. Ensuring that managers and supervisors have clear, delegated authorities to communicate with their direct reports, and understand their role as organizational ambassadors, is key to effectively positioning your communication strategy for success while containing risk.

Building a successful communication network can be done by:



Engaging leadership in the development of your internal communication strategy



Creating a playbook to ensure alignment across the organization



Giving leaders and supervisors time to understand the messages and ask questions before having to relay or support messaging



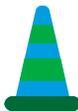
Providing resources to front-line supervisors with key messages and FAQs to help them communicate effectively



Identifying and empowering communication champions and ambassadors at all levels of the organization



Ensuring front line managers and supervisors know what they can say and when they can share it within their delegated authority



Making communication champions, ambassadors, and people managers aware of the risks created by inconsistent messaging and arming them with the appropriate tools to mitigate these risks



Understanding who employees will ask questions to and ensuring these employees feel supported

# Moving Forward

## The Approach

***There is no one size fits all solution for developing an effective internal communications strategy.***

Different lines of business and segments of your employee population may have different communication expectations. Understanding these segments, and how they consume content, will be vital to developing your strategy, content, and distribution channels. Because of this, a good internal communication strategy needs to be adaptable.

When developing an effective internal communication strategy, take the time to engage stakeholders to create a strategy that puts employees at the heart of the design. This combined with proper training, support, and delegated authority for people leaders will ensure your strategy will foster a rewarding experience for employees and act as a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining key talent.

In today's challenging business environment, it is safe to say that effective internal communication is more important than ever. Proactive internal communication can lead employees through this journey, no matter what direction it takes. As you navigate these uncharted times, ensure you are reviewing and adjusting your strategy as needed to keep your employees informed, focused, and engaged. Taking these steps will help influence and shape employee behavior, and help you maintain efficiency and productivity throughout this time of crisis.