

The Ultimate Guide to Internal Communications



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Introduction

The internal communications profession is incredibly rewarding. Bringing teams together using the [power of words](#), [aesthetically pleasing design](#), and a [strong organizational culture](#) is, frankly, a beautiful thing.

However, sometimes the perception of what we do as internal communications professionals is so inaccurate it can get a little frustrating to deal with it.

No, we're not in charge of ordering cakes for the office party. And no, although newsletters are super important, our day-to-day doesn't revolve around putting together the [employee newsletter](#).

At its crux, internal communications is the way people within an organization interact with each other. Everyone communicates. Period. It's not really optional.

The role of an internal communication professional goes a bit further than regular communications.

Internal communication professionals are responsible for facilitating better communication at all levels. That could mean producing messages on behalf of management, or facilitating two-way communication between an organization and its workers.

The scope of internal communication depends on the organization and its needs, but the common theme is that internal communication professionals are enablers of business objectives within the organization.

What is internal communications?

Before we get into the depths of how you can execute on your internal communications goals and practices, we should define what is internal communications.

According to [Study.com](#), internal communication is “...the transmission of information between organizational members or parts of the organization. It takes place across all levels and organizational units of an organization.

In short, it is contact or conversation that happens within a company’s walls between employees at all levels. Sometimes it involves all employees, or can be siloed between different teams in the organization.

Some of the biggest influencers in the communications space define internal communications:

[Rachel Miller, one of the top internal communications experts](#), describes internal communications as: “The way a company interacts with its people and they interact with it.”

In our interview with [Jenni Field, Director at Redefining Communications](#), she describes internal communications as “...everything that gets said and shared inside of an organization. As a function, its role is to curate, enable, and advise on best practice for organizations to communicate effectively, efficiently and in an engaging way.”

We also spoke to [Advita Patel, Internal Communications Specialist at the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority](#), who loves that “...with internal communications [I get to] explain, excite, and empower colleagues from across the organization to be the best they possibly can so they feel motivated to continue working hard for the organization and delivering great results.”

With all this in mind about what internal communications is, you can start to think about its function in your business. There are a lot of different uses for it, and a number of people who can be responsible for crafting communications.

What does internal communications do?

Internal communications bridges the gaps within an organization. It helps foster relationships between upper management and individual contributors, between departments, between department heads and their team members, and between the company and external stakeholders.

When it comes to internal communications reaching external stakeholders, we're speaking about it in the context of giving employees the tools necessary to discuss issues that may partially live outside of the company with tact. This way, employees feel trusted, respected, and the chances of miscommunication are lessened.

One way internal communicators could do this is through a company newsletter updating employees on key information or events. [When you're trying to create an employee-oriented newsletter](#), there are several approaches you can take. You may want to consider:

- Sharing company achievements and positive press
- Profiling new hires
- Featuring employee birthdays or other life milestones
- Having a team spotlight section
- Individual awards or recognition pieces
- Surveys and polls
- Messages from the C-Suite
- Reminders and announcements
- Internal job postings
- Nearby food spots to encourage socializing
- Company policies delivered through internal influencers

Even just including one or two of these things in employee newsletter going forward will likely foster a deeper sense of connection between the company and the people that help it succeed every day. It won't feel like a list of news that they feel obligated to read or apply a "skip the inbox" setting to, but rather, something that they're excited to receive in their inbox.



Which department does internal communication belong to?

Who does your Internal Communications team report to? Who determines the workplace culture or employee engagement at your company? Is it Internal Communications? Or is Human Resources (HR) supposed to dictate organizational culture?

The answer is: **it depends.**

Some smaller companies don't have a dedicated internal communications unit. In that case, HR usually handles many of the activities that would normally fall within the realm of internal communications, although sometimes the Marketing or Public Relations department may carry the torch. They take on internal communications duties including onboarding and employee training, internal newsletters, crisis management, employee retention strategies and much more.

Yet, with the growing importance of internal communications, many organizations not only have a dedicated Human Resources department but also a specialized Internal Communications team. Most large companies, especially those with a multinational presence, have teams and departments wholly dedicated to internal communication.

This is where the lines get really blurry:

Who is now in charge of employee experience?

Who is in charge of employee engagement?

Who is responsible for workplace culture and change management?

We believe that the responsibility falls on both Internal Communications AND Human Resources. If you truly want your organization to succeed, set an attractive workplace culture and enrich employee experience, then Internal Communications needs to be able to collaborate with every department!

How internal communications can collaborate with other departments

Collaboration Ideas for Internal Communications & HR

Work with Human Resources to Identify Internal Influencers

- While it's tempting to think of internal influencers as those with executive level job titles, in reality they're just your ordinary employees who exercise a lot of influence over workplace culture.
- If you want to introduce an unpopular company change or a significant policy and ensure your employees remain engaged with any kind of new initiative, you need to leverage the power of these internal influencers. They can, after all, exercise a lot of influence over your workplace culture.
- HR has access to a lot of information about employees. They're the ones who hunt for the best talent, who conduct informational interviews with potential prospects, bring in talent, and conduct exit interviews. They are finely in tune with the who's who of your office. They're likely to know who the influential employees in each department are.

Collaborate with Human Resources to Communicate Change

- Often times, employees will react emotionally to change. If the change is something major, such as impending layoffs, it's crucial to communicate this change in the right way to employees.
- This is when it becomes essential for Human Resources and Internal Communications to work together. If the change involves laying off a certain number of employees, internal communications professionals need to work closely with executive leadership and the HR department to ensure you're sending the right messages to communicate about these changes.

Use Human Resources to Help Craft Engaging Stories

- Whether it's creating amazing employee newsletters or helping upper management come up with the right messaging to communicate to employees, you need to know what your employees desire and need. That's the only way you'll be able to create and craft compelling content that they'll love.
- HR is the one department that probably knows the most about each and every employee within your organization. It is therefore fundamental that you work in tandem with HR to come up with compelling narratives that will not only [boost employee engagement](#) but also enrich your workplace culture.

Collaboration Ideas for Internal Communications and Marketing/ Public Relations

Leverage Employees for Marketing

- Your employees are always the front-line ambassadors of your company, whether that's in a customer facing role or telling their families about what they do. As your ambassadors, they should be prepared to communicate the business' goals and objectives with clarity and precision. As a brand, this allows you to speak with one voice.
- Internal Communications and Public Relations should collaborate on ways to prepare employees to speak about company initiatives. This is especially useful in employer branding, but can also present a more positive image of your brand as a whole.

