



Report

Global State of Internal Communications 2020



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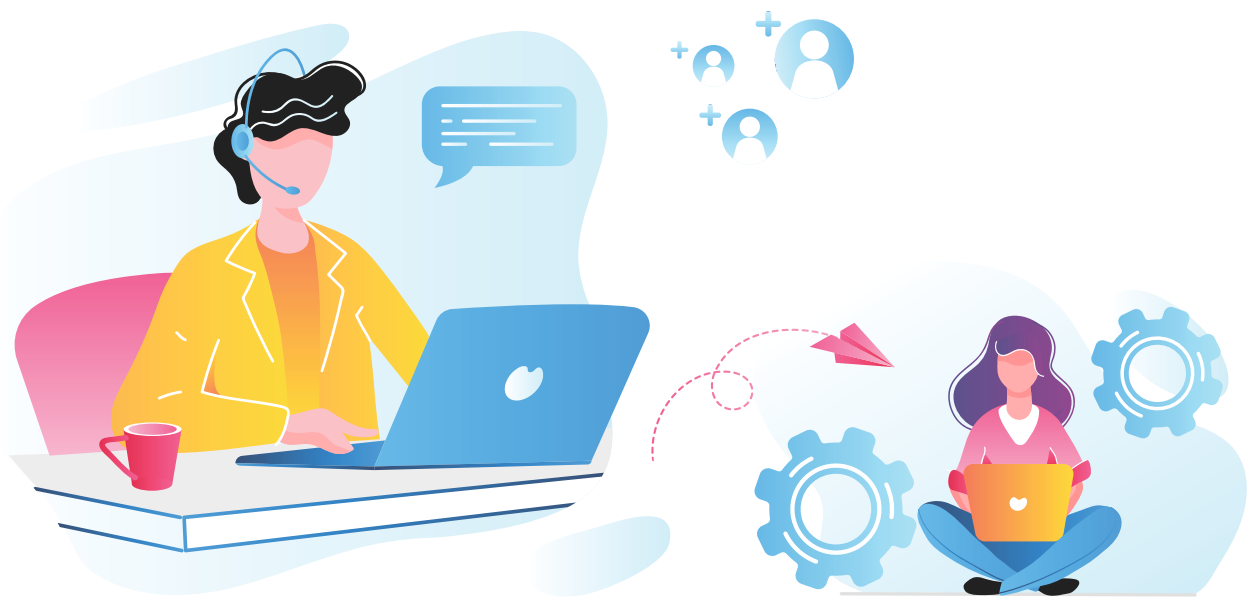
1. Introduction

Internal Communications is in a transitory phase, moving away from being a nice-to-have to a must-have for businesses across the globe.

For decades, experts have discussed the power of effective communication and its positive impact on interpersonal dynamics. This philosophy spread through organizations as they realized that it's impossible for a company to achieve profitability and growth without investing in its people.

Yet as a field, internal communications continues to face difficulties when it comes to getting recognized and prioritized for the value it creates.

With the onset of COVID-19, the world is seeing a radical transformation in the way companies work. This scenario presents a unique window for internal communications to prove its worth. For internal communicators, now is the time to get ahead of the curve, find opportunity in shifting trends, and come to the forefront of company strategy.





2. Executive Summary

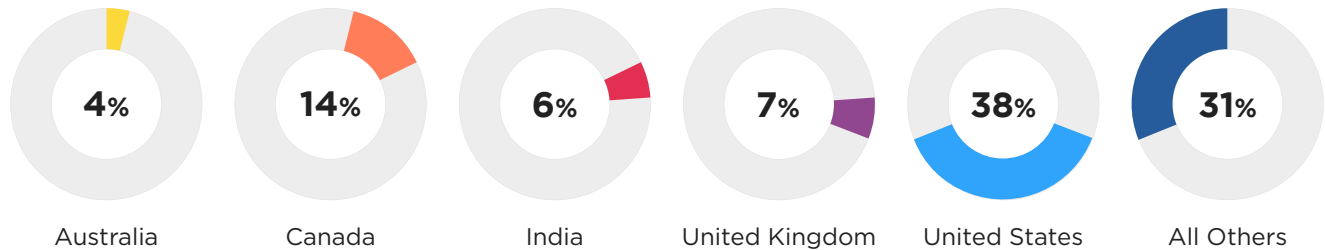
In this report, ContactMonkey highlights key trends shaping internal communications in 2020. The following insights come from our Global State of Internal Communications 2020 Survey, and are supported by secondary research sources.

Report Highlights:

