State of Internal Communications During COVID-19
State of Internal Communications During COVID-19

Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 2
Looking Back ................................................................................................................................. 4
How Leadership Has Responded ................................................................................................. 10
How Technology Has Held Up ..................................................................................................... 11
Moving Forward ............................................................................................................................ 15
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................... 17
Appendix ........................................................................................................................................ 18
About Simpplr .............................................................................................................................. 23
INTRODUCTION

The State of Internal Communications by Simpplr Research is one of the most downloaded reports to date. Then, COVID-19 came along and changed the landscape of internal communications. We decided to supplement our annual State of Internal Communications report with a special COVID-19 edition.

The State of Internal Communications during COVID-19 takes a look at:

• How internal communications (IC) professionals have handled the abrupt recent changes (especially in transitioning toward work from home life)
• Whether leadership has risen to the occasion and how they’re perceived
• How technology has held up and what changes need to be made
• How IC professionals are looking toward and preparing for employees’ return to work in what many call “the new abnormal”

This year’s survey had over 600 respondents either in IC or IT. For a subset of the questions, about 100 IT executives participated in the survey. The sample is predominantly based in the United States and was randomly distributed across industries and company sizes.

Which of the following best describes your organization at this moment?

- Most of our workforce recently transitioned to work-from-home: 72%
- We have a blend of newly working from home and still commuting to work: 19%
- Most of our workforce is still going to work on-site: 6%
- Most of our workforce has either been furloughed or laid off: 1%
- Nothing has changed since the crisis: 2%

Most respondents in the sample transitioned large portions of their workforces to work-from-home.
Here are lessons from this survey:

• COVID-19 has provided an ironic silver lining to many IC professionals. They’ve been taken to task, have been used more strategically, and have done a great job setting the tone with empathy and authenticity.

• While there has been heightened awareness of the function, many of the same challenges remain: Specifically, getting employees to consume information and figuring out the appropriate technology mix to do so.

• Amid the craziness with all of the town-halls and operational updates, some organizations haven’t made time for social connections and pulse-checks to gauge employees’ well-being.

• Leaders are having a moment! By and large they have arisen to the challenge and are changing how they communicate.

• Technology-wise, they managed the transition well. But some technologies, like company intranets, fail to meet expectations.

• IC professionals are working hard to plan for the next phase with updated processes and protocols.

• Appendix 1 notes the survey respondents’ biggest takeaways from this experience.

Finally, the survey asked all internal communications respondents one optional, open-ended question: “What’s your biggest take away from this experience and lesson for others moving forward?” We were amazed by the number of thoughtful responses! It’s nearly impossible to summarize or pull out major themes from these comments. They show the range of emotions and key learnings that many of us have experienced over the past several months. These are arguably the most valuable aspects of this research and shows how transformational COVID-19 has been for organizations.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Every year, Simpplr Research surveys hundreds of employee communications and IT professionals to understand how companies are engaging with and getting value out of their intranet software technology. This year’s survey had over 600 respondents either in IC or IT. For a subset of the questions, about 100 IT executives participated. The sample is predominantly based in the United States and was randomly distributed across industries and company sizes. Participants represented a wide range of industries specific to knowledge-based workers.
LOOKING BACK

In the first section of the survey, we asked various questions about how organizations have handled their responses to COVID-19 and where things stand today.

How would you rate your organization’s communication on the following criteria during COVID-19?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Below average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Above average</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Weighted average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership visibility</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeliness of</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency of updates</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance between over or under communicating</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting employees to consume information</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally, the survey showed recurring positive themes. Understanding how to set authentic and empathetic tones was absolutely critical in March 2020. Given all of the uncertainty, then and now, this should be widely appreciated as a success. The areas where people are less confident are:

- Balancing communications
- Getting employees aligned with all of the information

The comments in Appendix 1 strongly support these data.
STATE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS DURING COVID-19

Since the advent of COVID-19, how frequently have you been getting company-wide updates to your employees?

