



# Internal Communication Strategy Canvas Guidance Notes

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# Introduction

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According to a 2017 research project conducted by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations in conjunction with the Institute of Internal Communication, there is a clear link between an organisation's financial success and good internal communications.

Internal communications taps into key elements such as company culture, employee satisfaction and workforce performance.

These guidance notes are designed to help you complete the internal communications canvas, which gives you a framework to define your strategic goals and shape engaging communications channels within your organisation.

These notes should offer prompts and ideas to consider in each section and may help you to reflect upon the relationship between internal communications and corporate objectives, employee engagement and interpersonal relationships.

Using the guidance, you can work through each section on the canvas to gain an understanding of internal communications within your organisation, and how you can utilise new and existing resources to improve the quality and effectiveness of communications.

## What Is A Canvas?

A canvas is a visual diagram which helps businesses to align their activities and aspirations by highlighting key aspects such as the external business environment, the structure of your workforce, company procedures and your business model. The canvas was originally designed to help document existing business models or develop brand new models from scratch.

When it comes to internal communications, a canvas is a great tool to help you take a broad overview of your current business, and easily identify channels and messaging which can be addressed and improved. It also allows you to identify risks and challenges associated with your plans, such as resources, competing priorities and infrastructure.

The canvas will highlight any areas to target and ensure that the internal communications strategy you choose is comprehensive in that it will:

- cover all areas of the business
- include every member of staff
- meet your planned objectives
- measure the effectiveness of your actions.

# Definition

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Internal communication can be defined as the way an organisation communicates and connects with its employees.

Those communications can have many different purposes such as providing information, setting standards, planning work and providing updates on progress. They can be delivered in a variety of ways - emails, intranets, face to face meetings, team meetings, performance reviews and written documents such as policies and procedures.

However, those driving effective internal communications should also have ambitions in terms of engaging, empowering and motivating employees. Corporate wide communications, if implemented well, give employees a voice in what happens within the organisation, leading to a feeling of empowerment. This raises the level of communications with employees to a relationship that involves honesty and trust.

Each organisation will have its own definition of internal communications and its own strategy, reflective of the nature of its business and its workforce.

# Key Stakeholders and Responsibilities

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## **Who are the key stakeholders who drive internal communications?**

This section is designed to allow you to identify the key people who drive internal communications and assign their responsibilities in relation to messaging, news and information. The goal is to ensure that all of the identified key stakeholders deliver their part of the strategy so that resources are maximised.

### **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**

The personality of the CEO can strongly influence the style of internal communications. What are their key personal traits, and how can they be used to create engaging communications with staff? The strategy should be driven by the CEO, but overall business objectives will determine their approach to the strategy, its objectives and their level of input.

### **HR Director**

Employee communication is an essential part of the HR role. The effective HR Director will be focused on genuine dialogue, employee voice and the use of a mixture of digital and traditional channels and tools. Consider the priority that HR will place on two-way communications routes to improve internal negotiations and change management.

### **Operations Director**

Along with the CEO and HR Director, the Operations Director role models good communication. They will be focused on the impact of the internal communications strategy on operational processes and procedures. What gaps in those operations can be improved by better communication?

### **Managers**

Managers act as the front line of internal communications. What is their understanding of communicating, listening and having positive conversations with staff? How they interact with their staff will depend upon the types of employees they manage; if employees are off site regularly, managers may rely upon technology a great deal to talk to their teams.

#### *References:*

- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/employee-communication>

# Company Structure

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## **How does the structure of your organisation affect the strategy options open to you?**

The following are key elements that should be considered when shaping an internal communications strategy.

### **Number of offices/locations**

The more work bases there are, the harder it is to reach the entire workforce. Do you have employees who regularly work away from the office? Examples include those who work from home, are based in the community, work out of different offices or travel regularly.

Communications channels for a diverse and disparate workforce will look very different to those for a workforce that is largely based in one location. What flexibility is needed to ensure that messaging gets to the right people at the right time?

### **Number of employees**

Similarly, the more employees you have, the more thought is required to get internal communications right. Larger workforces tend to have a greater number of part-time staff and those who have more flexible working arrangements. In addition, a large workforce can encourage the creation of 'mini cultures', which are often set by department or work location and are influenced by management style. Review how these factors will impact - for better or worse - the communications strategy that you adopt. The goal will be to emphasise harmony rather than what marks each location or function as 'different'.



# Company Values

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## **What are your company's values?**

A company's values form the bedrock of its mission, vision and corporate objectives. If the company's values are not known widely by your employees, step one of your internal communications strategy will be to launch an awareness programme. Meaningful internal communications with employees should regularly promote these values in different ways.

Using values within internal messaging gives the organisation and its leaders credibility. It demonstrates that the company lives its values and encourages its employees to do the same. This increases the chance that employees will find their own work meaningful and helps them to understand the link between what they do and the overall purpose of the organisation. Consider how you can associate the purpose of each job with the values of the company.

