



# The Ultimate Guide to **Sending Internal Emails Your Employees Will Love** from Outlook



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# Part 1 - State of Internal Communications

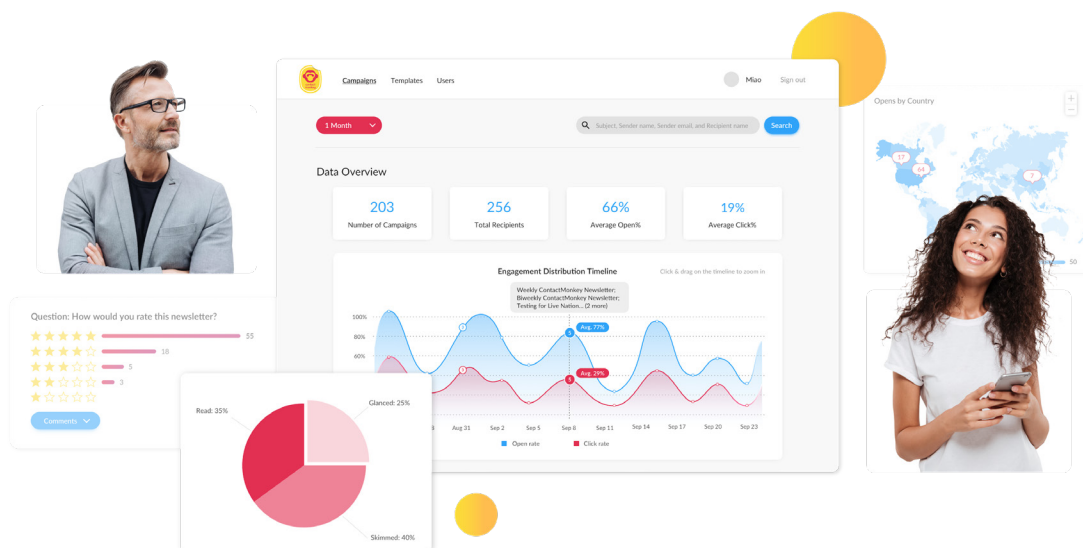
## Executive Summary

The world of internal communications (IC) has undergone several changes in the last decade. This has been driven by intense competition for talent, a distracted workforce, and the rise of employees who care deeply about values and missions, not just about a paycheck.

In addition to these challenges, communicators must also contend with IC trends. With mobile open rates doubling in the last five years and more remote workers than ever, communicators have to ensure their emails are responsive across all devices.

Internal communicators are quickly shifting from a nice-to-have addition to a must-have asset within organizations. Internal communicators help increase employee engagement, nurture positive work culture, and boost business performance.

With this guide we aim to give you actionable best practices and techniques you can use to send better email communications and become the driving force the modern workplace needs you to be.



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## Key Takeaways & Action Items



### Get Buy-In

Involve certain key players and “quiet influencers” in your communications to promote buy-in.



### Engagement

Understand what your employees want and deliver it in a timely manner.



### Personalization = Engagement

Personalize subject lines and body copy to ensure every interaction feels personal and caring, as opposed to just “another email blast.”



### Measure Everything

Pay close attention to metrics such as opens and link clicks to make informed decisions and optimize your emails every time you hit “Send”.



### Proving Return on Investment

Increase and measure engagement to demonstrate the ROI of internal communications. We will show you later on how you can prove this, especially when it comes to email communications.

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# The Challenges of IC Today & Tips to Fix Them

## *What's keeping internal communicators up at night?*

Smooth, efficient, and engaging internal communication isn't easy to achieve. For organizations to reach this goal, the right ingredients have to be in place: informational flow, buy-in from internal influencers, and tools to measure engagement.

In our chats with clients and internal communicators around the globe we've identified 2 major challenges for IC in the modern workplace:

### 1) Understanding What Employees Want

The battle for your employees' attention has reached incredible heights. Whereas a decade ago your newsletter could seem new and exciting, you're now competing for attention with Instagram, Snapchat, and funny videos of cats on YouTube.

On top of that (or because of it), 46% of employees say they rarely or never read internal communications. For that reason, it has become paramount that you truly understand what employees want.