- On a continuous basis (many times a day): 43%
- Weekly: 30%
- 2-3 per week: 23%
- Once a day: 20%
- Less frequently than on a weekly basis: 7%

Most IC professionals have been forced to provide much more frequent updates to the company. Interestingly, the IT sample shows a much more standard distribution and may indicate that communications aren’t as omnipresent as we think.

The State of Internal Communications 2020

This year’s State of Internal Communications (IC) report helps you better understand what separates great internal communications programs from everyone else. While there are many industry benchmark reports, few provide the rigor to help practitioners understand where they should focus.

Download the report to learn:
- The internal communications benchmarks across multiple topics including: practitioner challenges, measurement, technology usage, and activity focus
- The best practices and tactics from leading organizations’ IC programs that separate their programs from the rest
- Takeaways that can help you improve your own IC and drive employee engagement

Download the Report
How would employees rate your organization’s ability to provide timely, transparent communications during COVID-19?

Communications professionals

- Outstanding: 42%
- Above expectations: 36%
- Average: 16%
- Below expectations: 4%
- Poor: 2%

IT professionals

- Above expectations: 44%
- Outstanding: 12%
- Average: 39%
- Below expectations: 5%
- Less than 25%: 7%

While the same argument could be made from the last chart with the IT sample, organizations have done a great job overall communicating during COVID-19 considering all of the challenges.

This data can be taken a couple of ways. On one hand, if accurate, the majority of messages are being consumed. This is a big deal! And much higher than we traditionally see with email open rates and intranet adoption analytics. At the same time, only 7% of respondents claim to be at 100% which means a lot of critical information isn’t being heard. For benchmarking purposes, the 75th percentile appears to be the median level.

In your opinion, what percentage of employees are consuming major departmental and company-wide updates?

- 50% - 74%: 34%
- 75% - 99%: 43%
- 100%: 13%
- 25% - 49%: 7%
- Less than 25%: 3%

Now that some of the dust has settled, send employees your own survey! It will help you understand what’s working and what’s needed.
STATE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS DURING COVID-19

Have you proactively addressed new company norms and clarified the organization’s POV? (e.g. WFH with children, work hours, work flexibility going forward)

- Yes, thoroughly: 46%
- For a few areas: 42%
- No: 12%

For the most part, organizations have risen to the challenge to proactively address and accommodate the changing work environment.

Which best describes how news and information is organized, disseminated, and curated?

- Information is shared mainly through email and messaging channels: 94%
- It’s easy for employees to distinguish between “need to know” and “nice to know” corporate communications: 63%
- Our organization has communicated to employees when they can expect updates (e.g. daily at a given hour): 54%

- We have a definitive source of truth where employees can go for up-to-date, trustworthy information: 80%
- We are proactively culling outdated information and/or inaccurate information: 68%
The responses to the question “Which best describes how news and information is organized, disseminated, and curated?” provide us a lot of insights:

- Email and messaging apps (like Slack or Microsoft Teams) are clearly the predominant means of communication even though 4 out of 5 organizations have dedicated news sources.
- Nearly a third of organizations struggle with the balance between “need-to-know” and “nice-to-know” information. This is important because knowledge saturation is a widespread theme in Appendix 1.
- Only half of organizations have outlined for employees when and where they can expect company updates.

Pulse checks are used to gauge employees’ sentiment, engagement, and well-being. While not necessarily the sole purview of the internal communications, it’s surprising to see how many organizations are being lax. Especially, as many employees have become more socially isolated as time has worn on.
Have you rolled out new virtual team bonding activities? (e.g. virtual happy hours, meetups, support groups, social intranet posts)

- Yes, they’re going well: 31%
- Yes, with mixed success: 41%
- Yes, but nobody uses them: 3%
- No, not yet: 25%

Similarly, we saw a widespread disparity among organizations who incorporated virtual team bonding activities. These activities varied widely by industry with the majority of participants in predominantly desk-worker organizations such as technology companies.