Crisis Communication

- If there is a crisis/change to communicate externally, PR should work with internal communicators before the news is made public. Details that are imperative for employees to know before news go public can be delivered in advance. This will soften the blow for employees, who would rather hear about internal crises from their own teams than from a third party.
- PR and IC can also help train employees on how to speak about these occurrences externally, or advise them on their rights to refuse media interviews.



What is the difference between internal communications & corporate communications?

Ultimately, internal communications focuses on employees first. It's all about how information is transmitted directly between members of an organization or company.

[According to Chron's](#), corporate communicators are responsible for delivering a company's internal messages to relevant external audiences. Aside from that, they may be asked to orchestrate the delivery of company news, changes to benefits, and opportunities for training or professional development.

They may also be tasked with leading focus groups to better understand what matters most to individual contributors at work, and advise senior leadership on how to go about building relationships with their employees.

In short, corporate communications still concerns itself with employees, but there is also a great deal of focus placed on how the perception of an organization can affect employees - either positive or negative.

[Northeastern University defines corporate communications](#) as "...the way in which businesses and organizations communicate with internal and external various audiences."

Common audiences for company communications include:

- Employees
- Executives
- Customers
- Prospects
- Investors
- Media
- General public
- Government

[The major difference between internal communications and corporate communications](#)

is the responsibility of corporate communicators to provide a strategy around crisis communication. If something happens that poses a threat to a company's reputation, or the safety of the general public, corporate communicators assist the C-Suite with crisis management. A company crisis can be anything from an accidental death in the workplace to layoff announcements. Ideally, crisis communication plans are made proactively.

What is internal & external communication?

'Communication' in the business world is often misunderstood, which leaves outsiders scratching their heads wondering if there's a difference between internal and external communication.

Just like biology and geology share the same "ology" in their name, they are different fields for different purposes. To put it simply, the difference between the two comes down to the audience and stakeholders. While advances in one field may be relevant to the other, they are separate entities with separate goals.

Internal communication concerns internal entities within a business. These include employees, management, leadership, and sometimes investors and the board of directors. Internal communication is usually a function with its own department, or is a function within Human Resources.

External communication covers all other entities. These external entities include but are not limited to: investors, clients, prospects, regulators, governing bodies, the media, and the public at large. Any department in a business may engage in external communication, although it is traditionally associated with Marketing and PR.

While it might sound easier to lump all communications together to save time, that's really not possible or even practical.

Internal communication is meant to cover details that aren't pertinent to the general public. Onboarding, scheduling, policies and procedures, staff changes, and office wide initiatives are only relevant to employees. A vast majority of internal communications aren't relevant or interesting to the general public.

Internal communication is designed to streamline the flow of information within a workforce, and to achieve internal business objectives such as improved productivity, high employee engagement, and lower employee turnover.

On the other hand, external communication is tailored to the general public. External memos are typically more broad than their internal counterparts and deliver information on a need-to-know basis. Because of the vast range of external communications, there are different specialties, guidelines, and goals for different types of external communication.

For example, the way a marketing campaign is communicated to the general public will be very different than the way a report on regulatory compliance is communicated to a

government body; yet these are both external communications.

Internal and external communication might be entirely separate entities, but they can overlap. For example, there might be an internal communication campaign to help employees communicate externally.

For example, if FastFood Company (FFC) is launching a new vegetarian menu, internal communicators might prepare operational guidelines for FFC franchisee operators regarding changes they will need to make to serve the new menu. Meanwhile, the Public Relations department might prepare a list of Frequently Asked Questions they expect from customers, and have Internal Communications distribute that information to all front line employees. Both internal and external communication help the FFC franchise operators in different ways.



Why does my company need internal communications?

There's a lot of power in having a connected company. Internal communications is important as it has a direct effect on company culture. The more employees are informed, the better the rates of employee engagement.

[According to Ragan](#), 74% of employees expect to be kept in the loop. This fosters a culture around trust, respect, and transparency, especially when the communications are perceived to come from senior leadership. Employees that feel like they know what's happening are more likely to feel appreciated and more compelled to stay at their jobs.

Other key reasons for internal communications include:

- Crisis communication
- Change management
- Employee engagement
- Real-time employee feedback

There needs to be an agreed upon approach to internal communications, the messaging needs to be in line with the brand, and the content delivered needs to be in line with the company goals.

Challenges facing internal communications professionals

As communications aficionados, we're always keeping an ear out for the voices of communication professionals. We want to know what's going really well, what is surprising, and what is worrying our audience.

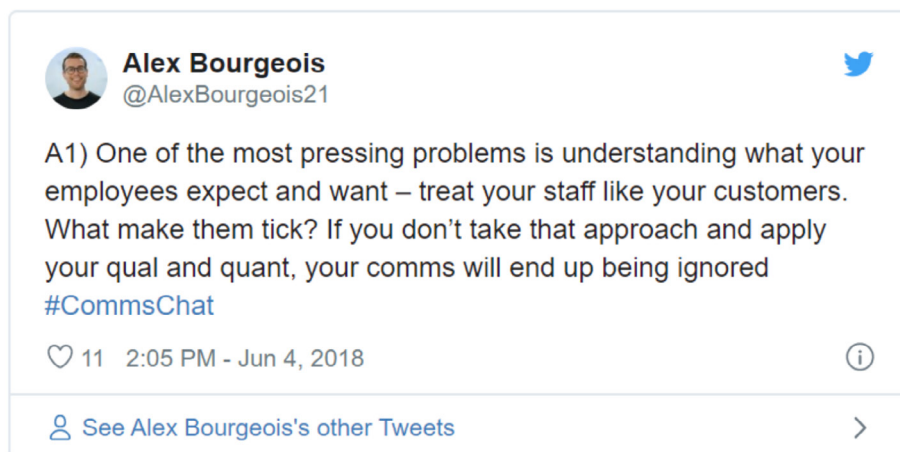
We had the pleasure to host an edition of [CommsChat](#) with [Communicate Magazine](#). CommsChat is an online conversation about all things communications, including PR, marketing, [internal communications](#), and digital [strategy](#).

Some of the main challenges troubling communicators are:

Challenge #1: Communicating What Employees Want

The first pressing problem people highlighted was a big divide in expectations when it came to the role of internal communications in an organization. Too often, Communication Professionals are delegated to sending emails and creating powerpoint slides as prescribed by management.

This order-taking approach wastes many of the skills and talents of communication professionals, and inhibits them from being fully able to reach employees. Prescriptive internal communications comes off to employees as inauthentic, and limits the success measurements that communicators can use to evaluate and leverage effective communications. Moreover, this limits the potential for two-way communication to occur.



What's missing? Trust.

Internal communication professionals crave the same trust given marketing and sales to iterate and problem solve. Let them approach the needs that employees have the same way sales approaches concerns their prospects have.