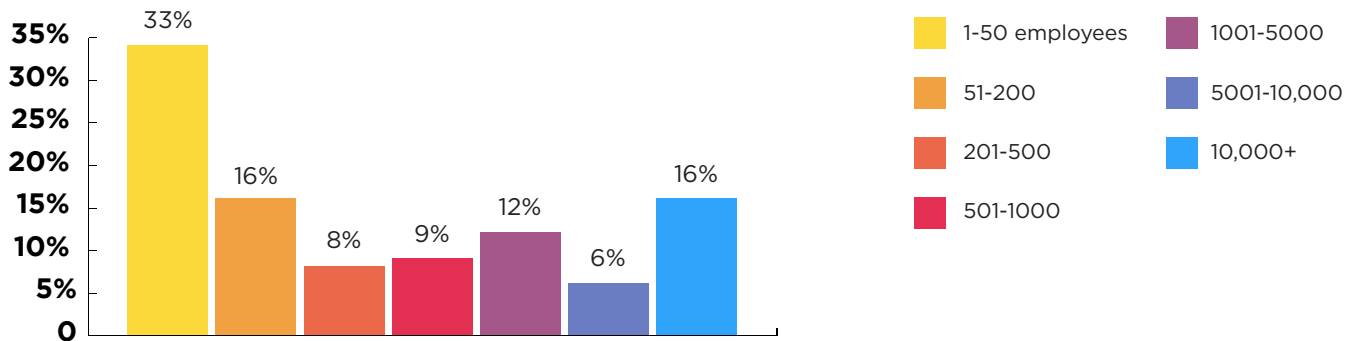
- The primary goal of internal communicators is to drive employee engagement leading to higher productivity, improved retention levels, and a happier workforce
- Internal communicators are challenged with budgetary and resource constraints that prevent them from enhancing their efforts and showcasing the true value of internal communications
- Measuring internal communications is one of the biggest obstacles to building credibility for the domain within an organization
- Research indicates that leaders recognize the importance of internal communications, but often fail to prioritize it when making business decisions
- Internal communicators seek to create a communication strategy that is holistic, timely, clear, and consistent in order to boost employee participation rates
- Email is by far the most popular channel for internal communications in 2020, with 95% of internal communicators using email as their primary communication channel

3. Respondent Profile

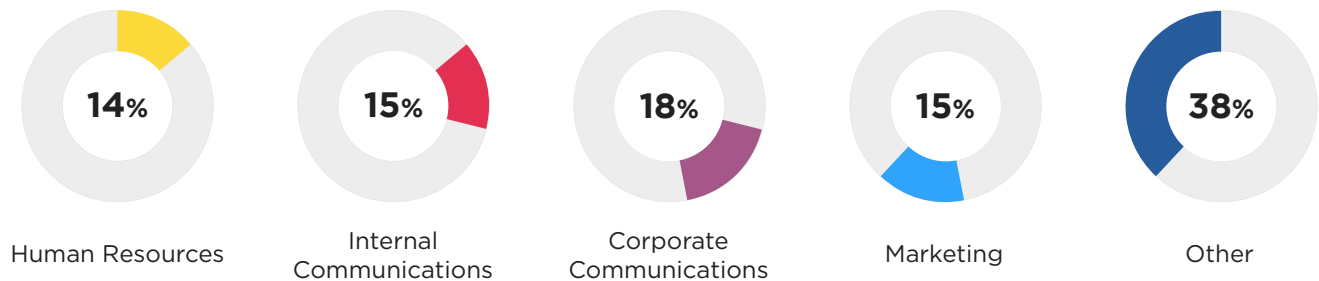
3.1 Location of survey respondents



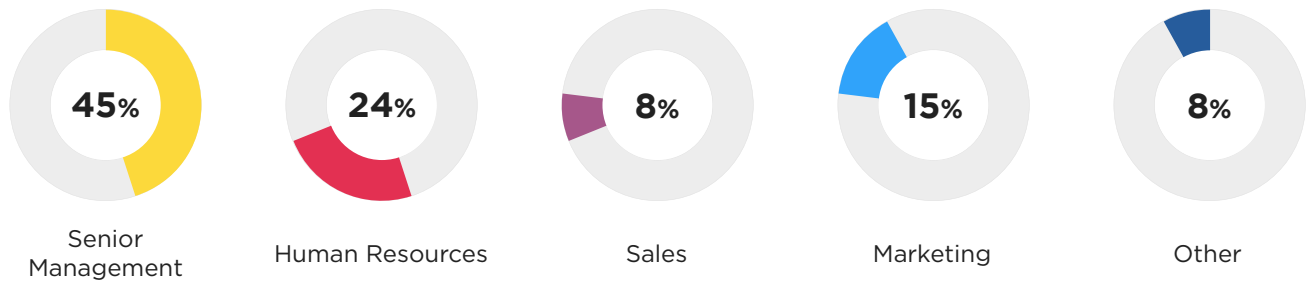
3.2 Sizes of the companies respondents represent



3.3 Department of respondents



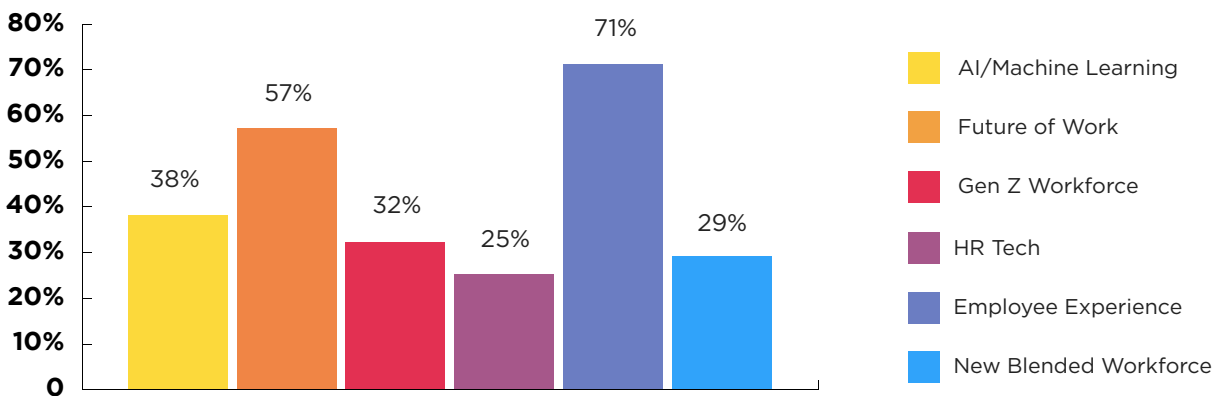
3.4 Stakeholders working closely with respondents



4. Trends

4.1 Topical

Most Popular Trends of 2020



Employee Experience is a leading trend that has captured the attention of 71% of internal communicators in 2020.