## **Company Culture**

In addition, communicating the company's values can have a dramatic impact upon company culture and employee behaviour.

The communication of company values should run through the employee's entire journey with the organisation - from recruitment and induction through to performance management and career development. A communications framework embeds the values within the workforce, which helps to shape the correct employee behaviours and interactions inside and outside of the company.

References:

- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/internal-communication-definition>

# Communications Resources

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## **How will you implement the internal communications strategy?**

The resources available to you (people, tools, technology, money) will heavily influence the content and the reach of the strategy. A crucial aspect of this is accessibility. Does your organisation have the channels available to reach every part of the workforce, regardless of their job title or work location?

### **Dedicated internal staff**

It may be that your strategy will be more successful if there are staff dedicated to internal communications. They will have the expertise and time to devote to messaging, news and promotions, which in turn may generate positive returns on investment in terms of employee motivation, productivity and retention.

### **Agency**

Hiring a communications agency is an alternative if the organisation does not want to employ people directly or, indeed, there is no immediate answer as to who will manage the communications function. If the initial framework of the internal communications strategy suggests that help may be needed for parts of it or at certain times of the year, using an agency may be more cost effective.

### **Dedicated software/systems**

Successful communications require user friendly, effective channels and methods. The right software platform can foster engaged discussions, valuable feedback, trust and innovation. What technology will you need to deliver your internal communications plan?

References:

- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/internal-communications-app>

# Organisational Goals and Objectives

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## **How does your organisation communicate its strategic goals and objectives?**

Research indicates that employees who know and understand the organisation's objectives operate more effectively. It also gives more meaning to employee work, which in turn can improve motivation and employee engagement.

In addition, what are the objectives of the internal communications strategy itself? Examples of broad outcomes include improved employee satisfaction or higher staff retention.

## **Next 12 months**

When communicating strategic objectives to the workforce, clarity and simplicity are the key elements to remember. Employees may be overwhelmed by information on the organisation's five year mission, but they will respond well to knowledge on the company's goals within the next year. What kind of tools and resources can you use to remind employees of how their work contributes to the twelve month plan?

## **Main goals**

The communications plan should include major changes such as plans to grow the business, new product or service launches and moving premises. Reflect on how you can maximise two-way communication on these issues in order to achieve employee buy-in.

For this element of the internal communications strategy to work well, you should promote how these goals will be achieved, who will be responsible and when will they be complete.

References:

- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/benefits-of-internal-communication>
- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/internal-communication-best-practices>
- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/internal-communications-plan>

# Communications Channels

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## **What main routes will you use to deliver your communications plan?**

Review the infrastructure and technology that your organisation has to support the internal communications strategy. The methods that you use to communicate with employees will have a huge influence on engagement levels.

### **Employee app**

With almost 80% of UK adults owning a smartphone, organisations can use this mobile use as a communications channel and invest in an employee app. An effective app will give frontline workers easier access to news, documents, discussions and more. What kind of scope (audience, frequency of messaging and reporting) would an employee app offer your organisation?

### **Email**

Everyone is used to email so it is a reliable way of sending messages to employees, and especially to remote workers. Of course, it is an overused communications channel so it can be easy for employees to miss important messages. Consider how frequently your employees receive emails and how they use them. With that in mind, how should email use feature in your plans?

### **Intranet**

A company intranet is more flexible in that it can support news briefings, blogs, discussion boards and access to directories such as the training calendar. If implemented well, it can encourage two-way communication and connect employees who never actually see each other face to face. How can you ensure that your intranet is able to capture all of the workforce?

*References:*

- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/methods-of-internal-communication>
- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/employee-intranet-or-employee-app>
- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/internal-communication-channels>
- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/8-reasons-why-intranets-fail-to-engage-employees>

# Workforce profile

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## **How do you reach the entire workforce quickly and easily?**

As mentioned in the 'Company Structure' section, physical distance and role differentiation can act as barriers to good communication flows. What resonates with one part of the workforce may turn off another section.

## **How to segment the workforce**

Segmentation involves targeting your audience in different ways. Can you divide your workforce into groups that have similar needs, wants or characteristics? Simple differentiators include age, work location and work patterns. More sophisticated approaches involve asking employees about their needs and interests.

The segmentation will inform you on which communications channels to use for each segment of the workforce. How, for example, would you message each part of the workforce on a change in pension provision?

## **Hard to reach employees**

Hard to reach employees often do not have easy access to work emails, which can often lead to a reliance on line managers to cascade information. This rarely yields consistent results.

Remote workers actually need special attention to reduce feelings of isolation. Who are those employees within your organisation? A technological platform such as an app may be appropriate to allow those employees to feel a part of the company.