They want to optimize and deliver the employee experience your workers want. Allow them to try new technologies, and to explore avenues that foster two-way communication.

As long as their approach is metrics driven, you will see much better outcomes than when you focus solely on outputs.

Challenge #2: Embracing Technology Without Sacrificing Culture

We live in a technologically connected world and there's an app, extension or a plugin for almost everything, which is awesome. But, at the same time, a balance between tech and a company's values is important.

Many participants agreed that, in order for technology to help as it's supposed to, the right values and culture have to be there from the beginning. Otherwise, technology just enforces and accelerates bad behaviours.

That said, most participants agreed that a multi-channel internal communications approach was needed, especially in a rapidly digitizing world. Communication professionals are challenged to find the technology that helps them cut through the noise without detracting from employee productivity.

Challenge #3: Not Enough Time In A Day

People agreed that the biggest challenge keeping communicators from successfully engaging with their employees is a finite amount of time to engage with employees. And that was true both for communications having not enough time to create the best resources, and of employees not having enough time to consume communication material.

That's precisely why ContactMonkey exists, to help communicators save time. We were able to save four hours a week for Kate Kralej, the Marketing Communications Specialist at Mettler Toledo, since switching from Mailchimp to ContactMonkey for sending all their internal communications.



The team was able to stay within Outlook and use existing Outlook distribution lists to send employee newsletters and updates quickly and easily, rather than having to upload everything into Mailchimp every week.



What is an internal communications plan?

If crafted correctly, your internal communications plan will be [a guide on how to communicate with employees](#) – and be consistent about it.

A traditional internal communications plan usually includes [seven components](#):

- 1. Analysis of the business at present:** Where things are and how that will affect future commitment to internal communications.
- 2. What the goal of the internal communications plan is:** Evaluating overall business goals and determining how the communications department aligns.
- 3. Who your target audience is:** How you will communicate with all employees versus how you will communicate with select teams.
- 4. What your message is:** What sorts of topics you will address, why you want to address them, and how (i.e. what media) you want to use for this.
- 5. How you'll spread the word:** What are your strategies, tactics, and channels of choice? Is it an email newsletter, instant message blast, internal blog post, or a video?
- 6. When you'll send internal communications:** Based on data, when are employees the most open to receiving internal collateral?
- 7. How you will measure campaign success:** Decide your key metrics and what tools you need to be able to analyze those metrics

After you go through the steps mentioned above, hold yourself accountable to a consistent schedule and ensure that no matter what media you decide to use, you [make it easy for your employees to follow](#).

You're providing them with company information that you feel is vital to them. In return, you hope that they take the appropriate action to achieve whatever company goals you've outlined to them within these communications. However, if you make employee engagement difficult, this will be reflected in the results.

Think of employees the same way you think of your customers; they're just internal!

Examples of an internal communications plan template

As we know, those who fail to plan are the ones who plan to fail.

When crafting an internal communications plan for your business, it is often prudent to

use a template. This ensures that ongoing internal communication efforts are always contextual and aligned with business strategy.

Some of the examples of communications templates we recommend are:

- [AllThingsIC](#)
- [SnapComms](#)
- [SocialChorus](#)



How to audit internal communications plan

[Auditing your internal communications plan helps you](#) to understand the goals of your internal communications strategy, and make changes going forward if need be.

According to Helen Deverell, award-winning communications professional and Director of [Helen Deverell Communications](#), “Audits can be scalable so even if you have a small budget, there are ways of still getting the outcomes you desire.”

A [SWOT analysis](#), where you evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of internal communications within the organization, can be [very helpful in your internal communications audit](#).

How an internal communications audit can help you achieve your goals:

- Understanding your internal communications data and creating a baseline for measurement.
- Evaluating the state of the organization as a new internal communications hire.
- Making more strategic decisions when crafting your internal communications strategy.

When gearing up to perform your internal communications audit, consider finding ways to hear from employees directly. For instance, focus groups can help you by getting a group of employees in the same room. You can study more than their responses. You also have the opportunity to look at their body language and better understand their thought processes.

Depending on the scope of your internal communications audit, it may be useful to hire an external agency or consultant to provide an unbiased approach. Before any of this, involve relevant stakeholders (like the C-Suite) from the start.

After your internal communications audit, be ready to take action right away.

Internal communications audits are a lift, so it's imperative that you make the time spent by yourself and others worth it to the organization as soon as possible. Share next steps with the organization so that you can be held accountable to following up on the action items you've outlined.



Top internal communications agencies and consultants for building your internal communications strategy

Of course, this is a limited list, but these are some of the internal communications professionals that we've had the pleasure of partnering with. Whether you're assessing your current internal communications strategy or building one from scratch, it can be worthwhile to get a second opinion on your approach and the scope of your strategy.

Even if you're just looking for [some material you can apply to your project](#), rather than bringing in a third-party, you can start with:

[Advita Patel](#)

Advita Patel is the Director at CommsRebel. Over the last 15 years, she's done internal communications in the industries of Healthcare, Energy, Education, and Transport.

[Andrea Greenhous](#)

Andrea is the Founder and Chief Internal Communications Strategist at Vision2Voice Communications. Her agency is focused on business outcomes, like better employee performance and lower turnover rates.

[Ashli Davis](#)

Ashli is a Senior Communication, Marketing, and Change Strategy Consultant at Type A Consulting. She's helped organizations like Coca-Cola and Deloitte with a number of issues, including crisis and change management.

[Helen Deverell](#)

Helen is the Director of Helen Deverell Communications. In her 12 years, she's worked with more than 60 organizations as a consultant, helping build relationships with stakeholders and measure value.

[Jason Anthoine](#)

Jason is the Managing Founder at Audacity, and has over 30 years of experience working in internal communication, culture change, and employee engagement.

[Lise Michaud](#)

Lise is the CEO & Founder of IC Kollektif, and has over 25 years of experience in internal, external, and change communication.

[Mike Klein](#)

Mike is the Principal at Changing the Terms, and the mastermind behind The Gorilla Games for Communicators.

[Rachel Miller](#)

Rachel has more than 20 years of experience as a professional communicator, and is particularly focused on training and consultancy. She mentors both individuals and full teams directly.

[Priya Bates](#)

Toronto-based communications leader, Priya Bates, has over 20 years of experience and has worked with the likes of Loblaw Companies Limited and HP Canada.

[Silke Brittain](#)

Silke is the Managing Director of ClearVoice Comms, and focuses on aligning senior leadership and individual contributors to the strategy and purpose of their shared organization.

How to measure internal communications?

A common concern of communication professionals relates to demonstrating value to the C-Suite. This requires you to actually measure your communications so you can take that data and show it to the executive team.