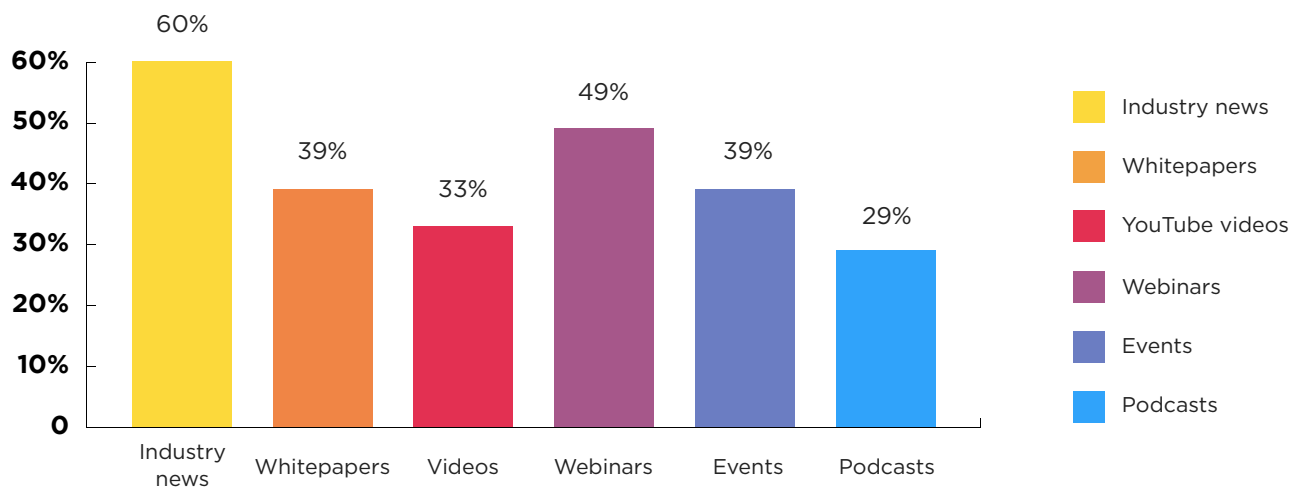
A good employee experience is integral to employee engagement, satisfaction, productivity, and company profitability. A [Deloitte University Press](#) study states that “...80% of executives rated the employee experience as very important (42%) or important (38%), but only 22% reported that their companies were excellent at building a differentiated employee experience.”

Clearly, employee experience has become progressively central to companies looking to take their people strategy to the next level. Internal communications is all about improving how an employee interacts with the company they work for, and it is no surprise that employee experience goals coincide with those of internal communications.

The Future of Work is another topic that sparked the interest of 57% of survey respondents. The nature of the workplace is evolving quickly, and companies need to adapt to growing trends in order to successfully attract, engage, and retain talent. As remote work rises in popularity, companies need to innovate to motivate, engage, and encourage collaboration among remote employees through regular and effective communication. The onset of COVID-19 has only accelerated this trend, with many reports stating that the pandemic will likely change the workplace forever. This scenario presents internal communications with an opportunity to establish its value in an organization.