#### **Tips to make sure you're providing content employees want to read:**

- Track opens and link clicks to understand what subject lines and content your employees actually want to read (more on that below).
- Make emails fun and memorable by adding memes, GIFs, and other visuals to break up text.
- Keep communications short, relevant and to the point-everyone likes brevity.
- Actively seek out feedback and participation, whether in the form of a survey or a vote for the next company outing. People are more likely to engage with something they had a say in.
- Avoid communication overload: send the right information at the right time to the right people. Got an important policy you need employees to sign? Don't wait to include this in your weekly/monthly blast-instead employ the framework, one message, one action.

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## 2) Proving the Value of IC to the Organization



Lack of understanding—too often IC has a perception of being the senders of the ‘fluffy emails and organisers of the cakes and pretty pictures—Real IC is measured and provides tangible ROI.



- Hannah Claffey, on challenges facing IC professionals today.

While the role of IC has evolved to put communicators in charge of promoting culture and engagement, many find it difficult to shake the idea that IC success is unquantifiable.

As shown by Hannah’s comment, there is still a perception that IC is only in charge of the fun, cute events at the organization, when in fact they are leaders with a strong influence in company culture, engagement, and talent retention. Let’s explore ways to change that perception.

### **Tips to change the perception of IC and prove its value:**

- Get early buy-in from leaders and influencers. Sometimes the most influential people in the organization aren’t managers or executives, so identify them and involve them in your communications.
- Encourage cross-departmental communication: by helping other departments accomplish their goals, the value of IC will become more evident to the organization at large.
- 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.”
- Make your communications an objective strategy by tracking everything, from email opens and engagement, to link clicks (more on that later).

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## Key IC Trends for 2021

Internal communicators need to go beyond understanding what employees want and use that knowledge to provide value to the organization. They also need to pay attention to tech advancements.

### Intranet/Employee App

Many large-scale companies are favoring intranets for its ease of use and adaptability. It also allows remote workers and employees working from different offices to work more collaboratively and achieve aggregate goals.

#### **An intranet is a good fit for organizations:**

- If it's difficult to communicate important company announcements or news and email isn't an option (nowadays some on-the-ground workers don't have a company email, so intranet might be one of the only ways to reach them).
- When departments are experiencing communication breakdown with employees.
- If there's a need to reduce excessive documentation and store important information in one place.
- To help cross-functional teams collaborate on projects or access resources. People are also using social apps like SocialChorus and Staffbase to connect with each other.

### Instant Messaging

One of the best communication tools for collaborative work is instant messaging. With the rise of remote work, and a high-dependence of cross-functional teams, it's no wonder that instant messaging tools like Slack and Jostle are leading communication tools in today's workplace.

#### **Instant messaging is a good fit for organizations if:**

- Teams working in different geographic locations and in different time zones need to communicate and collaborate with each other.
- Team members need to share files and have a shared conversation in real-time, either with multiple team members in a chat, or with individual team members.
- Teams need to instantly catch up on important discussions, updates, and status of projects.

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## Email

The modern workplace is buzzing with endless connectivity, and the greatest way to engage with employees in a low-cost and broad scale remains email.

Long gone are the days when sending an email felt like taking a shot in the dark, never knowing if you actually scored.

Not only does email represent permission-based communication, if used effectively it can prove to be more useful and measurable than other interactive communication channels such as intranets or instant messaging apps.

Email is specifically useful for organizations with multi-location teams. Managers can use tools such as ContactMonkey Internal Comms to see the location of email opens, click-through rates, link clicks, devices used, gather employee feedback, track event invites and more.

Such metrics can help you streamline your email communication strategy and figure out when, where, and how to send emails within the organization.

### Major benefits of using email include:

- It's a **proactive distribution channel** – companies can instantly share important company related news that directly affects employees and their jobs.
- Although 46% of employees only skim (and even ignore) internal emails, **most employees take email seriously**. If it lands in their inbox, they know it's important enough to read (given that best practices are followed).
- Modern HTML email tools do away with boring text-only emails and allow you to **create beautiful, responsive templates** for your communications.
- Email communications are also instantaneous while preserving **a sense of importance and urgency** (as opposed to an instant message), thus enhancing quick dissemination of information and engagement.