However, this is also a point where many communication professionals don't even know where to start. Luckily, there are a few different approaches you can take to measure your internal communication efforts.

How to Measure the ROI of Your Internal Communications

1. Employee Engagement

We've discussed employee engagement quite a bit on our blog, and that's because it's a major topic for organizations. Ignoring employee engagement has been proven to harm productivity. According to Gallup [highly engaged teams are 21% more productive](#) than their disengaged counterparts.

Companies with strong [employee experience](#) are likely to attract and retain talented staff, all the while avoiding costs associated with a disengaged workforce.

Although there are dozens of [different factors impacting engagement](#), strong internal communications can make or break your engagement campaign.

In order to measure the success of your internal communication strategy, start with the Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS).

It's a one question survey you can send out to employees, and measure their satisfaction. On a scale of 1 - 10, eNPS asks "How likely are you to recommend this organization as a place to work". Based on the ratings, your score equals the percent of your Promoters (scored 9-10) minus the percent of Detractors (scored 1-6). The best possible score one can score on eNPS is +100, with the worst being -100.

While most companies tend to start off with negative scores, a score greater than 50 shows that you are doing well.

Based on this standard scoring system, you can track the effectiveness of your communications with real employee engagement rates, and demonstrate the productivity ROI as you improve employee engagement.

2. Email Open and Click-Through Rates

Internal communicators are tasked with a huge responsibility – getting important company information out to every employee.

You spend hours crafting the perfect email and use the best platform to reach out to everyone, but do you know if the emails are actually being opened and read?

One of the biggest challenges for a communicator is to measure their reach. They are often left wondering if their strategy is actually making a difference because they aren't able to track metrics such as email open and click-through rates.

The best way to do this is to send internal communications through a platform that can deliver such metrics, such as ContactMonkey.

By using digital tools for communication, you are able to monitor data such as email open or click-through rates and use the information to assess the overall internal communications reach.

3. Responses and Employee Feedback

How often do you respond to questions from employees?

Successful internal communicators don't just push out content. They are also actively listening and creating dialogue.

A great way to measure effectiveness for your internal communication strategy is to ask for feedback from employees. You can do so this straight from your Outlook inbox by [adding social reactions and pulse surveys to your email templates](#) from ContactMonkey's email template builder.

To get the best responses and feedback, you need to adopt the platforms your employees prefer. If you know that mobile devices are popular with your employees, be sure that your communications align with that channel. For instance, if a majority of your employees are looking at emails on their phone, make sure that the [newsletters you send are mobile responsive!](#)

4. Turnover Rate

Employees leave their jobs because their relationship with their boss or immediate supervisor is lacking.

[Employees crave a good relationship with their boss](#) and that has a huge impact on employee engagement and voluntary turnover. And turnover, as we know, [can cost the business between 50-200% of the leaving employee's annual salary](#), depending on their seniority.

Don't get me wrong. Your company may have a great culture, but that won't stop employees from leaving if they have a nonexistent or poor relationship with their managers.

As an internal communicator, your job is to facilitate communications from the top down. Your internal communications strategy should make employees feel valued, informed, and well connected with leadership and managers of the organization, which ultimately can help reduce turnover.

Make sure you are tracking turnover and integrating it with your overall communication efforts. You can also review feedback from past employees on sites such as Glassdoor to gauge what employees think about the company.

It's also a great way to address areas for [improvement that can be communicated through internal communications](#). If you can prove your efforts are helping reduce turnover, you're proving that your communications have a demonstrable ROI attached.

No matter which metrics are most important to your business, always ensure that your tools are helping you collect measurable feedback on your internal communications.



How to get executive approval in internal communications

According to [Harvard Business Review](#), studies show that [senior executives dismiss good ideas](#) from below far too often, largely for this reason: **If they don't already perceive an idea's relevance to organizational performance, they don't deem it important enough to merit their attention.** Internal communication professionals have to work to alter that perception.

Let's go over some ways to get that so very important executive approval!

1. The Earlier You Get Buy-in, The Better

It's easier to get approval and buy-in when leadership feels they also had a role in shaping the strategy, no matter whether that feeling is real or perceived.

For a successful communications strategy, [early executive buy-in is crucial](#), according to Jane Lawrence, internal communications manager at Northumbrian Water Group, which in 2016 won the HR Excellence Award for Most Effective Communications Strategy.

"It was important for the senior leaders to be walking the walk, and not just talking the talk, when it came to our strategy. It was underpinned by their support and ensuring they were visible through all the stages," affirms Lawrence.

2. The Numbers Don't Lie

A key to getting your executives excited about any particular internal communications plan is to transition from the subjective to the objective. Whether your organization believes in the power of internal communications, or even whether your executives like you or not, if you have the numbers to back up what you pitch, the value of your internal communications campaigns becomes undeniable.

For this to happen, you need to use metrics to demonstrate the impact of your campaigns. Whether it's a launch campaign about using the new system for submitting expenses, or a PSA about dishes in the kitchen sink, always send management a detailed picture of the "before and after."

By tracking everything, from email opens, engagement, link clicks, location and even devices used, you'll be able to make your communications an objective science. Analyzing the

metrics from your internal communications plans benefits your team in 3 ways.

- 1) It allows you to see what content resonates best with your employees.
- 2) It enables you to have solid proof of the impact you're having on the organization at large. That's a win-win!
- 3) It allows you to speak to internal executives in the language they understand, ROI.

Be sure to always frame your communications as **outcomes** rather than outputs. This will allow you to be more strategic in your recommendations.

3) Focus on the Solution, Not the Problem

An integral aspect of whether you get approval for your internal communications plan is to highlight the solution rather than the problem you're trying to solve. We've all been in those meetings where everyone is vocal about the problems in the organization, but no one seems to suggest any solutions.

Don't be that person. According to experts, Susan J. Ashford and James R. Deter, [those who suggest thoughtful solutions when speaking about a problem](#) were more successful at influencing executives than those who just highlighted problems.

"Proposing a solution signals that the seller has put thought into the issue and respects leaders' time. Indeed, [recent laboratory research](#) shows that people think more highly of issue sellers who suggest solutions," the writers found.

Getting approval from executives to execute your internal communications plan isn't a singular event, it's an ongoing process that starts with early buy-in, collecting proof (data) that your strategies work, and making sure you're always pitching solutions and ways to improve processes around the workplace.



Internal communications tools and channels

The modern workplace is constantly evolving. With the rise of information technology, employees have more options than ever. As of 2019, 66% of companies are allowing their employees to [work remotely](#), and 16% are fully remote. Meaning that in total, [82% of companies](#) are making room for remote work lifestyles.