### *References:*

- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/the-importance-of-internal-communication>

# Key Communications Activities

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## **What methods should you use to communicate with your employees?**

Adopting a number of methods adds flexibility to your internal communications strategy and keeps things interesting for your workforce.

### **Newsletter**

Whether in print or electronic format, newsletters allow for a less formal way of communicating with employees. Consider how a balance between business and social content (for example, birthday announcements) could affect employee engagement.

### **Company conference**

If your company already has an annual event, how can you influence it to improve communications and engagement? Plan on who should attend and how the event should be promoted, before and after the actual date.

### **Annual engagement survey**

Surveys are a good two-way communications vehicle, so long as the organisation demonstrates that it has listened and acted upon employee feedback. What do you really need to know from your employees? Ensure that you have clear objectives associated with your surveys to maximise response rates.

### **Monthly video**

Videos combine the personal experience with the advantages of technology. Which leaders in your organisation would be great candidates to deliver inspiring and memorable messaging? The type of video you adopt will also depend upon the resources that you have to create the content.

### **Recognition**

The use of praise varies widely within organisations. Recognising employees is a low cost but effective ways of improving employee engagement. Think of incorporating 'thank you' and 'well done' messages within newsletters, emails and discussion boards.

## Ideas

Communications methods that invite employee suggestions, opinions and comments can yield results that you could not have predicted. How can you incorporate that culture of innovation within your internal communications strategy?

## Pulse

Effective communication requires ongoing review of the mood of the workforce. This enables you to nip issues in the bud and promote popular topics. Decide on how you can track employee satisfaction using a happiness index.

## References:

- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/internal-communication-ideas>
- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/types-of-internal-communication>
- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/internal-communications-survey>
- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/internal-communication-tools>
- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/internal-communications-trends-for-2020>



# Communications Metrics

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## **How will you gauge the effectiveness of specific messages and communications channels?**

Measurement of the success of the organisation's communications plans allows you to highlight what is proven to be working and what needs to be refined. Employees will see faster and more engaging responses to their communications.

What kind of metrics will you need to measure the effectiveness of your internal communications? Consider how those measures will translate into other statistics on employee performance, loyalty and retention. Good measurement provides evidence for return on investment.

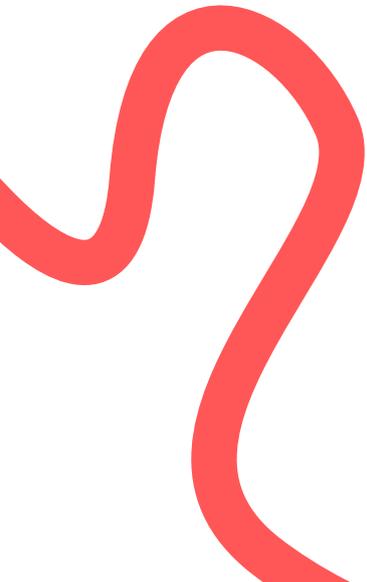
### **Read rates/received rates**

Basic data on messages received and read inform you on the reach of your communications activities within your workforce. Setting up a platform to measure these statistics allows you to identify and plug gaps, ensuring that all employees get the same messages at the same time.

Consistent basic data allows you then to build other metrics on your communications channels. What kind of technology will allow you to achieve the key performance indicators that you want in relation to internal communications? Examples include employee participation, loyalty and responses to change.

#### *References:*

- <https://www.talkfreely.com/blog/how-to-gauge-whether-your-internal-communications-channels-are-working>



# Engagement metrics

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## **What effects will your internal communications strategy have on employee engagement?**

Good communication and employee engagement are inextricably linked, with each improving the other in a virtuous circle. This section is designed to allow you to set the employee engagement goals that you want to achieve and how you will know when you have achieved them.

### **Employee engagement survey**

What kinds of surveys will be useful in measuring your communications and employee engagement? Consider what you want your software to do in terms of producing detailed surveys and downloading/publishing the results.

### **Pulse survey**

Do you need a facility to create short snapshot surveys of your workforce? These may be useful to gauge reaction to a change management programme or a particularly busy period. They can also be used to gather opinions on employee benefits and other related topics.

### **Retention figures**

Staff turnover metrics are a key indicator of employee happiness. Ensure that your reporting system has sufficient capacity to provide information on reasons for leaving, length of service and so on.

### **Sickness figures**

Employee engagement can also be reflected in the sickness absence rates for the company. Will your reporting system include data on categories of sickness and find any links to certain organisational events or changes?

# Talkfreely

## what you need to know

Our mission at Talkfreely is to enable every employee to maximise their individual contribution. We want to help employers unlock the true, often hidden, potential of a disengaged and disconnected workforce.

And since 2005, we've been turning all of that into reality: with our employee engagement platform. Today, we work with a diverse range of national and international companies, to revolutionise their internal communications and bring their people closer together.

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