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## Part 2 - Email: Now More Important Than Ever

### Email Isn't Going Anywhere

All the aforementioned benefits aside, there's still countless articles about the "death of email." Yet, in a time with so much informational noise, where everyone with a phone can be a publisher, a source of official news is now more important than ever.

In fact, our Global State of Internal Communications Survey for 2020 found that email was the preferred communication channel among 95% of respondents.

According to our Employee Communications Preferences Survey, we found that 64% of employees feel they receive the perfect number of such communications. On top of that, thanks to the ubiquity of mobile devices, opens per email have gone up on mobile, doubling in the last 5 years, according to research by Return Path.

### Why You Should Keep Email at the Core of All Internal Comms

Due to (not despite) the countless different tools connecting employees to each other in the modern workplace, email has gained an increased prominence. While GIFs on Slack or direct messages can be ignored, internal emails carry a connotation of importance that will never be replaced.

Yet given its implied importance, your employees will only continue opening emails if you keep delivering on that perceived importance. The minute your emails feel fluffy, your engagement rates will start to sink.

We recommend using email as the spearhead, the MVP of your internal comms strategy in conjunction with your other tools. Just because your team uses intranet doesn't mean you shouldn't track email opens; just because you use Slack doesn't mean you shouldn't send beautiful HTML newsletters to your team. All these tools should be used in conjunction with each other to reinforce your messaging and communications.

How can you make your employee emails more engaging and appealing? As email experts, we have developed best practices and tips based on interactions with clients and other industry experts.

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## Tips for Engaging Emails

### Segmentation is Key

Companies of any size can benefit from leveraging distribution groups or lists to ensure the information is relevant and your message is reaching the right audience (thus boosting your employee engagement with the content).

Why are distribution lists necessary? Consider this: do your Canadian employees need to know about changes to your American policies? How will they feel if their American counterparts have perks and benefits different from what is offered locally? This can create at best a willingness to ignore emails and, at worst, resentment in other markets.

Distribution lists are also helpful for employees in the same office to help increase departmental engagement levels, since information that is relevant to the sales department may not apply to IT.

Segmentation lists can also help you identify internal influencers, since with the right metrics you'll be able to pin point them from their email open activity.

### Personalize Everything

Once you have your distribution lists and segments set up so your news is flowing to the right audiences, it is time to steal a common sales tactic: personalization.

In a time when you can customize everything from your coffee to your running shoes, we expect brand touchpoints in our lives to be relevant.

This applies to your biggest brand advocates (i.e. employees) as well. Use merge fields to create a sense of individualization and increase engagement.

A merge field is a field you can put in an email template to automatically insert values from a data source. Below we'll show you how to use a mail merge field to include the recipient's name instead of a boring "Hi!"

### Make it Easy to Skim

Have you ever opened an email just to see a never-ending block of text? How did it make you feel?

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Your employees may already believe communications aren't critical to their day-to-day. Increase engagement and the chance of your employees actually reading your communications by adding summaries and key takeaways at the top of your block of content.

These can be particularly effective for product updates if you aren't leveraging segmentation. Sales can deep dive into the changes to understand how they can use the information, while your support staff might just need to glance at the summary.

## Subject Lines are Everything

You can craft the perfect and most beautiful newsletter or write award-winning copy, but if no one opens it, your email might as well be empty. To ensure your emails get clicked and opened, we suggest you:

- **Use short subject lines:** research has found that subject lines between 6-10 words have the highest open rates. Another thing to consider is that most people check their email on their cell phones, so a shorter subject line will ensure that your email is displayed correctly.
- **Lead with desire:** put yourself in their shoes, what email would you open? For your employees to open an email, the subject line needs to go beyond information to address their desires and needs. For example, if for your weekly pizza lunch the menu has been changed to Thai food, which email subject line would you click on...  
"Information regarding pizza lunch" or "We've got a delicious surprise for lunch"?