That said, it's vital for internal communicators to introduce innovative internal communications tools that strive to bolster employee engagement.

Here are some of the [most popular communications tools](#):

- **Intranet:** This is a private hub for authorized users in a business with purpose around internal communication and collaboration.
- **Slack/other IM:** An effective communication method that makes real-time updates easier.
- **Email:** The most well-established communication tool that provides the ideal space for tracking interactions between employees and content.
- **Video:** An engaging medium for distributing more detailed information.
- **Audio:** Means of passively digesting important information without taking away time from the task at hand.
- **Forums:** Safe space for managers and employees to openly discuss various topics.
- **Internal blogs:** These are invisible to customers, and allow employees to share viewpoints and information quickly and informally.

Although it may better suit their lifestyles, remote workers don't have the advantages that come with the daily interaction that a physical office space provides. Therefore, extra effort has to be made to make them feel included and informed about the company.

[One of our customers, Exemplis, is facing this challenge head-on.](#) They have remote sales staff spread out across the United States. They started using ContactMonkey to understand and evaluate how employees were engaging with their internal communications, and to ensure alignment with the company's vision and values.

Now, they're averaging a **70% open rate** on their weekly internal communications from Outlook.

“

Our team is pretty obsessed with the data attached to it. We always want to know the open rate, how many people clicked the link. Right now, we're averaging a 70% open rate on our weekly communication to the team with click rates hovering between 20 - 30%. For a manufacturing environment, we are proud of that. Before using ContactMonkey I wouldn't have had any of that data

”

One problem facing internal communicators (though some would argue it's a good problem to have) is the overwhelming number of online internal tools on the market.

To ease the burden, we compiled a top 12 list of [must-have internal communications tools and channels](#) for your 2020 internal communications planning.

At this point, you should understand how to build out your internal communications plan, know what tools you need to measure the success of your plan, and be able to make a case with the C-Suite for the tools that you need to achieve your communications goals.

The next step is taking all of that, and putting it into creating a stellar internal communications campaign.

Examples of great internal communications campaigns

When we think of marketing campaigns, we're obviously thinking about how the campaign will impact an organization externally.

But because your employees are often your biggest brand advocates, you really need to think of how your internal campaigns will affect them.

Are they on board with the changes? Have you involved them from the get-go?

If you're thinking of coming up with a new internal communication campaign idea, we've got your back.

Here are three internal communication campaigns that can really inspire you to up your internal communications game and refresh your employee engagement strategy.

How Millicom's New Mascot Re-energized Employee Engagement

[Millicom, a UK telecommunications company](#), wanted to introduce new codes of conduct for employees without making this sound boring or overwhelming.

The company approached [UK's internal communications agency, H & H](#), and asked them to come up with an innovative internal communication campaign.

One of the objectives of this campaign was to [re-energize employee engagement](#) within their organization. The agency developed an avatar, named Millie, to communicate Millicom's new rules and regulations. Millie, taking the form of a cartoon woman, was introduced via videos and an anonymous message board for employees to ask Millie questions.

As H & H mention on their Millicom employee engagement campaign page, "the ambition was that employees would actively engage with the IC team, building dialogue, conversation and productive feedback around ethical behaviours."

And it did. People reacted very warmly to Millie, and took the opportunity to engage Millie with policy questions.

After the success of Millie's initial debut, the internal communications team created a Yammer page so employees could have an ongoing dialogue about the new code of

conduct with Millie. Millie is now the face of all internal communications, and is seen by employees as a helper and a listener.

Asendia's Internal Communication Campaign

Asendia, a global post and shipping company, wanted to boost employee engagement and increase participation in the business strategy. To do that, they hired Think Tank to create a campaign that would revitalize international employee engagement and communicate corporate values.

The agency decided to craft an [employee engagement campaign](#) by drawing upon ideas and values embedded within another famous brand – LEGO!

They positioned [LEGO](#) within the company's imagery to communicate the organization's new core values effectively, highlighting trust, friendliness and ease of use.

Leaflets, posters, pamphlets, animated videos, and a set of LEGO for each team, were distributed as part of the internal communication campaign.

The first part of the campaign also involved educating employees about Asendia's business strategy through a fun quiz.

The quiz, titled “SuperAsendian,” asked employees multiple choice questions around the company's strategy.

This was followed by another employee engagement activity, titled the “SuperAsendian Challenge.”

Employees were grouped into teams for this challenge and asked to pitch new and innovative ideas that were in line with Asendia's business strategy. Awards were also given to employees who were able to showcase these core values within their daily work.

Overall, Asendia's Campaign was a soaring success and managers from each department praised the initiative. This campaign also won the Best Employee Engagement Campaign award at the Corporate Communications Awards in 2014. Pretty inspiring, isn't it?



HSBC's Crisis Communications Campaign

Remember the global financial crisis of 2008? In case you don't remember, it left many employees working within financial institutions completely disillusioned. [HSBC](#) was one such financial institution.

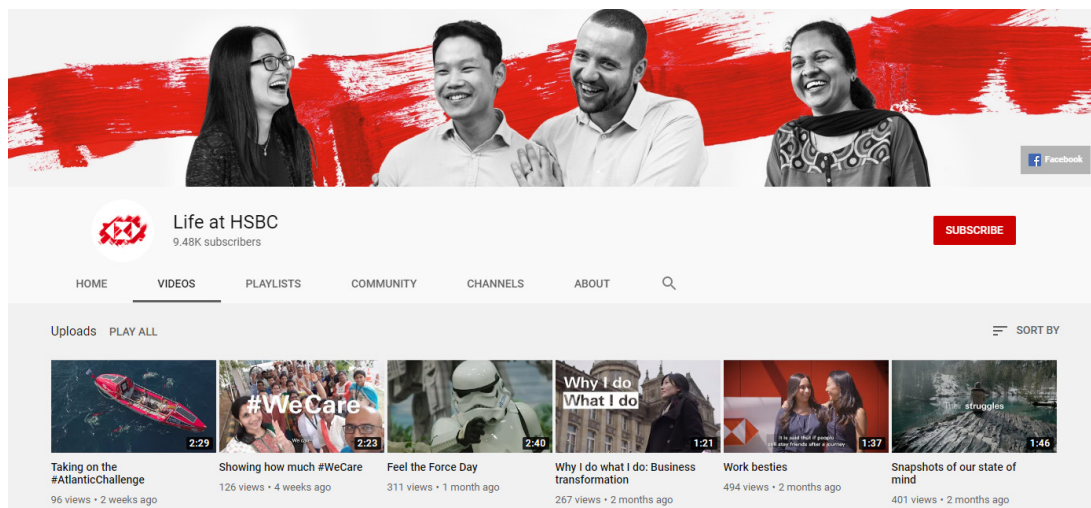
Most HSBC employees felt completely disengaged and a 2011 survey showed that [only 50% of employees trusted decisions](#) made by the upper management.