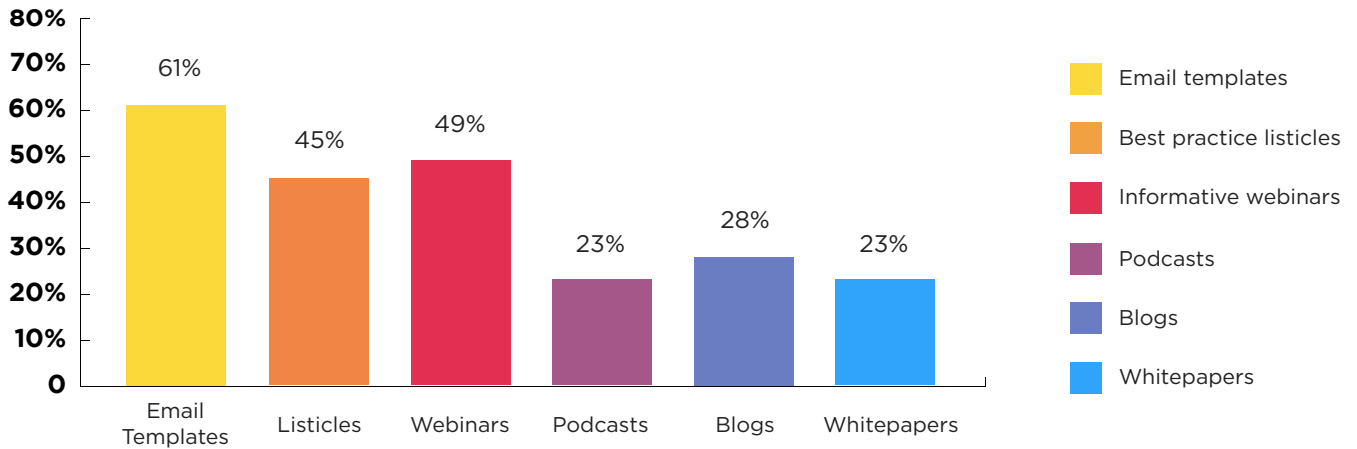
4.2 Content

Preferred Format for Consuming New Content



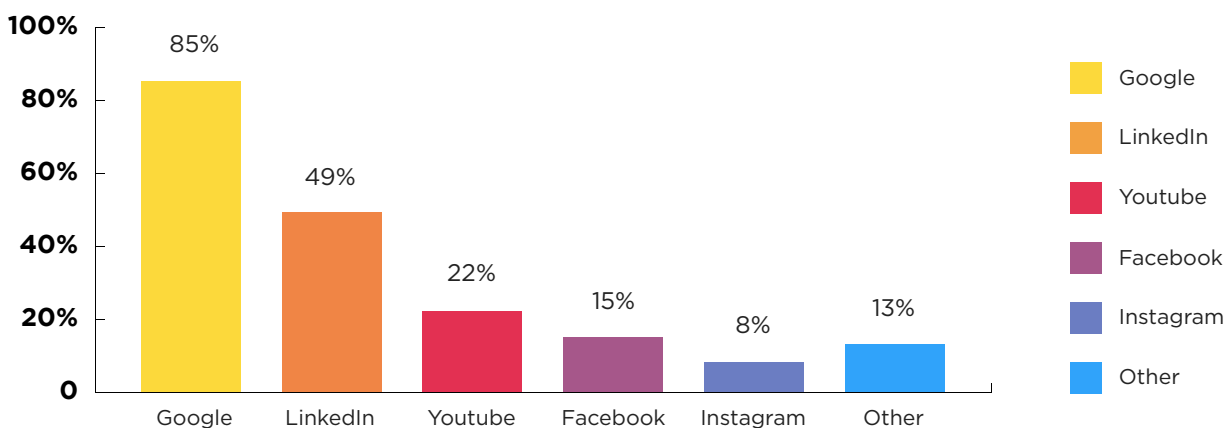
Industry news and webinars are the go-to platforms for internal communicators when it comes to staying informed and updated on all things internal comms.

Email Templates, Listicles, and Webinars are Most Valued



Internal communicators are most interested in content that provides direct, practical value to their communication strategy. Employee newsletters are a powerful tool for regular communication to employees. They help ensure employees are all on the same page and updated on relevant company updates. But newsletters are only effective if employees are actually reading and engaging with them. Therefore, internal communicators see the most value in email templates that are aesthetic, responsive, and engaging.

Respondents' Main Sources of Internal Communications Information



When searching for internal communications content, most internal communicators use Google (85%) and LinkedIn (49%) to gain industry-related knowledge and insights.

Key takeaways:

- Employee Experience (71%) and the Future of Work (57%) are trending topics among internal communicators in 2020
- Industry news (60%) and webinars (49%) are the most popular sources of knowledge for internal communicators
- Email templates (61%) are highly valued by internal communicators, followed by webinars (49%) and listicles (45%)
- Google (85%) and LinkedIn (49%) are the main platforms internal communicators refer to for research





5. Goals

5.1 Key internal communications goals

- 1. Boost employee engagement levels:** Internal communicators are focused on strengthening the bottom line by boosting employee engagement levels. According to Gallup, high employee engagement leads to around “22% higher organizational profitability and 21% higher productivity, as well as 65% lower staff turnover and 10% higher customer ratings.” Contributing to these metrics will help highlight the impact of internal communications on organizational growth and empower internal communicators to make a strong data-backed case for bigger budgets and more resources.
- 2. Improve productivity:** As per Mckinsey & Company, employee productivity increases by 20 to 25% in organizations where employees are connected. On the other hand, fragmented, weak internal communication leads to more absenteeism, high attrition levels, and lagged productivity; these are all signs of a disengaged workforce. Enabling clear, consistent, and open two-way conversations is an important goal for internal communicators as these factors are closely linked to employee productivity.
- 3. Higher employee retention:** Employee retention is a persistent challenge for companies. According to the 2018 Retention Report, Truth and Trends in Turnover, more than 77% of employees who quit could have been retained by their employers. Effective internal communications plays a big role in driving down attrition and is a key priority for internal communicators. A big part of attracting and retaining talent is to build a culture of open dialogue, two-way feedback, and trust. This helps employees feel heard, connected, and involved, thereby increasing the likelihood of them being retained.
- 4. Increase awareness of vision/mission:** The most thoughtful and powerful vision and mission statements will be ineffective if not communicated clearly and consistently across an organization. According to IBM, 72% of employees don't have a full understanding of the company's strategy. The responsibility of effective messaging, and dissemination of the company vision and mission often falls on internal communicators, making these important objectives for them.