Employees are looking for guidance! Organizations need to do a better job at understanding employees’ needs, focusing communications, and delivering critical information to employees.
HOW LEADERSHIP HAS RESPONDED

Leadership engagement has long been tied to the success of any internal communications function. In this section we asked how leaders have responded to COVID-19 and managed throughout change.

COVID-19 has forced leaders to increase their accessibility to employees and become more transparent. Hopefully, this is a trend that sticks although many organizations will struggle to keep this frequency.

Here’s another silver lining. Most company leaders have risen to the occasion during this crisis. This could be an opportunity for the IC function to capitalize. COVID-19 has already shown that internal communications is a necessary function. Hopefully, many leaders awaken to how they impact employees’ lives and how employee engagement starts with shared purpose, alignment, and transparent communication.

### How often are leaders offering town halls or “Ask Us Anything” sessions?

- Monthly: 28%
- Weekly: 38%
- Daily: 3%
- Sparingly: 19%
- They’ve been quiet: 12%

### How have your leaders been perceived during COVID-19?

- More favorably: 34%
- Much more favorably: 33%
- The same: 25%
- Less favorably: 6%
- Much less favorably: 2%

According to Edelman’s 2019 Trust Barometer, employees are more likely to trust their leadership than NGOs, the Government, the media! The same report said that 71% of employees believe it’s critically important for my CEO to respond to not only industry issues, but also political events, national crises, and employee-driven issues.

Executive leadership is bigger than the workplace
HOW TECHNOLOGY HAS HELD UP

In this section we asked survey respondents how their communications technology has held up during the COVID-19 transition. On one hand some of the findings were pleasantly surprising with many feeling astonished at how smoothly transitions were made. On the other hand, many organizations’ intranets are not where they need to be to help facilitate critical information and connect distributed workforces.

First off, we asked the IC professionals to rate their cohorts in IT during COVID-19. By and large, technology has done an amazing job. Recall, there was concern in early March whether there was intranet bandwidth or the security in place to transition our workforces. IT historically has been a crucial partner for internal communications.

Which of the following tools are primarily used for these communications?  
(Check all that apply)

- Email: 95%  
- Web conferencing (e.g. Zoom, WebEx): 79%  
- Messaging apps (e.g. Teams, Slack): 62%  
- Intranet/employee communications apps (e.g. Sharepoint): 57%  
- Other: 12%
As shown in the previous sections, email and messaging apps continue to be the predominant vehicle for company-wide communications. This is problematic because we also saw the communicators’ biggest struggle is getting employees to consume critical or “need-to-know” updates. Over 40% of organizations exclude intranets in the communication toolbox. There is an opportunity for organizations to revisit their communications tech stack and question why that is.

A modern intranet can benefit communicators and employees in multiple ways:

1. Messages don’t get lost because (unlike email and messaging apps) the company can dictate the front page news and for how long.
2. The source can be curated and personalized so employees don’t have to sort through noise.
3. It’s a trusted entity that employees know is vetted and curated so you can squash fake news and rumors.
4. It brings employees back to the company’s virtual headquarters so they can connect to news and experts beyond those they normally chat with.
5. It can provide readership/engagement analytics and “Must Read” workflows to ensure all employees receive the most important information.

To get employees to consume and internalize essential information, organizations should look at all of these available technologies and question their existing toolkit. Ideally, you’re able to use all tactics to their advantage.

Which of the following tools in your Communication Tech Stack are your employees most dissatisfied with? (Multi-select)

- Intranet/employee communications apps (e.g. SharePoint) 52%
- Web conferencing (e.g. Zoom, WebEx) 36%
- Messaging apps (e.g. Teams, Slack) 32%
- Cloud productivity suites (e.g. Google Docs, O365) 28%

Intranets continue to be among the workplace’s least liked applications with more than half of respondents noting dissatisfaction. All of the other classes have made wide-scale, generational improvements in their technology. For example, Microsoft Office has evolved to either Google Docs or O365. Zoom is widely replacing WebEx. Slack and Microsoft Teams are relatively new solutions. Intranet technology, however, is just now starting to see momentum with newer alternatives.
Internal communications is much more critical with their existing intranet technology than their peers in IT. This is not surprising for a couple of reasons:

1. Most intranets today were built on platform technology (e.g. SharePoint) that require a heavy configuration investment from IT.
2. As the business-side users, IC has a stronger dependency on the intranets to succeed in their roles.