Executive leadership realized they needed to act fast to rebuild trust, restore pride and [create a culture of good](#) within their organization.

They decided to launch a video platform, called [Life at HSBC](#) (formerly known as HSBC NOW). The platform was dedicated to showcasing HSBC employees, making them the heroes of the organization.

Common video themes revolved around the topics of friendship, sacrifice and triumph. Currently, videos are posted once or twice a month.

According to the [article published by Simply-Communicate](#), an average episode gets around 42,000 views internally and these can often go as high as 80,000!



What can we take away from these awesome examples?

That the best internal communication campaigns all succeed in one thing: creating joy and meaning for employees. By taking humanizing approach to internal comms, these companies were able to achieve strategic business outcomes. This human driven approach will always resonate more with your employees than rote facts and instructions.

Internal influencers: Who are they and how can internal communicators tap into their power?

It may be tempting to think of internal communication influencers as those with official power and important job titles, but nothing is farther from the truth. Although having executive and managerial buy-in is often a must, it can be useful to [tap into informal influence within the company.](#)

An [internal influencer](#) knows exactly what your average employees are experiencing.

How? Because they are one of them! Being able to identify influencers and leverage them is paramount if you want to increase employee engagement.

With that in mind, prioritize figuring out how your audience wishes to have internal communications presented to them. Find your champions in your internal influencers.



If the formal organization is the skeleton of a company, the informal is the central nervous system driving the collective thought processes, actions, and reactions of its business units.



- David Krackhardt and Jeffrey R. Hanson,
Harvard Business Review

When it comes to finding your internal influencers, it may be beneficial to look to some of the younger employees, and have them work with more experienced members of the organization. [Younger generations in the workplace love to interact and engage](#), so give them a voice and let them be heard. Give them the platform and the recognition they crave and they will deliver so much more to you in return.

Storytelling and internal communications

Storytelling is the sharing of information and ideas. Although important at all levels, leaders have the opportunity to influence, teach, and inspire their employees with narratives around where the company started and where it's headed. Storytelling also helps people to build deeper connections with each other, compile ideas, and become more unified in knowledge around culture, history, and values.

When it comes to internal communications, storytelling is key to making sure that it's effective. According to one of our favourite Internal Communications gurus, Rachel Miller,



A good communicator is someone who is clear, consistent, and considerate.



How to measure the effectiveness of storytelling in your communications:

- **Decide relevant key metrics to track:** They can be items such as email opens, link clicks, social shares, [employee feedback](#), or devices.
- **Involve employee groups:** Running a focus group, conducting a group interview, or sending out a survey can all be effective ways to collect data.

When it comes to storytelling, put some thought into [what kind of employee stories will captivate your audience](#). Focus on your word choice (diction) or your design elements, and leverage tools to understand who's actually reading. Your employees want to feel like you see them, so make them the hero of the company story. Acknowledge achievements, promote opportunities for development and team building, and ask for their feedback on what information you're providing them, as well as your delivery method(s).

Here's a simple checklist you can use for your internal communications:

- Don't forget your why
- Hone in on your target audience
- Use different visual elements (which can also include video)
- Keep the tone light and conversational (if that suits your brand)
- Keep your copy clear and concise

How to create engaging internal communications for remote and diverse workers

[A study by the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans](#) found 74% of employers now offer employees the option of working remotely.

According to [an article on teleworkers by the New York Times](#), surveys indicate that employees feel most engaged at work when they are off-site 60-80% of the time.

Remote work and telecommuting show no signs of stopping, especially as our workplaces become more and more digital. Your workers most likely cherish the opportunity to ditch traffic and rush hour commutes.

Plus, if done with finesse, your internal communication strategy might resonate stronger with remote employees.

Ideas to Create Engaging Internal Communications for Remote Workers

1. Feature Remote Workers in your Employee Communications

Think about it. We all love being the stars of our own show, don't we? It's the same with all your employees, whether they're regular office workers or remote workers.

You need to make employees feel like they're an integral part of your company and convince them the work they do matters.

One way you can achieve this is by featuring them in your internal communications.

You can highlight one remote worker per week or per month (depending on what your internal newsletter schedule looks like) in your employee newsletter.

You can do a Q&A section within the employee spotlight area of your newsletter asking each remote worker you've interviewed to talk about what they love about the work they do.

If you want to get really creative, you could start an [internal communications podcast for employees](#).

You could even feature different teams on different episodes after doing a whole series on individual employees.

2. Introduce Team Collaboration Tools for Effective Communication

Remote employees have limited opportunities for meeting face-to-face with their colleagues.

Luckily, there are great [online collaboration tools](#) that make up for it. Platforms such as Yammer and Slack are a great addition to supplement emails. As a bonus, they make the work much more manageable.

Encouraging teams to jump on video calls will make internal communication feel more immediate and natural. There are [dozens of video conferencing tools](#) on the market, making virtual team huddles easier than ever.

3. Use Gamification Tactics to Motivate Remote Workers

[Gamification](#) is an ever trending topic in the business world. Not only can it be very successful for marketing and customer onboarding, but it also works well within internal communications.

According to this [article on gamification within internal communications](#), this process can be described as, “the use of game design elements, such as scoring, rewards or competition with others, in non-game contexts.”

For business, gamification focuses on engaging people and creating behavioral change.

Some fun gamification ideas for remote workers could involve starting Trivia Tuesdays for an hour every week via a group Skype conference call.

You could even start a photo competition, asking employees to submit photos of their workstation at home. The most creative workspace photo can then be featured in your upcoming employee newsletters. It's a fun and interesting feature your employees can look forward to each week.

4. Offer Ongoing Training and Development Opportunities

Employees crave learning and development opportunities so make sure your internal communications are catering to that need.

For remote workers, you may consider recording training sessions to facilitate employee on-boarding.

Check out this great piece on [how to use video for internal communications](#), including video for training purposes.

Remote workers coming into the company will feel less alienated this way and the

training sessions will help them feel equipped to handle any new tasks and understand company policies and procedures.

You could also consider starting monthly webinars where you talk about workplace culture topics such as mental health, diversity, or upcoming company events or initiatives.

The great thing about webinars is that if done live, they can provide workers with an opportunity to ask you questions.

On the other hand, video allows remote workers to access the recording on their own time if they have too much on their plate or are in a different timezone.



How to create a diversity and inclusion communication plan

We live in a world where your average office is a melting pot of people from different cultures and backgrounds. Not only are we experiencing a greater diversity of ethnic backgrounds, a growing number of organizations are seeing more women rising to positions of authority.