5. More consistent communication: Internal communications need to be regular and reliable in order to achieve the desired impact on employee behaviour and morale. Poor, inconsistent communication leads employees to become disinterested and detached from company goals, which leads to a weak and unproductive work culture. Research by Tribal Impact states that 74% of employees have the feeling they are missing out on company news. This makes establishing consistent communication practices a key goal for internal communicators.

5.2 Top internal communications priorities in 2020

- 1. Improving employee satisfaction (57%):** Internal communications aims to foster a strong workplace culture where employee engagement is high and attrition is low. A measure that reflects a positive company culture is employee satisfaction, which makes it a key priority for internal communicators.
- 2. Increasing workplace participation (57%):** Strong internal communications help employees feel more involved and aligned with company objectives. This increases workplace participation as employees feel more integrated with company practices and operations. It is no surprise that workplace participation levels are a strong indicator of the effectiveness of internal communications and—therefore—a leading goal for internal communicators.
- 3. Driving culture change (55%):** The majority of respondents also identified culture change as a top priority. According to SaneBox, organizations with effective change and communication programs are 3.5 times more likely to outperform their competitors. Communication is a key driver of change. Well-crafted internal communications strategies can have a strong influence on employee behavior, and drive openness to change. On the other hand, poorly executed internal communications strategies will do little to bring down employee resistance to change.

Key takeaways:

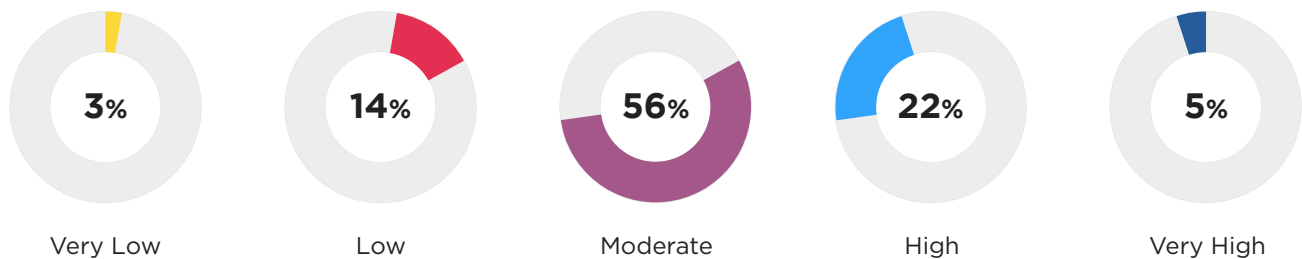
- Building an engaged, aligned, and productive workforce through consistent communication is the primary philosophy shaping internal communications strategies
- Improving employee satisfaction, increasing workplace participation, and enabling successful culture change are the top 3 priorities of internal communicators in 2020

6. Challenges

6.1 Low employee engagement levels

Only 27% of Respondents Experience Healthy Employee Engagement at Their Companies

How would you describe the current employee engagement levels at your organization?

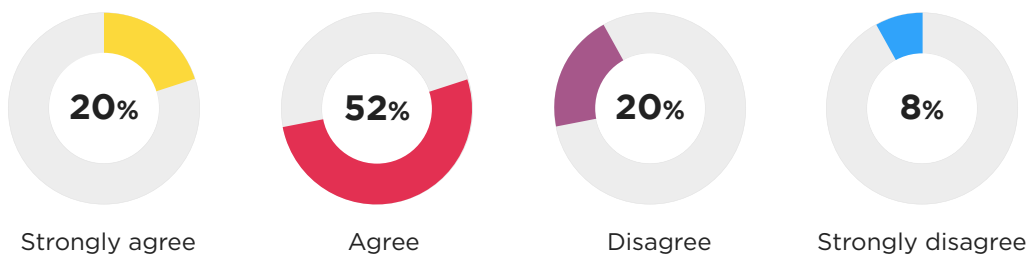


Employee engagement levels are directly correlated with higher employee morale, productivity, and alignment with company objectives. As a key driver of employee engagement, internal communications carries the weight of these goals. In our survey, only 27% of respondents said they enjoy healthy levels of engagement in their organizations. This is echoed in Gallup’s study which highlights that in the United States, 13% of employees are “actively disengaged” and 53% are “not engaged” at work. With most organizations facing an unnervingly high level of disengagement, internal communicators are faced with a massive challenge on this front.

6.2 Difficulty measuring internal communications

72% Find it Difficult to Measure the Effectiveness of Internal Communications

I find it difficult to measure the effectiveness of internal communications.
Do you agree with this statement?



In Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends report, it says that "84% of respondents viewed people analytics as important or very important." The report also states that only "8% of organizations report that they have usable data."

Effective, accurate, and consistent measurement of internal communications continues to be a glaring challenge for internal communicators. According to IABC, "60% of internal communicators do not measure their internal communications strategy at all."