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## The Nightmare of Sending Responsive Emails

All the advice and best practices are swell. But wouldn't it be great to know how to send responsive HTML emails that look exactly how you envisioned them from your own Outlook? At ContactMonkey we understand that your employee newsletter plays an incredibly important role in your internal communication strategy.

We also know that sending mass emails or an employee newsletter in Outlook has been, historically, a surprisingly difficult task.

Although one of the most widely used email clients in the world, with Outlook there's always the fear that your emails won't render properly or that they will lack mobile responsiveness. This painful experience is so universal that there's thousands of articles describing how it's impossible to send responsive emails from Outlook.

Take for example this comment by MailStyler, showcasing the frustration of sending newsletters in Outlook just to watch them collapse after being sent.

**“Unfortunately, the number of people who will choose Microsoft Outlook to send a newsletter is still pretty high. It will be frustrating, for no template builder, not even MailStyler, can make sure that the layouts you create and send stay responsive, and it's Outlook's fault,”** they said.

Or this comment on a Litmus forum about responsive emails breaking in Outlook:  
**“There's no way, to my knowledge, of stopping this. Outlook doesn't use HTML as a rendering engine, instead it uses Word. So HTML gets altered when used in Outlook.”**

Well, we've put a stop to that. There is a way. Here's how.



# Part 3 - Sending Internal Emails Your Employees Will Love

## Putting an end to the nightmare

With ContactMonkey's all-in-one Internal Communications software, you can create, send, and track emails from your Outlook inbox. Create responsive emails that look great across all devices and platforms. Send scheduled and personalized emails to maximize your engagement, which you can track from your campaign dashboard.

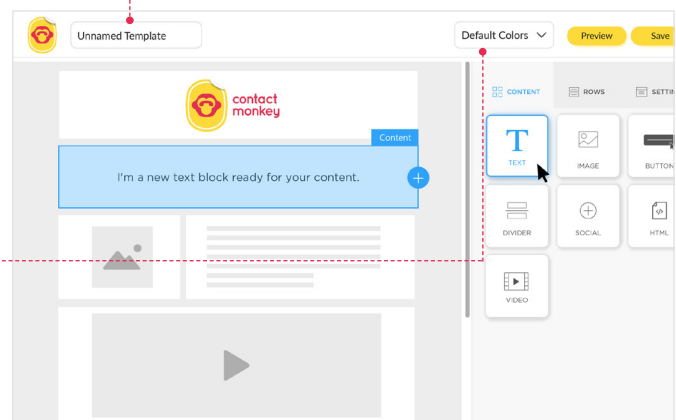
Need branded email templates quickly? With ContactMonkey's [Outlook Email Design Service](#), you can get customized email templates to your exact specifications, made by professional designers.

## Create

Building a beautiful HTML email is easier than ever using ContactMonkey. With our email template builder, you can create stunning employee emails in minutes:

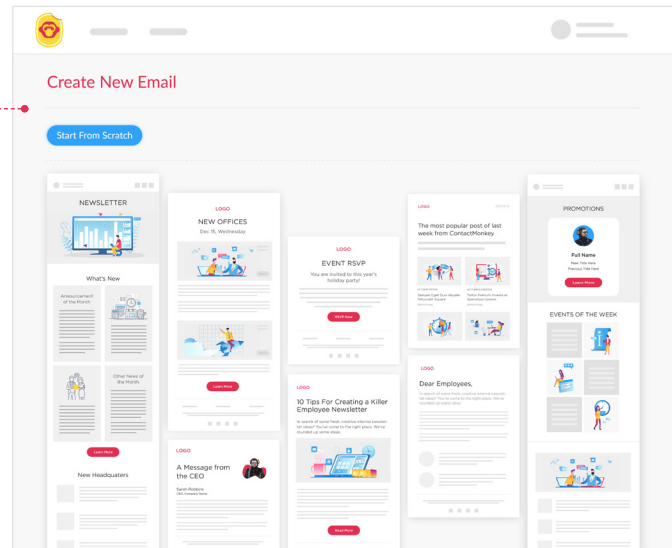
### Getting Started

- Name your email templates so they can be found and used again
- Customize the content area of your template; we recommend at least 800px
- Insert company brand colours using the default colours option
- Use rows to organize your email content