In spite of the diversity present in the workforce, it can be challenging to incorporate diversity and inclusion into an existing internal communication strategy.

In order to create a robust diversity and inclusion strategy, it's important to start from the ground up.

1. Laying the Groundwork for Your Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

As with everything internal communications professionals have to do, it's important to get executive buy in for a diversity and inclusion strategy. Once you show management the benefits and importance of having a more inclusive workforce, you will be better equipped to enact a diversity and inclusion plan.

As studies [from McKinsey](#) have shown, diversity in the workforce leads to greater profitability. At its surface, having people with different perspectives on a project creates added value when compared to homogenous teams. The same holds true at the executive level, as McKinsey found a statistically significant correlation between diverse leadership and better financial performance.

2. Set Realistic Goals

Once you begin a diversity and inclusion strategy, it's important to set clear goals and objectives to benchmark your growth.

Here are some examples of some diversity goals from our friends at [Lever.Co](#):

- Percentage of employees to submit responses in an initial benchmark survey
- Number of internal events/trainings with a target number of attendees
- Number of diverse candidates in your pipeline, or interviewed for a role
- Number of [blog posts](#) about your culture written by current employees
- Number of job descriptions overhauled for [inclusive language](#)

3. Take Action

Your initiative will lose all credibility if you do not take actions to back up fluffy pro-diversity statements. It's important for communicators to keep their workplace informed of all the actions they have already taken or going to take in the near future.

A good way to do this is to use internal communications software to send and track a diversity and inclusion [newsletter with news about new initiatives](#) and milestones.

4. Multi-Channel Diversity and Inclusion Communication Plan

Social media and digital tools play a role in everyone's daily routine. Communicators should use tools such as [internal newsletters](#), pulse surveys, intranets, social apps, and internal blogs to communicate the diversity and inclusion initiatives with all employees.

A diverse workplace can be challenging to reach. Internal communicators should try to adopt a multi-channel approach to better engage with all of their employees. Tools like ContactMonkey help you segment your audience and identify where there might be gaps in your communication strategy.



Mental health and the role of internal communications

According to the [World Health Organization](#):

“Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

Between a quarter and a third of our lives will be spent at work, according to [Mental Health America](#). Overall job satisfaction and employee well-being rely on [workplace culture](#), which can have a direct impact on productivity, energy levels, and individual health.

[Investing in employee mental health and well-being](#) will grant organizations happier, more productive employees. This will result in better business outcomes.

Talking about mental health in the workplace shouldn't be limited to face-to-face meetings. It needs to be a part of your entire internal communications strategy.

Part of your internal communications strategy around mental health can include initiatives for training leadership on the importance of employee wellness, or empowering employees to learn how to access mental health resources.

Whatever your wellness program entails, be sure to research in advance, understand what your employees truly want and need, and then demonstrate to executive leadership the benefits of investing in a wellness program to get buy-in.

What do some of the top internal communication thought leaders have to say about internal communications?

Over the years, we've sat down with a number of internal communication thought leaders and asked them a number of questions around how they view the field, lessons that they've learned, and tips they can share to those also entering the space. We compiled some of their most memorable quotes below:



Mike Klein

Founder of Changing the Terms

"When you change the words, you change the terms. When you change the terms, you change the rules. And when you change the rules, you change the game. "

We are all supposed to be visual and digital these days. But [all this focus on "vigital" belies the basic fact that the written word remains central](#) to the ability of internal communication to add value and coherence to the organizations we work with.

"[Guerilla internal communication is] what we can do even when the sponsorship, finances and attention we "need" aren't readily available, and we still take on the challenge. Communicating without budgets."



Rachel Miller

Director of All Things IC

"I think one of the biggest disruptions we've seen is [the shift in our role from content creators to curators](#). It's no longer about our bylines, but how we facilitate conversations and connections in organisations."

"Professional communicators need to have excellent relationships with stakeholders across their business, including IT. I don't think the intention should be to propel themselves towards success, but to know what's on the technology roadmap for their company."

“Trepidation or cautiousness, rather than fear, often comes through lack of knowledge. Internal communicators need to make it their business to know their business, IT included.”

“I don’t think it’s a fear of numbers, I think it’s a lack of clarity about what to measure and how to do it. Reporting and KPIs for internal communications have been focused on outputs for years, rather than outcomes.”

If you’re too focused on broadcasting via email than engaging and encouraging employee voice and two-way communication, it causes problems as employees switch off. It’s the difference between communicating to and for people. Your colleagues know the difference.



Priya Bates

President of Inner Strength Communication

“We see communicators who simply communicate for communications sake and [send out the newsletter and the messages and tell stories](#) but they don’t actually measure the results and fail to connect these with business results.”

“Organizations typically go through two types of disruptions: evolutionary and revolutionary. Small changes that happen over time are evolutionary changes while bigger disruptions are revolutionary.”

“In most cases, change programs fail either 50% of the time or even 75% of the time. It’s because we don’t communicate effectively.”

“Having a communication infrastructure in place during the good times will help a company during a change and crisis and also build trust.”



Jenni Field

Director of Redefining Communications

“There is a clear change in the way the younger generation work and their connection to technology is generally not seen in other generations.”

“Internal communication really called me because it mattered to people who you were with everyday and you could be really creative with your approach to the organisational challenges.”

“[Internal communication includes everything that gets said and shared inside of an organisation](#). As a function, its role is to curate, enable, and advise on best practice for organisations to communicate effectively, efficiently and in an engaging way.”

"If you don't have a strategy, at least do some research into what people need and want. Without that you're not doing what is right for the organisation and the people."

"We also need to recognize that we are professional communicators and we need to invest time in ourselves to demonstrate credibility. In doing this, we signal the importance of internal communication and what we are doing and that it isn't something just anyone can do."

"I think a good email is one that is clear. It should clearly tell me what do you want me to do and by when."



Advita Patel

Director at CommsRebel

"Lots of things have changed in recent years, but one of the most important changes I've seen is that [the profession is moving away from being a 'nice to have' to a 'must have' in many organizations.](#)"

"Once you start pushing back a little, and challenging things that are not adding anything to the business, you'll see a shift in attitude and better results for you and your team."

"You need to remember bricks and mortar don't have a tone or voice that sits with the leaders in your org, so if they change, so does the tone and voice, which is different from brand values, which would generally remain the same."

"However, if you feel like your values or ethics are being compromised and you are unable to influence change then you may need to think about whether that organization is for you. Working somewhere where you don't agree with their values can cause an inner battle with your authentic side – which in the long-run can leave you exhausted and feeling a bit sad."