We tried to understand why this was the case, and here's what we found:

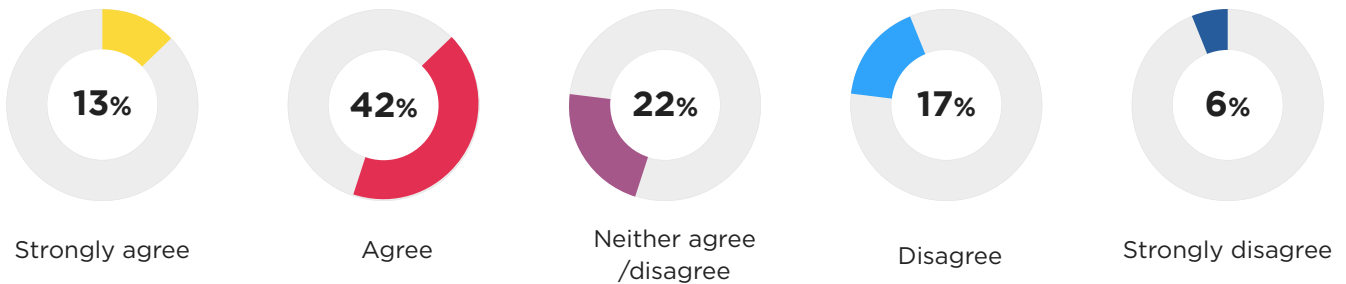
Survey respondents identified 5 main barriers to measuring internal communications:

- 1. Lack of effective measurement tools:** One of the biggest barriers faced by internal communicators, when it comes to measuring the effectiveness of their strategies, is the lack of effective measurement tools within their reach. Due to limiting factors such as a shortage of technological resources or inadequate budgets, they are unable to invest in effective measurement tools.
- 2. Low and distorted feedback:** Building a 'feedback culture' is hard work. However, feedback is a crucial component of internal communications and is one of the best ways to determine if a strategy is working or not. At the end of the day, internal communications are only successful if employees respond to them. Internal communicators struggle to get adequate employee feedback - and even when they do, getting honest feedback is a challenge. Finding a way to make employees feel safe and confident enough to give genuine feedback is an important first step in improving its quality.
- 3. Gathering accurate data:** With half-baked or surface level metrics, internal communicators often lack access to accurate data. Additionally, dishonest employee feedback could further distort data, making measurement difficult.
- 4. Lack of resources:** Small budgets and limited staffing starve internal communicators of adequate resources needed to implement an effective strategy. Time-strapped internal communicators just don't have the bandwidth to measure, track, and interpret data.
- 5. Qualitative data is difficult to obtain:** When dealing with people, qualitative data plays a significant role. Surveys, in-person meetings, and suggestion boxes can all be platforms for employees to share how they feel about the company and its management. Again, implementing these feedback mechanisms and interpreting vast amounts of qualitative data can be a challenge when faced with a shortage of resources.

6.3 Showcasing the impact of internal communications

54% of Respondents Find it Difficult to Showcase the Impact of Internal Comms

It is difficult to show how internal communications impacts change within our organization. Do you agree with this statement?

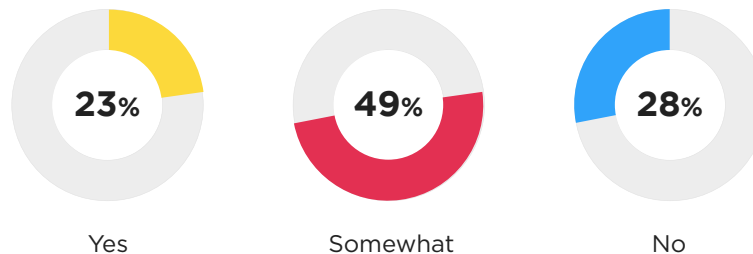


As we know, a persistent challenge facing internal communicators is a lack of metrics to evaluate tactics and showcase the effectiveness of their strategies. Measurable outcomes are essential for internal communications to earn a seat at the table. Without data, the domain will remain a low priority when allocating departmental budgets and resources.

6.4 Building credibility for internal communications

72% Find it Difficult to Establish the Importance of Internal Comms in Their Company

Do you find it difficult to establish the importance of internal communications within your organization?



72% of respondents say they struggle to establish the importance of internal communications within their organization; measurable outcomes are needed to overcome this obstacle. When an organization is able to see that a rise in employee engagement leads to a rise in productivity and ultimately profitability, there will be a change in the attitude toward internal communications.

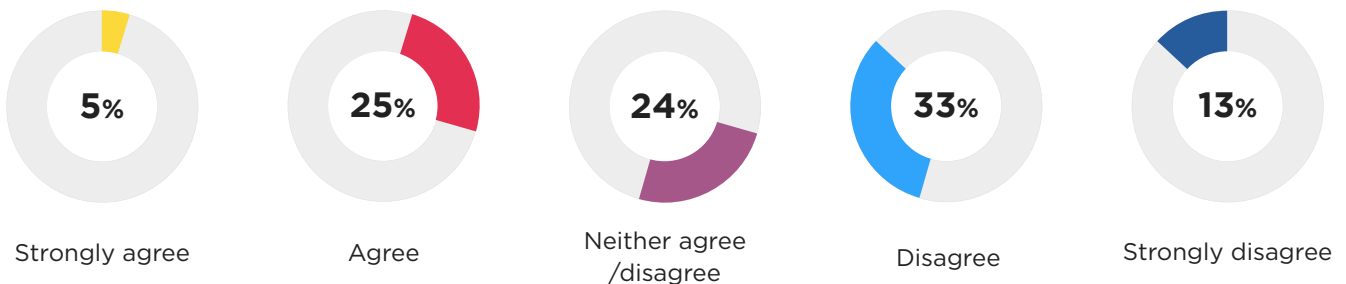
Key takeaways:

- Only 27% of respondents said their workplace has a healthy level of employee engagement. With employee engagement being closely tied to internal communications, improving engagement levels is a glaring challenge facing internal communications in 2020
- A whopping 72% of respondents find it difficult to measure internal communications. This is due to lack of measurement tools, low employee feedback, shortage of resources, and difficulty obtaining accurate data
- Showcasing the true value of internal communications is another challenge identified by respondents. 52% said they find it difficult to showcase the impact of internal communications, and 72% said they struggle to establish its importance in the company

7. Channels

Majority of Respondents Don't Find it Difficult to Choose an Employee Communication Channel

I find it difficult to know what channel to use for communicating with employees. Do you agree with this statement?

