


B2E

**INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS: THE GLUE
THAT HOLDS EVERYTHING
TOGETHER**

SOUND BITES






Communications has never been more important. It is the glue that holds everything together. If we communicate effectively with our colleagues, presuming what we're saying is authentic, people will feel a stronger connection to an organisation, a sense of inclusion and belonging.

Andy Grant Communications manager, Elior UK

Everyone's fighting for talent. It's a candidate-led market. The work model on offer will play a part in this battle, but it's how that's communicated that really matters. Employees are looking for guidance, clarity and a bit of direction.

Sophia Williams Internal communications & engagement manager, Appsbroker



Organisations that prioritise how they communicate with their workforces will always outperform those that fail in this area. In turbulent or uncertain times, the need for effective communications strategies is heightened. Communicating well ensures that despite the current challenges employees feel connected and cared for.

C-J Green Co-founder at Brave Goose and co-creator of Clever Goose HR Tech

Every employee is looking for regular communication. But the channels they use and engage with differ, depending on personality type, generation and so on. People have different learning styles – visual, auditory, reading & writing, kinaesthetic. It's the same with communications. People digest information differently. A communications programme has to consider that as to not alienate anyone. It has to come in a lot of shapes and forms.

James Bradley COO, Churchill Group

INTRO

BY JO SUTHERLAND, MD, MAGENTA ASSOCIATES

One of the many important talking points of The Great Workplace Conversation over the past three years has been how we talk about change. Whenever anybody refers to people 'returning to work', they can expect to be corrected by somebody else pointing out that most people never stopped working during the various lockdowns. They'd stopped going into work. In the same way, people are likely to point out that the office and the workplace are often two different things.

Words matter. Precision matters. Shared ideas matter. Engagement matters. And they especially matter when it comes to communicating change to an increasingly diverse and dispersed workforce.

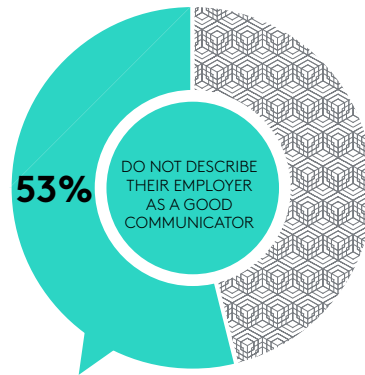
That is why so many organisations are now placing so much emphasis on their internal communications. It is an essential part of change management. It is happening while the times and place of work are changing more than at any point in history. And when we have more and better technology to apply in comms strategies, we know how to meet this challenge.



Organisations are
now placing so much
emphasis on their internal
communications

RESEARCH

Research by Magenta Associates has revealed that marketing priorities are shifting. Since March 2020, the new focus for business and marketing leaders is to communicate more effectively with employees. Internal communications is not new, but never before has this discipline been so complex, particularly with so many organisations embracing hybrid work models.



Magenta surveyed 2,000 employees to explore how they rate their employer's communication – 53% did not describe their employer as a good communicator. 70% of employees couldn't agree that their employer is clear about the company's work policy now that Covid-19 restrictions have eased. What's more, one in three did not believe their views are considered before their employer makes decisions that affect them in the workplace.

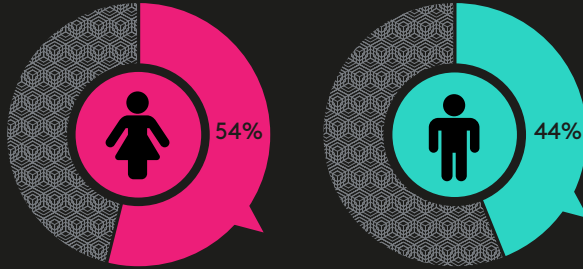
With many organisations in the process of redefining, refining or even reimagining the employee experience on offer, more attention needs to be paid to how workplace change, whatever that change looks like, is managed and communicated. Because that process can make or break a workplace strategy and the employee experience that goes with it.

Despite 83% of business leaders agreeing that employee communications is more important today than prior to March 2020, 35% admitted they lack expertise and support in this area. The biggest communications challenges were communicating workplace change, health & wellbeing, training, and learning and development, followed by encouraging collaboration between dispersed teams, clarifying remote working etiquette, and culture management.