"If you don't have any measures in place then how can you see what value you've added and the difference it's made to the organization?"

"Being able to network and share ideas really helps internal communications pros who are often working on their own with no team, and limited budgets."

"We need to stop talking about having this 'seat at the table' and start working towards building ourselves as trusted advisors."

"Employees are time poor these days and we're constantly fighting for their attention against all the other things they have access to on their own personal device, so don't make things harder than they need to be."



Future of work: Where are internal communicators heading?

The role of internal communication is changing rapidly. With the introduction of new technological tools and the growing importance of measuring an organization's internal communications, internal communications [professionals are starting to see their roles increase in importance.](#)

“I think one of the biggest disruptions we've seen is the **shift in our role from content creators to curators**. It's no longer about our bylines, but how we facilitate conversations and connections in organisations,” says Rachel Miller, Director of [All Things IC](#), when speaking about the changing role of internal communication.

The future of internal communications is all about adopting the right tools and technologies that can help you create value in your workplace.

Top internal communications podcasts for 2020

Podcasts, no matter the topic or genre, are an excellent way to consume content. They're a nice change-up from music during the work day, or on a long road trip. On his blog, [Gary Vaynerchuk spoke about the rising popularity of audio and voice](#), a topic he continues passionately advocate for today.

He stated that audio and streaming has been steadily increasing 75% year over year (YoY), eclipsing video with 250 billion streams per year.

If you haven't gotten on the podcast train yet, here are a few reasons why you should give them a try:

- They are free to listen to
- You can listen to them on the go
- They can be listened to passively while you tackle other tasks
- They are topical and offer a great deal of variety
- They can provide incredibly valuable information and inspiration

Books, videos, and conferences are also great, but they require a lot more focus and less flexibility, in some cases. The concept of being able to plug into a podcast on employee engagement while doing laundry or cooking is pretty appealing.

There are two communications-focused podcasts that started in 2019 that we look forward to listening to in 2020 and beyond. They are:

The IABC International Podcast

[IABC](#) is the body for internal communicators around the world. They've had podcasts in the past, but in March they relaunched and rebranded with the [IABC International podcast](#). They answer questions around taking your internal communications career to the next level, how to get back to meaningful communicating, and everything in between.

The Comms Shift Podcast

Run by [Smarp](#), the [first episode of this podcast was an internal communication masterclass](#). It covers topics like the role of technology in internal communications, and

how to deliver bad news to employees.

For more suggestions that we're still enjoying, be sure to check out our list of top internal communications podcasts: <https://www.contactmonkey.com/blog/internal-communication-podcasts>



Internal communications books for 2020

At ContactMonkey, we're all non-fiction nerds. And finding compelling communication reads isn't always the easiest task.

Luckily for you, we've compiled [a list of books](#) designed specifically for internal communications professionals, as well as some other books that were written for a marketing audience with relevant insights for internal comms professionals.

Regardless of the titles, each book offers a unique perspective that will help you build your [company's work culture](#), engage employees and up your internal comms game!

Read on to see some new titles for your reading list:

1. **Making the Connections: Using Internal Communication to Turn Strategy into Action**

The way we communicate is changing due to disruptive technologies and rampant globalization. It has now become even more difficult for internal comms pros to turn their strategies into action in a world filled with distractions. This book by [Bill Quirke](#) hones in on what it means to use communication to help organizations create desirable internal outcomes.

2. **Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action**

Simon Sinek's groundbreaking book is a great read for those organizations struggling to figure out how to communicate their brand purpose effectively to employees.

Companies need to lead with purpose and ensure their workers can leverage that purpose and be active contributors to the company vision. If you've ever wondered how some companies are more successful and leave an impact while others flounder, you need to read this!

3. Internal Communications: A Manual for Practitioners

[Internal Communications: A Manual for Practitioners](#) by [Liam FitzPatrick](#) and [Klavs Valskov](#) is jam-packed with advice, case studies and practical tools on how to create effective internal comms in your organization.

The book takes a deep dive into what good internal communication looks like and offers a clear step-by-step action plan on how to go about creating a stellar internal communications strategy. This would be a great addition to your library of epic communication books!

4. Brand From The Inside

While many organizations are able to build a compelling employer brand, very few are able to truly engage their employees and get them on board to deliver on the promises of what the brand entails.

In “[Brand from the Inside](#)”, [Libby Sartain](#) and Mark Schuman, give you an in-depth guide on how to ensure your workers are able to consistently add value to your employer brand and deliver on brand promises. This is one of the best communication books out there for those looking to build an impactful internal brand.

5. The Purpose Revolution: How Leaders Create Engagement and Competitive Advantage in an Age of Social Good

While internal communication professionals understand the importance of helping to create an organizational culture driven by purpose, many of them struggle with figuring out how to do so.

Authors Jeff Izzo and Jeff Vanderwielen tackle this problem head on. The Purpose Revolution leaves you feeling motivated and inspired to work in an organization that prioritizes its purpose above everything else. The authors provide concrete examples on how to lead with purpose and thus attract the world's best talent, customers and suppliers.

For the full list of titles, be sure to check out our full list of [must read books for internal communicators](#).

Internal communications conferences you must attend in 2020

We made [a list of the best internal communications conferences](#) happening around the world. There's a lot of variety in content and scale, meaning that there's something for everyone!

By attending internal communications conferences, you can stay up-to-date on communication best practices, learn from some of the biggest names in the field, and network with like-minded professionals.

You can come away with new industry connections, valuable information on how to expand your skills as an internal communicator, get a glimpse into the biggest internal communication trends, or expand your consultancy - the possibilities are endless.

[HubSpot has made an excellent conference list](#) for 2020 that includes some of our favourites, and others that we haven't previously considered. The list includes:

- [Annual Conference for Media Relations Professionals](#)
- [Confab: The Content Strategy Conference](#)
- [Crisis Communications Conference](#)
- [Internal Association of Business Communicators World Conference](#)
- [Social Media Strategies Conference](#)

We're also keeping an eye on:

- [Connect 2020 by PRSA](#)
- [Employee Experience Summit](#)
- [Engage Internal Communications Conference](#)
- [Future of Communications Conference](#)
- [8th Annual Internal Communications Conference](#)

Lastly, we're intrigued by a lot of [the conferences on Smarp's latest list](#), including the Gartner Digital Workplace Summit, where the future of work will be discussed. That's a topic that remains top of mind for us internally, especially as our team is experiencing so much growth.



Further reading: Internal communications resources for 2020

- [10 Killer Internal Newsletter Ideas](#)
- [Top 12 Internal Communications Tools](#)
- [How to Create an Internal Communications Plan](#)
- [How to Track Internal Emails](#)



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