Nonetheless, there is a disconnect from both sides. The majority rate their intranet as adequate or better even though the previous question noted that more than half of employees are dissatisfied with the solution.

Get the report: The Forrester Wave™: Intranet Platforms Q2, 2020

While the intranet remains a foundational technology in the workplace, there are tremendous opportunities for intranets to improve.

This report helps you understand today’s intranet challenges and how to evolve your intranet to meet today’s demands.

Download the report to learn:
- Learn how Forrester ranks top intranet platform providers across 26 criteria
- Identify a shortlist of viable intranet vendors that can meet your requirements company needs
- Understand the most important factors to consider when evaluating an intranet platform
Intranets, relative to other communication technology, were less prepared for the COVID-19 shakeup. Many of the comments in Appendix 1 reflect this reality. Diving deeper into intranet technology, we see many intranets continue to struggle with the user interface, content governance, technology integration, and connecting employees with their counterparts.

**INTRANETS STILL MATTER!**

**Based on the State of Internal Communications report:**

1. The intranet is still the most important technology vehicle for internal communications
2. To optimize the effectiveness of your IC program, leverage your intranet along with a mix of other technologies
3. Do not limit your organization to only using email communications — leading organizations actually use email less frequently
MOVING FORWARD

In the final section, we asked survey participants about how much they’re looking toward the future. While it’s hard to capture everything with quantifiable results, this section, along with the comments in Appendix 1, provides insight into how IC professionals have been planning.

**Have you started planning with leaders and other departments on how to transition employees back to work?**

- Yes, extensively: 45%
- Yes, partially: 41%
- No, not yet: 10%
- Not applicable: 4%

Excitingly, internal communications, a group that often wishes for a stronger seat at the table, has been heavily involved with leadership and other departments in return planning.

COVID-19 has forced CEOs to rethink the importance of internal communications. It’s time for communicators to make the quantum leap from necessary function to critical organizational priority!
**STATE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS DURING COVID-19**

Assuming there is a “return to normal”, how prepared are you with the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Below average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Above average</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicating the return logistics (who works when, where)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating new office work procedures (distancing, masks, etc.)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating adjusted, long-term work-from-home policies or options for employees who aren’t ready to return</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocol for sharing if coworkers have been exposed and how the organization manages safety</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating potential business strategy shifts or workforce reductions</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating policies should a next-wave of COVID-19 hit</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart shows where many IC practitioners’ minds have been in recent weeks. It’s exciting to see how prepared organizations are for COVID-19’s next phase with an abundance of planning around new protocols and returning to work. Ironically, based on these responses, organizations are least prepared to experience a second wave of the virus even though they’ve experienced a first round.
STATE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS DURING COVID-19

CONCLUSION

The effects of COVID-19 are still ongoing. Generally, IC professionals have risen to the challenge and shown they were well-prepared to manage the initial crisis in a very human manner. Based on the survey, most are also prepared to take on whatever comes next.

Hopefully, this experience brings a silver lining to 2020, especially in the IC function. IC has proven it deserves a seat at the table and now it’s time to dedicate more resources to the function. Also riding a popularity surge, leaders have acknowledged their role to lead better during this crisis. Hopefully, non-believers have been converted and leaders better understand the impact their accessibility has on employee engagement.