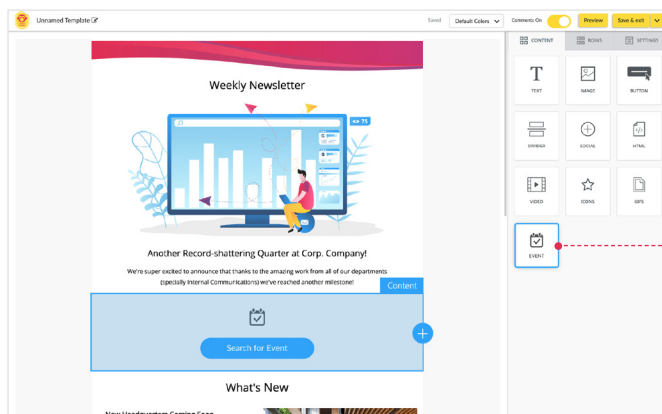
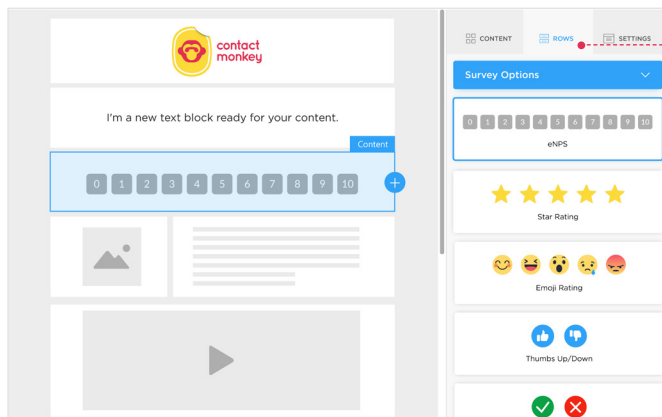
## Design

- Choose from ContactMonkey's library of 500,000+ free images to enhance your email
- Add text blocks with merge tags that personalize text according to who receives it
- Use clickable icons to increase your click through rate on links
- Grab your readers' attention with full GIPHY integration



## Engage

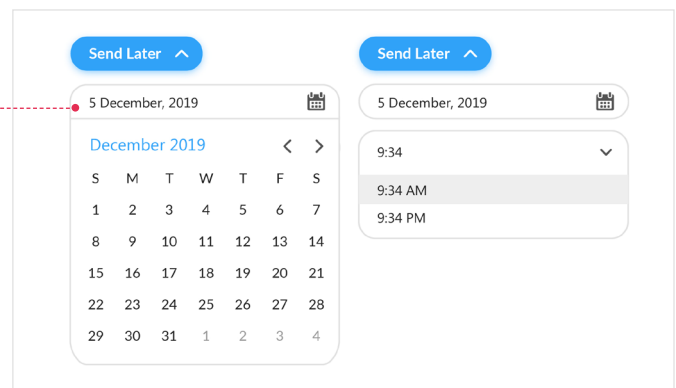
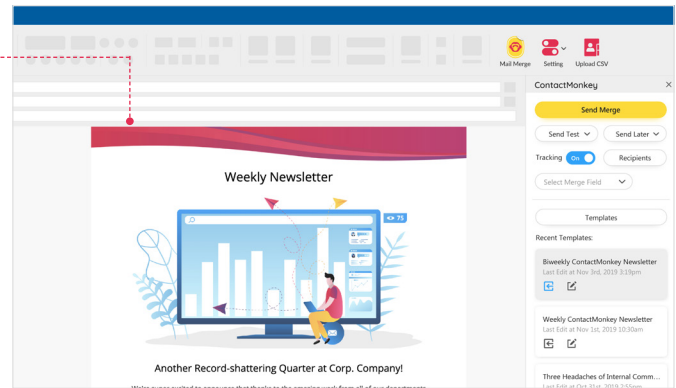
- Insert pulse surveys, emoji reactions, yes/no questions, and more to let your employees give feedback
- Collect anonymous employee comments based around questions you ask
- Gauge how likely your employees are to recommend your business to their friends or family with eNPS surveys
- Preview your email template to see how it will appear on desktop and mobile devices to ensure everyone can read it easily
- Manage your virtual and in person employee events. Create events and embed them within your employee newsletters. Employees can RSVP to events directly from the email, making it easier for you to track event engagement and registrations