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place

George Bernard Shaw

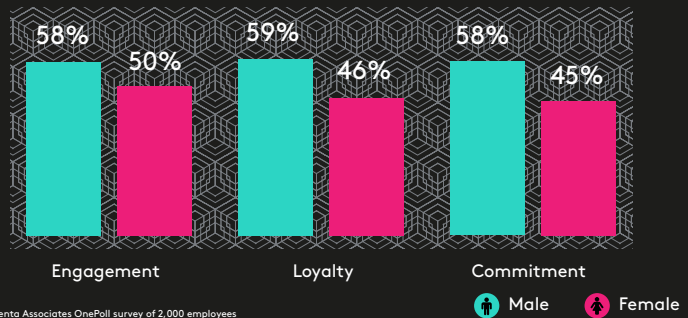
More female employees agree that good communication supports wellbeing:



Magenta Associates OnePoll survey of 2,000 employees

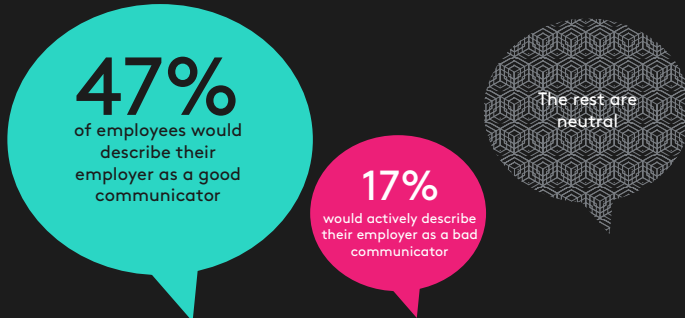
As voted by employees, poor communication negatively affects morale (80%), job satisfaction (68%), engagement (53%), loyalty (50%), commitment (49%), work ethic (39%), health & wellness (34%). Everyone in the 18-24 age group says poor communication impacts 'job satisfaction & engagement'.

As a consequence of poor communication, men are more likely to suffer with a lack of:



Magenta Associates OnePoll survey of 2,000 employees

Would you describe your employer as a good communicator?



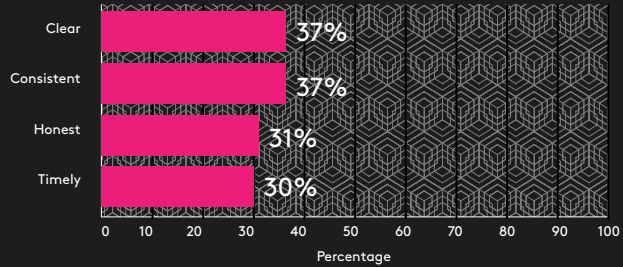
Magenta Associates OnePoll survey of 2,000 employees

The property sector fares 7% higher than average. The worst is transport & logistics, with 29% of employees describing their employer as a bad communicator – 12 percentage points higher than average.

Employer communications also fail when decision-makers are not leading by example (23% of employees believe this is the case with their employers).

One in three (29%) did not agree that their views are considered before their employer makes decisions that affect them in the workplace.

Employees described their employer's communication as:



Magenta Associates OnePoll survey of 2,000 employees

Only **39%**

of employees can agree that their employers are clear about how, when, and where they're supposed to work

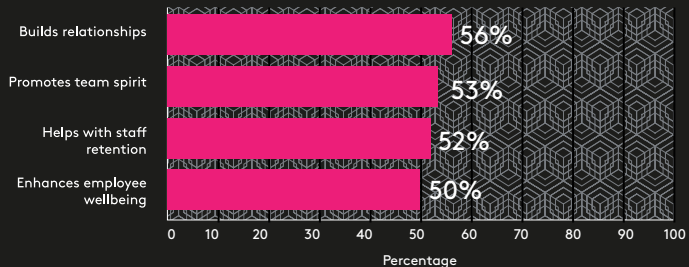


(43% for those in property), and 30% said their employer is clear about the company's work policy now that all Covid-19 restrictions have lifted.

Magenta Associates OnePoll survey of 2,000 employees

A third of those surveyed believe good communication can inspire ideas (36%) and encourage innovation (34%). 42% think effective communication can help people fulfil their potential.

As voted by employees, effective communication is important to an organisation's success because it:



Magenta Associates OnePoll survey of 2,000 employees

WHAT IS INTERNAL COMMUNICATION?