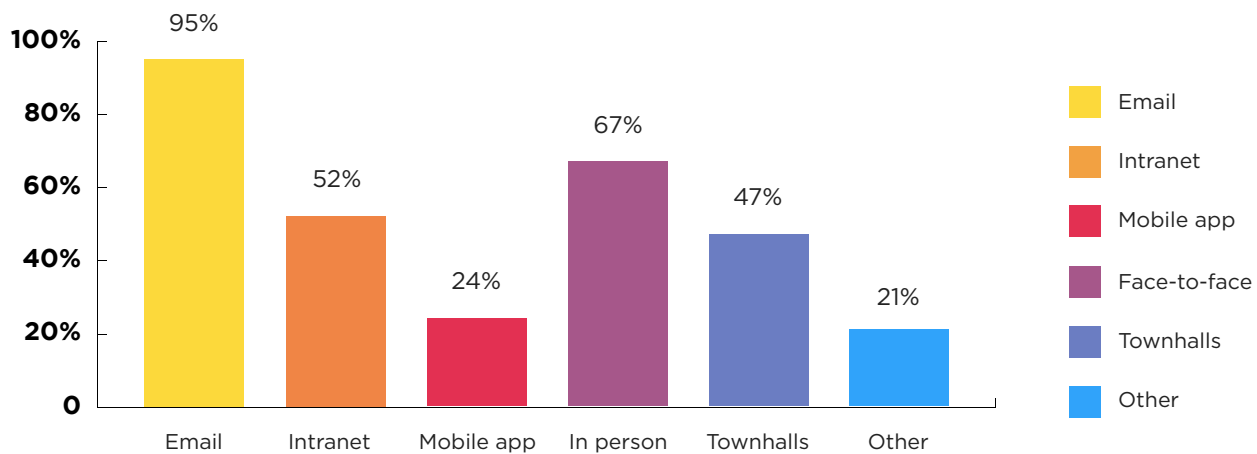


Internal communicators have a wide gamut of resources and tools at their disposal. When it comes to selecting channels or platforms for communicating with employees, the majority of internal communicators say they find it easy to select which one(s) to use. Despite this 30% of internal communicators still struggle to identify the right channels for their internal communications strategies. While face-to-face communication is an integral channel for internal communications, is it sufficient?

In large organizations, the Intranet is a great way to disseminate information to every employee. This makes sure the entire company is updated on all relevant company developments. How can internal communicators measure this channel and ensure employees are actually engaging with the information it puts out? Is the employee experience on this channel personalized enough to be effective?

Deciding an appropriate channel strategy is not an easy task.

Email is the Most Popular Communication Channel for Internal Comms



When asked which channel they use for internal communications, 95% respondents identified Email as a key channel. 67% rely on face-to-face communication, while 52% use the company intranet as primary communication channels.

Lastly, 91% of respondents believe that emails are important or very important to their internal communications strategy. Email is also the main channel respondents track and measure in order to evaluate the efficacy of their internal communications efforts.

Key takeaways:

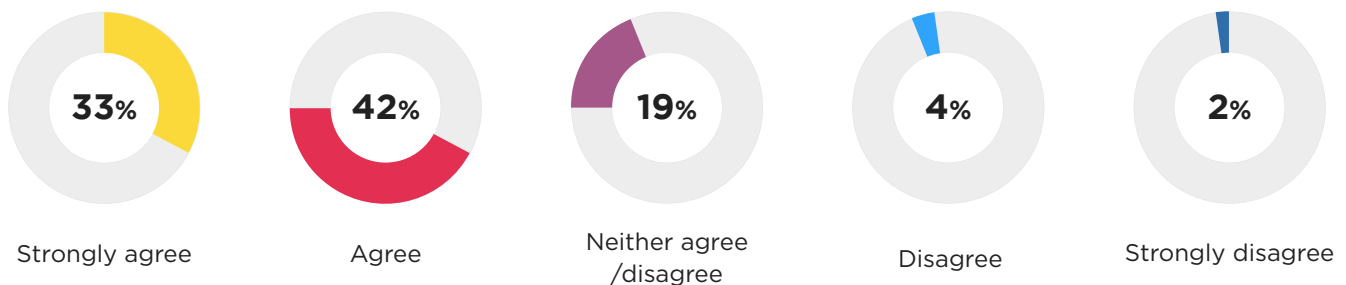
- 30% of internal communicators said they find it difficult to identify which channel fits best with their internal communications strategy
- While face-to-face communication (67%) and the intranet (53%) are popular channels among internal communicators, Email takes the lead in being the primary communication channel for 95% of respondents

8. Leadership & Strategy

8.1 Belief of leadership

74% Respondent Say Their Leadership Believes in the Value of Internal Communications

Your company leadership believes in the value of internal communications.
Do you agree with this statement?