## Send

Once you're happy with your email template, you're ready to import it into your Outlook inbox:

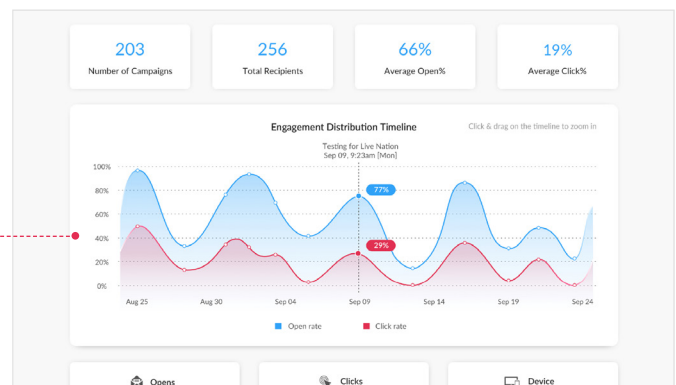
- Select your template from the ContactMonkey sidebar; the most recent one will appear on top
- Choose your desired distribution list, or send to a CSV file by clicking Upload CSV
- Personalize your subject lines for boosted engagement by using Merge Tags
- Schedule your email for when your recipients are most likely to read it
- Click Send on the ContactMonkey sidebar and you're good to go!



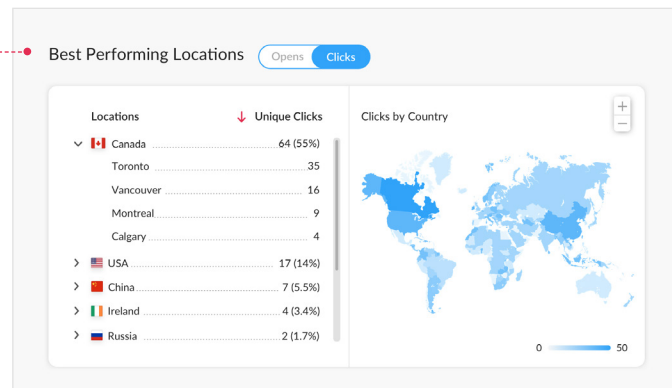
## Track

Now that your employee email has been sent, how can you determine if it's a success? Tracking your emails not only gives you valuable insight into what your employees want to see, but email metrics can be used to demonstrate the value of your internal communications. With ContactMonkey's campaign dashboard, you can:

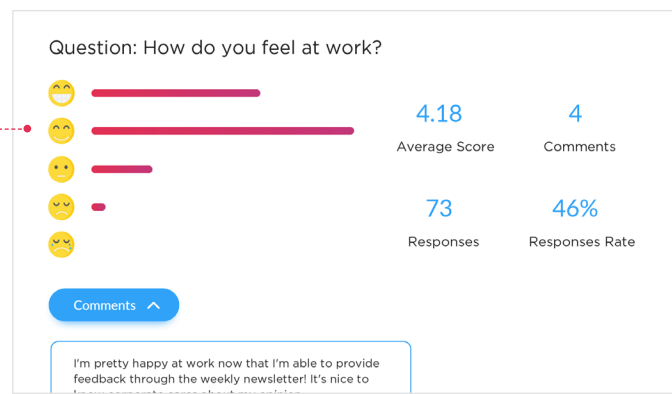
- Track both individual and overall email metrics; understand employee email behaviours as well as business-wide trends
- Measure open rate and click-through rate to track engagement and find your best content



- Track your email performance by employee location



- View your employee feedback to surveys, and read your anonymous employee feedback



- Create segmented email stats to view metrics according to department, location, title, etc.