Lastly, be sure to read through the survey comments in Appendix 1. They capture the emotions, learnings, cynicism, and breakthroughs experienced during COVID-19 much more than any quantifiable approach. After all, internal communicators are storytellers!
**APPENDIX**

“What’s your biggest take away from this experience and lesson for others moving forward?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan for the unexpected and be proactive</th>
<th>Keep everyone close, communicate regularly. Great opportunity to get to know people in a different way, great way to focus on work-life balance.</th>
<th>No matter how prepared we think we are, something always comes out of left field to blindside us. That said, so far there has been a great spirit of cooperation and understanding that we’re all navigating a new world virtually blindly.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use numbered lists to keep an employees attention (e.g. 5 Things to Know Today)</td>
<td>Always take care of your health and be respectful of people around you. Keep your area clean and always wash your hands.</td>
<td>More planning and preparedness for the ‘worst case scenario’ and be ready to pivot often as new information/data become available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biggest takeaway: remember and embrace EMPATHY in your communications, especially when communicating policy changes; I’ve regularly been shocked by others’ cold “just the facts” mentality and am still surprised by how often I’ve had to push back during this time, working to ensure our communications sound and feel more humane.</td>
<td>People are what really matter in an organization. Take care of them.</td>
<td>Leadership communication eases massive change for a workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for the unthinkable is always important and pays off</td>
<td>Help leaders and other departments plan and coordinate messages throughout communication channels</td>
<td>We were already a company where two-thirds of our workforce worked remotely. We’ve learned through this experience that a large majority of our teams can work remotely with success. We have made the decision that it is unnecessary to rush employees back to working onsite and that it is in the best interest of all to continue working remotely as we build safe protocols for returning in the fall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on wellbeing</td>
<td>Create weekly e-newsletters to share information and informative articles, conduct pulse surveys, etc. with employees. The open rates have been exceptional, and we’ve averaged better than 75% attendance at our weekly virtual town halls with the President.</td>
<td>It’s important for internal comms to lead the way by (1) empathetic, authentic leaders showing their vulnerabilities (2) regular F2F video sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t be afraid to try new things!</td>
<td>Document everything so that you’re ready for the next such crisis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form a cross-functional crisis management team early and begin communicating as quickly as possible from a single point of contact/version of the truth perspective</td>
<td>Important for leadership voice and visibility. Walk the talk of organizational values.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly CEO updates during times of great uncertainty are not “too much” — employees consistently point to them as reassuring, encouraging, and helping them focus on company goals.</td>
<td>Constantly look at new ways of doing business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like many organisations, it has taken external factors to accelerate our digital experience and play with tools we would not have used. Test and learn tools — will hopefully be more readily accepted in use of channels and tools going forward.

The regular and more informal communications from our most senior leaders have been superb. It helps to see them as ‘real’ people and that they are having to cope the same as all of us working from home, in a virtual environment.

Having more informal ‘social’ video calls has also helped us build relationships and ‘see’ more of our global colleagues than we would normally.

Have one source of truth. Don’t undermine employees’ smarts and expectations.

Home office work is effective. Apply how we can use it in the future.

Be authentic, treat people like humans, and balance your zoom meetings with a good, old-fashioned phone call.

There is not one big takeaway but our takeaways are to focus on: ongoing preparedness, communications, and employee engagement.

Everything will not be perfect, but most of the time, things will be good enough. Must move forward through the ambiguity.

WFH is possible and meaningful. Gives employees the opportunity to balance life better.

Technology must continually be updated. Leaders must be visible, authentic and empathetic. Some of the most effective Comms is peer-to-peer.

Stay connected, implement strategies, focus on what happens when concepts, and take care of the wellness factors for staff.

Have a well-thought-out and rehearsed business contingency plan that can be executed at short notice.

Take care of yourselves as much as possible. Get plenty of rest. This process is exhausting.

(1) It was fortunate that we had rolled out a lot of useful infrastructure before the start of the epidemic. (2) Open and honest communication is appreciated, even if it’s bad news. However, communications of “We haven’t decided yet, and we’re not sure when we will decide, and even if we did decide already, we can’t share all the details with you” are NOT appreciated as much.

Be flexible and adaptable. Don’t underestimate emotions and fears.

Crisis plans are more important than ever.

Employees and organizations are more resilient and adaptable than we probably ever imagined.