Internal communication is the sharing of information, ideas, principles and culture between the employees, managers and other stakeholders of an organisation. It consists of formal and informal communication. Formal, planned communication can be verbal, electronic or printed.

Informal communication can be organic or nudged and prompted as part of a planned, comprehensive internal comms strategy.

Traditionally, this may have happened as part of daily working life as people shared the same times and places of work. Increasingly, this is more likely to take place over electronic media as an element of online meetings, messaging and video conferences. It is primarily synchronous, whereas more formal comms can be both synchronous and asynchronous, meaning they do not depend on people engaging at the same time.

WHY IT MATTERS?

Internal communication is vital for the culture, wellbeing and strength of an organisation. Without it,

managers would find it more difficult to lead employees, while employees would lose sight of their culture and shared purpose.

Creates a shared culture

It is essential that people work together on the basis of common culture, goals and ideals. This will be rooted in the structures of the organisation, the design of its offices, the technology it uses, the way information flows, its ambitions and the products and services it offers. But it is also evident in the way people behave towards one another, the way they talk and the ideas they share.

Increases employee engagement

People need to feel engaged with what they do, and internal communications has a major role to play. They need feedback on what they do but they also need to feel connected to it. They need to understand how their role and the way they go about it impacts the organisation, their colleagues and the outside world. That what they do matters.

Maintains organisational cohesion

Misunderstandings can be toxic. Internal comms can minimise the potential for misunderstanding and set the ways in which people discuss

ideas and share values. When problems do arise, as they will, internal comms has the potential to resolve them and restore a harmonious workplace.

Manages diversity and dispersal

An effective internal comms strategy should embrace everybody, regardless of their background, beliefs, personality, personal circumstances and place of work. What matters is not what is different about people, but what they have in common.

Encourages collaboration and innovation

Through its ability to create a cohesive culture and allow people to express themselves as important parts of a team, internal comms can foster collaborative work, the sharing of ideas and information and, therefore, drive innovation. It can help tear down the barriers between people and departments to drive the organisation forward.

Leadership is about encouraging people. It's about stimulating them. It's about enabling them to achieve what they can achieve – and to do that with a purpose

Christine Lagarde

MANAGING CHANGE

In his 2020 book *Elemental Change*, the workplace expert Neil Usher dedicates a whole chapter to the challenge of communicating change. This is now one of the cornerstones of any effective internal comms strategy. He writes:



We want – and need – to know what’s happening. But not just that. We also need to know why it’s happening, how it’s going to happen, who’s doing what, when and where it’s happening, what it means for me, what I need to do, what happens if it doesn’t happen, and what happens if something else happens instead.”



All of these questions and more should be addressed in an internal comms strategy. A study published in the Journal of Health Organization and Management set out to explore the main issues in successful organisational change based on previous research. Although the researchers couldn't define a universally applicable roadmap, they did discover that some factors were common to most successful change programmes that can be tied to an internal comms strategy.

Like a human being, a company has to have an internal communication mechanism, a "nervous system", to coordinate its actions

Bill Gates

▶ **Align vision and action**

There needs to be a universal understanding of how change applies to people at every level of the organisation. If a process is changed, everyone involved needs to understand what has changed, why it has changed and what it means for them.

▶ **Make incremental changes**

Particularly in larger organisations, resistance to change can often be overcome by making it about baby steps and communicating these and the reasons behind them to everybody.

▶ **Foster distributed leadership**

Leadership should not come solely from the top. Everybody in a management role of any kind should be a leader. So, the goals of the organisation and the reasoning behind them should be evident to anybody who leads others.

▶ **Promote staff engagement**

When staff have concerns about the way change is implemented, it's important to listen to them, then engage with them positively so their ideas are taken on board and they understand the thinking behind the change process.

▶ **Create collaborative relationships**

Organisations rely on people and departments to work together in the pursuit of shared goals. Increased collaboration and communication means change embeds more quickly and people feel more engaged in the process.