Campaign Overview: Weekly ContactMonkey Newsletter

Data Overview Segmented Email Stats

Choose A Segment Below

Department

Department

Title

Office Location

	Recipients	Open % (Unique Opens) ↓	Click % (Unique Clicks) ↓
Marketing	234	60% (140)	6% (14)
Sales	1092	52% (568)	10% (109)
Product	897	45% (404)	8% (72)
Customer Success	421	43% (181)	17% (71)

- Compare how your email campaigns perform against one another, and export the results into PowerPoint presentations

< Select Campaigns

Campaign Comparison

1. Weekly ContactMonkey Newsletter Sent on Wed, Sept 16, 2020 3:19 pm	4. Mailchimp Alternatives for Internal Newsletters Sent on Sat, Sept 7, 2020 9:02 am
2. Biweekly ContactMonkey Newsletter Sent on Sat, Sept 14, 2020 10:35 am	5. Product Update: Outlook Mail Merge for Office 365 Sent on Mon, Sept 9, 2020 8:30 am
3. Starbucks Meeting Schedule for 2020 Sent on Friday, Sept 6, 2020 3:18 pm	6. Outlook Email Templates for Communicators Sent on Sat, Sept 14, 2020 1:30 pm

Opens & Clicks

Shows: 5

Sent Time	Subject	Recipient Count ↓	Unique Opens% ↓	Unique Clicks% ↓	Unopened
Sept 16, 2020 3:19 pm	Weekly ContactMonkey Newsletter	245	60%	41%	98
Sept 14, 2020 10:35 am	Biweekly ContactMonkey Newsletter	788	52%	22%	378
Sept 6, 2020 3:18 pm	Starbucks Meeting Schedule for 2020	531	44%	33%	297
Sept 7, 2020 9:02 am	Mailchimp Alternatives for Internal New...	290	38%	30%	
Sept 9, 2020 8:30 am	Product Update: Outlook Mail Merge for...	500	30%	27%	350



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## Proving the Value of Internal Communications

Another way that using your metrics dashboard provides value is by giving you the information necessary to show management and the C-Suite the results of your campaigns.

**Gone are the days of “trusting your gut” or hoping that your internal comms strategies are working.** With tools like ContactMonkey Internal Communications software, which you can access from Outlook, you can see and report on how efficient your communications are.

Wherever you're at now, beginning to track and analyze performance of your internal emails can help you improve your communications and solidify your value within your organization. You could start by testing different email subject lines or tracking what type of content gets most clicks. Your findings will help you learn what resonates best with your employees so you can create communications they love to read.

**How do you develop a strategy to measure communications? What metrics should you be looking at? How should you be tracking different communication key performance indicators (KPI's)?**

Although it may seem challenging, internal communications can be measured once you define change to: how the role of internal communications is helping achieve the overall business goals and objectives. From here you can set out key performance indicators to prove the value and return on investment of internal communications. We recommend you start by tracking the following:

- **Reach:** How many employees are you interacting with?
- **Behavior:** Is your team behaving differently because of your communications? Track those changes.
- **Impact:** Did your communications lead to an improvement in performance, retention or productivity?
- **Engagement:** Are your employees opening your emails? Are they clicking through the links you send them?

Tracking communications is just the start. In order to be successful in proving value, you will need to consistently review communications metrics to alter and adjust strategies based on your departmental KPI's.

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## Survey Away!

By tracking KPI's you'll have the objective information to showcase that your strategies are working. You also need to record qualitative data to get a more human sense of how your campaigns are being received.

A great way to measure effectiveness of your internal communication strategy is to gather feedback from employees. You can do so by simply adding survey questions to your company newsletters within ContactMonkey.

To get the best response and feedback, engage with employees on a platform they prefer to be reached out on. Since mobile has pretty much taken over everything, try using a email template to easily reach out and get fast responses from employees.



# Conclusion

In this guide you've learned how internal communications has evolved, requiring communicators to embrace a leading role within their organizations. We've also offered some best practices that you can start applying today to increase engagement and business performance.

We hope that our how-to guide enables you to send responsive HTML internal emails from Outlook in Office 365 without all the pains and obstacles traditionally associated with Outlook.

Now that you know what trends to look for, as well as the challenges your colleagues are facing, you'll have the know-how to use the tools at your disposal efficiently.

## Track Your Internal Comms From Outlook

[Book My Demo](#)