Barriers to information have been a major concern for our organization following the initial rush in March/April to close and make those initial decisions. Since then, internal communication has been silent, inconsistent, and generic.

Sometimes crises have a silver lining by expediting technologies and approaches that leadership had been hesitant to try.

The importance of checking in on each individual on a personal level. There’s more than just the business aspect of this and we missed that. This could have been a huge opportunity to boost engagement by showing that we care.

Stay positive!

Crisis management and communication annual check-ins and preparation meetings in case this happens again in the future.

It’s impossible to predict everything that might happen when no one has been through something like this before. Be flexible, be nimble, and be prepared to constantly reevaluate what is/is not working. Have steady, consistent communication, even when you don’t have all the answers.
• The importance of having the tools and technology to enable the business to continue work when unable to physically be in the office. It has helped to shift the mindset of having to be physically present to get things done, and has helped demonstrate the importance of having the tools (laptops, VPN, software, etc.) for our workforce to provide the flexibility/adaptability to an evolving world of work.

• People know that we are in this together. They are willing to forgive missteps as long as we are honest and timely. We are all people and community is so important to all of us.

• Virtual town halls with our leadership through video platforms have proven invaluable in delivering top agency messaging to our employees and it fosters a dialogue via a question and answer session at the end.

• Communication is critical to help employees navigate through the crisis and understand how we should work together as a team to maintain the business operating

• Have a communications plan and stick to it. Communicate clearly, factually and with empathy. Every team member needs to be on board for the company to continue to function.

• As with any crisis, agility and transparency are essential. Having the right technology in place is most important and can take the longest to address.

• Empathy, honesty, and consistency are the most important tools in our toolbox right now. I think respect and appreciation for our leadership has skyrocketed through this crisis because of the way we handled it.

• Provide continual communications as things change and to give updates across multiple channels. Provide support. Use communications to reassure people and let them know we are in this together and will get through it successfully.

• Communicate, communicate, communicate — be proactive, plan

• Our employees have done amazing through this and have proven that we can WFH and get stuff done. We have come together and are prevailing. Technology has been key to our success and keeping us connected.

• Technology and a great staff are the two most important components for the longevity and success of the organization.

• Communication, empathy, and leadership are important

• Everyone is capable of amazing things and we as a company have rallied together to help our employees, community at large, customers, and partners. I’m really proud to be part of such an amazing company (Cisco)

• We can shift. We did shift. We like some shifts more than others. There is no way to know the exact direction ahead, but we can try to trust that we’ll be able to respond when it comes. Also, try things and fail early while having a safety-first orientation for staff and customers.

• Crisis management has become an essential skill set for the average communications professional. COVID-19 won’t be the last time we’re forced into crisis mode, so learning the skills of how to effectively communicate to employees during a crisis (e.g., pandemic, natural disaster, etc.) is critical to our success.

• Get out fast and create trusted resources for employees. Don’t forget your field teams with an over-reliance on technology.

• Employees are inundated with industry, partner, client/prospect, and internal communications. Balance is a challenge now more than ever with everyone being home at the same time in a household.