▶ **Continually assess and learn**

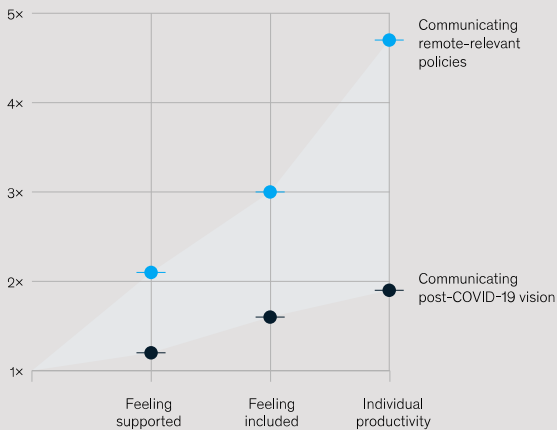
The two-way process of a great internal comms approach is essential in managing change. It encourages feedback and dialogue which the researchers found helps leaders to nudge change in the right direction and learn from mistakes.

When communication fails,
it's rarely the fault of the
audience

Neil Usher

Organisations with clearer communication are seeing benefits to employee well-being and productivity.

Importance of communicating vision and policies on productivity, support, and inclusion, impact multiples



Note: All analyses conducted while controlling for all other predictors, region, industry, company size, job level, age, gender, and parental status (n = 4,854–5,043). Source: Reimagine Work: Employee Survey (Dec 2020–Jan 2021, n = 5,043 full-time employees who work in corporate or government settings)

McKinsey
& Company

THE HYBRID WORKING CHALLENGE

According to a [2021 report from McKinsey](#), one of the major challenges organisations will have to address in the new era of remote and hybrid working is how to communicate with a dispersed workforce. One of the key findings of the report is how important effective communication is for their wellbeing, engagement and productivity.

Conversely, and perhaps inevitably, a lack of communication leads to feelings of disengagement and a fall in wellbeing and productivity.

The report concludes: "Organisations that convey more detailed, remote-relevant policies and approaches see greater increases. Employees who feel included in more detailed communication are nearly five times more likely to report increased productivity. Because communicating about the future can drive performance outcomes today, leaders should consider increasing the frequency of their employee updates—both to share what's already decided and to communicate what is still uncertain."

AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY

The golden rule of any effective communications strategy is to make it accessible and simple. Co-ordination of coherent messaging is essential so people not only have clarity but are also able to engage with it as part of a two-way process. The choice of the right channels of communication is vital.

Crucially, the strategy must align with the actual behaviour and identity of the organisation. So informal communication and feedback is essential alongside more formalised channels. An effective strategy will typically display a number of important characteristics:

Use clear messaging

As with all forms of communication, the use of jargon and obscure language has the potential to cause misunderstandings. Clarity is important in both the ideas being communicated and the language in which they are expressed.

Develop influencers

Internal influencers, identified as part of the strategy, can not only ensure a consistent message, but also feedback any concerns that people may have with what they are being told. As well as any centralised messaging, influencers play a vital role through the use of social media and other forms of messaging.

Be consistent

Communications need to be aligned with the actual strategy, behaviour and identity of the organisation. Failing to do this could cause more problems than it solves. Also, communication needs to be a long-term consideration. Don't just use it alongside specific change programmes and activities.

Invite feedback

People should be free to communicate back to the organisation, including constructive criticism. This also has the benefit of allowing the organisation

to better understand its employees, encourage diverse voices to speak up and feed into future strategy.

Use multiple channels

There have never been more ways of communicating with people, so use them. This makes messaging more accessible and multiplies the chances the organisation has to engage with people. Some people may prefer videos or podcasts, others blogs, intranets and newsletters, others spoken briefings, and others social media and instant messaging. The important thing is to co-ordinate and use as many as possible.

Measure effectiveness

Ask people what they think of the messaging, both in its style and substance, and measure levels of engagement on digital media.

Good communication is just as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

CONCLUSIONS

As Magenta's internal communications study shows, there is often a mismatch between how important the organisation thinks communication is and how well it actually communicates with the people who work for it.

This is an ongoing challenge and one that is particularly important right now as organisations meet the dual challenge of managing rapid change and communicating with an increasingly diverse and dispersed workforce.

Fortunately, we have the knowledge and tools at our disposal to be able to improve the way organisations communicate with people and listen to them.

• Get in touch today and see how we can help shape the future of your organisation's internal communications:

info@magentaassociates.co
+44 (0)20 3773 3622



Office 3, Design Quarter
129-130 Edward Street
Brighton BN2 0JL

info@magentaassociates.co
+44 (0)20 3773 3622

magentaassociates.co