For internal communications to get recognized as a vital strategic ingredient to organizational success, the department needs to be viewed as crucial by company leadership. At the end of the day it is the senior executives that make decisions on resource and budget allocation. Without their buy-in, internal communications will continue to face challenges on the budget and resource front.

The good news is the majority of respondents stated that their leadership believes in the importance of internal communications to the overall health and profitability of the company. Despite this, the same respondents also faced roadblocks when it came to getting approvals for larger budgets, more resources, and investment in third-party tools which would enhance their internal communications efforts.

Research conducted by the United Kingdom's Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) proved that while senior leaders understood the value internal communications creates, it still does not rank high in their list of most valued departments, which usually include sales or operations.

8.2 Internal communications Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The three most common KPIs of internal communicators are:

Email open rates and click rates: Email open rates and click rates are some of the top internal communications metrics used to track employee responsiveness and engagement. These metrics give internal communicators data-backed insight into which communication was most engaging and which generated the maximum interactions. It also helps inform internal communicators which timing, messaging, imagery, language, or even colours garner the best response.

Employee satisfaction: Using Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) or employee satisfaction surveys equip internal communicators with the data they need to determine whether their efforts are translating into a more satisfied workforce. With employee satisfaction being a top priority for internal communicators, this is a crucial KPI for internal communications.

Survey responses: Employee feedback is as valuable to internal communicators as customer feedback is to a sales representative. Anonymous surveys, pulse surveys, or even informal conversations are a direct way for internal communicators to assess the efficacy of their internal communications strategy.

Key takeaways:

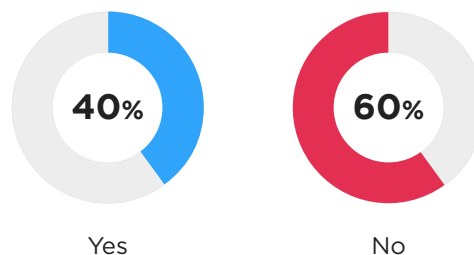
- Consensus is that senior leaders understand the value of internal communications, but it is still not viewed as a priority by many
- Email metrics, employee satisfaction scores, and employee survey responses are the top 3 internal communications KPIs for 2020
- If you're like the majority of respondents and your top KPIs for 2020 are measuring email metrics, employee satisfaction and employee survey responses, [ContactMonkey](#) could be the solution for you. ContactMonkey enables you to measure all of this right from your Outlook or Gmail inbox.

9. Software & Tools

9.1 Third-party tools

Majority Respondents Don't Use A Third-Party Internal Communications Solution

Do you use any third-party internal communications solution? If yes, which one/s?



It's important to note that 60% of internal communicators do not use third-party tools for internal communications. From email solutions like ContactMonkey, to workplace instant messaging platforms like Slack, numerous collaboration and communication tools are available for internal communicators to enhance and streamline their efforts. It is not that internal communicators do not see value in these tools but—instead—face certain barriers that prevent their adoption.

9.2 Barriers to adopting new software

- Budget:** As seen earlier, internal communicators work with tight budgets, which makes price sensitivity a common barrier to adopting new software. In order to get executive buy-in for such investments, internal communicators need to prove the potential return on investment a third-party solution can bring to the table. It's important these tools offer tracking and measurement features that help internal communicators make a data-backed case for their adoption.
- Usability/training barriers:** Easy-to-adopt platforms are the need of the hour for internal communicators looking to transition to third-party solutions. Internal communications departments are often strapped for resources and spread thin across multiple deliverables. This makes internal communicators hesitant to adopt third-party tools as they dread the time and training required to adopt unfamiliar third-party tools.

3. Lack of interest or priority: According to Workforce, 60% of companies don't have a long-term strategy for their internal communications. Clearly, internal communications is still viewed as tactical rather than strategic by most organizations. This perspective leads to internal comms falling lower on the priority list, making it harder for internal communicators to get buy-in for investment in tools that will augment their effectiveness.

Key takeaways:

- Due to budgetary and resource constraints, the majority of internal communications practitioners still do not use third-party solutions to streamline and enhance their strategies
- Difficulty proving the ROI of third-party tools, adoption barriers, and the lack of priority given to internal communications also prevents internal communicators from adopting third-party internal communications solutions.



10. Conclusion

Internal communications is caught in a vicious cycle of small budgets and limited resources due to a lack of priority given to the domain. This results in few executives investing in internal communications technology, which keeps its importance relegated to other domains.

Interestingly, internal communications is currently experiencing an evolution as many organizations shift their focus toward building a collaborative, aligned, and engaged remote workforce. This scenario has elevated internal communications to an indispensable position.

Internal communicators need to focus on finding ways to track, measure, and optimize their efforts to build credibility, improve processes, and make a compelling case for greater investment in the domain.





About ContactMonkey

ContactMonkey is an internal communications and employee engagement tracking solution that integrates into Outlook and Gmail inboxes. We built our tool to help internal communicators transform employee newsletters into a two-way communication channel.

Use ContactMonkey to create, send, track, and measure employee feedback and the effectiveness of your corporate communications.

Ready to Elevate Your Internal Communications?

[Book My Demo](#)