• Constant communication is vital.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS DURING COVID-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Be prepared and have what is needed to transition fast and smoothly to a remote working situation to limit impact to our employees and to our customers. Invest more in digital disruption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is important for us to continue to serve the community during this time and to acknowledge our own thoughts, feelings and reactions to the pandemic while still putting the needs of the community we serve in perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You can’t apply tactics in a cookie-cutter approach. Each organization is different and needs and expectations can shift quickly and with little notice. Communicators must have listening mechanisms in place, be willing to act on what they learn, and the communication strategies and systems need to be nimble, adaptable, flexible, scalable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Optimize crises to drive improvement in teaming and in speed/nature of employee communications. It can prove to leadership the value of an employee intranet and employee comms overall. Plus, don’t let perfect be the enemy of the good — accept you’ll be communicating amid ambiguity with only partial answers sometimes but commit to sharing what you know as you know it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quick and transparent decision making has helped increase trust within our organization. Being able to clearly state a point of view — even when it’s not a popular one — has helped build trust. Since there is so little certainty in all areas of lives — healthcare, safety, child care, elder care, etc., we’ve tried to give as many concrete answers as possible. Staff have appreciated reopening dates (not until XXX) to give employees as much concrete details as possible. They’ve said this concrete information has been helpful in controlling what they can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All communications must be intentional and adaptive. You have to be focused on the moving target ahead and not reactive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am grateful that we had a well-established communications plan because it made this seamless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We started a daily 3 p.m. communication that was sent by email right away. The email included all COVID-related news employees needed. This was the best decision because it was a daily, reliable touch point for employees that connected them back to the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We can do it — with patience, skill collaboration, and communication, we’ll get it figured out sooner than later.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Virtual work environments work for departments we were uncertain could manage WFH. These departments are effective and it could change our thoughts on future work environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Empathy is everything. Our company put its colleagues’ safety and well-being first, and we’ve gotten very positive feedback as a result.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• That we have a resilient company that can handle anything. This experience has given us a blueprint to handle anything unexpected and allowed us to overhaul our crisis communication process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employees remain one of our top stakeholders. Ensuring they have timely, authentic and accurate information is essential to keep them engaged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Intranet is an important tool to keep people connected and productive no matter where they are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being transparent and engaging employees during this time is very important. They want to hear from the CEO and being silent or scripted does not come across very well to employees. Being genuine, honest and grateful goes a long way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**STATE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS DURING COVID-19**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our company must rely on internal communications and our intranet to be a RESOURCE (i.e., have a seat at the table) to effectively communicate targeted and relevant communications to employees.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital connectivity is key. Cross-functional crisis response team is key to ensuring communication remains paramount.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders should not assume that employees are aware of policies and should communicate policy changes as soon as they happen. Also, they need to be transparent and not pretend that employees are informed. Be willing to share the bad news as well as the good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing cloud services greatly improves the flexibility of IT to adapt to people working from home. I've found that most people are able to adequately perform their job while working from home and don't necessarily need to be in the office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helps to have cloud-based services and laptops, so it’s as simple as unplugging and changing location!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust your employees to do their jobs even when not in view of their supervisors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We must remain fluid at all times, whether there is a pandemic or not. Clinging to old ways is what got us into this business challenge, not the pandemic itself. We have to re-imagine what work means to our company, our customers and our employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy makes a difference in employees returning to work and clients trusting us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open, transparent and timely communication is critical to maintaining employee engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New digital tools have proven their worth and we are in a good place comms wise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational culture is key — much more important than the specifics of tools choice. It is this that enables a flexible response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The need for increased one to one virtual conversations to check in on people’s well being as group chats can often hide problems as people don’t always want to speak up or share how they’re feeling in a group forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your intranet is a vital tool in your workforce comms. Having an intranet that can be accessed remotely is vital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication has and always will be key.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology can hinder or help effective communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive planning helps. Constant communication is a must. This time of disruption is a good time to sharpen the saw.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To take employees on the journey as we navigated the crisis. The more communication they get, even if it isn’t the best news, will help alleviate their anxiety around trying to guess the ‘unknown’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABOUT SIMPPLR

Simpplr is today’s modern employee intranet. Our software helps companies connect their workforce by streamlining internal communication and forging employee connections.

Simpplr partners with many leading brands, including Workday, AAA, Vertex Pharmaceuticals, DocuSign, Eurostar, and Columbia University. Our customers are improving productivity, increasing employee engagement, and reducing employee turnover. More importantly, the improved internal communication is helping employees find work meaningful and fulfilling.

SIMPPLR BENEFITS:

- Designed for the way you work
- Ready to use in weeks, not months
- Built for business users
- Unified, engaging experience across mobile and the web
- Powerful integrations
- Secure and scalable platform

TRUSTED BY:

CONTACT US:

simpplr.com  |  +1.800.750.8330

See Simpplr in Action

Request a Demo