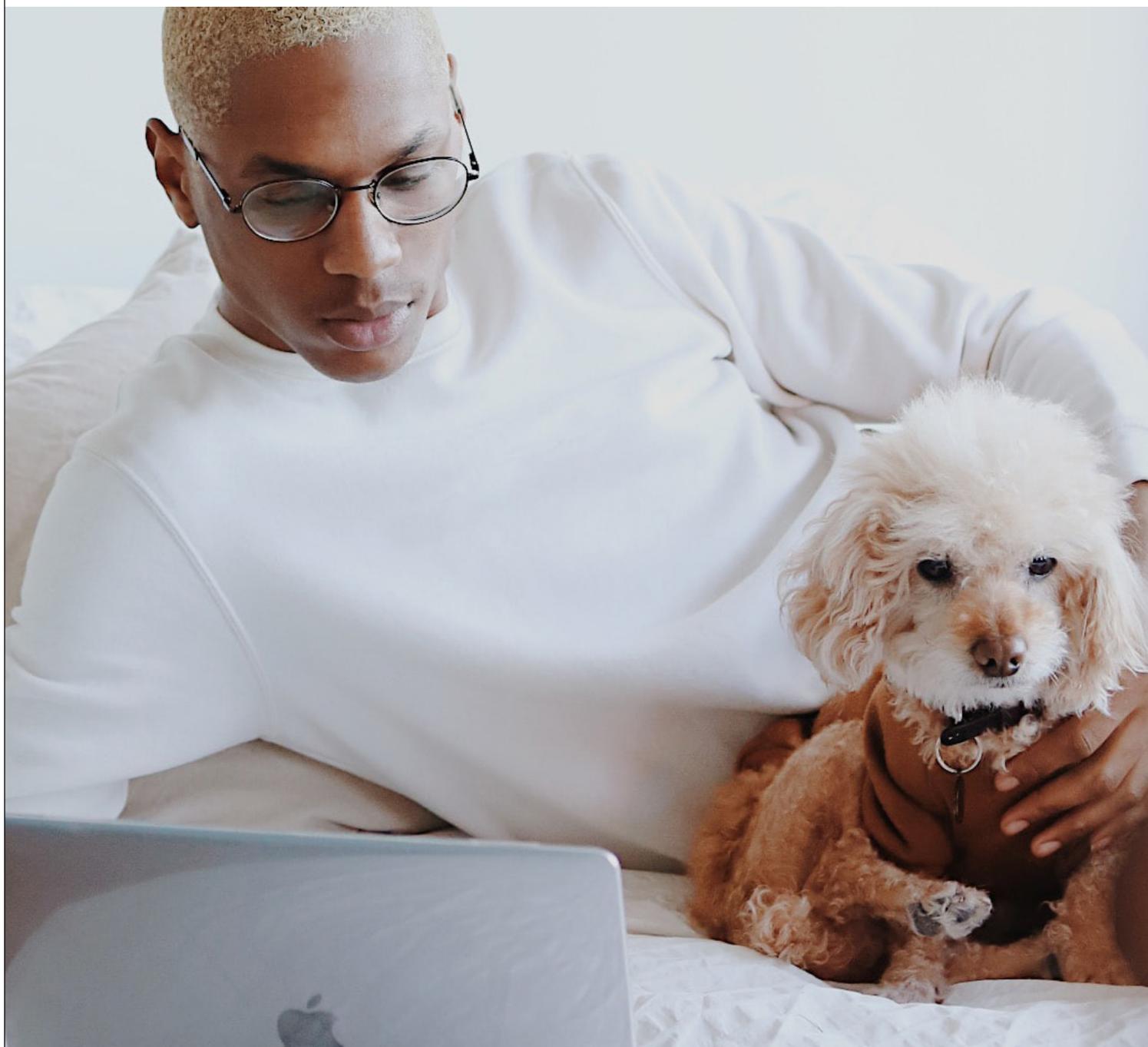


State of Internal Communications 2022

simpplr.



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Introduction

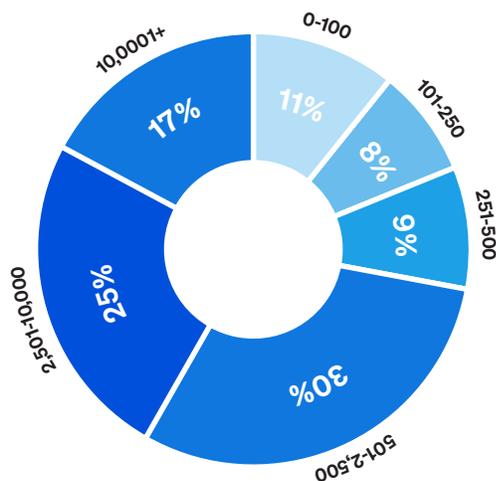
The past two years (March 2020-March 2022) brought many challenges to the workplace—and to the world. Internal communications (IC) professionals felt these seismic shifts early. At last, IC was in the spotlight. Once thought of as simply “nice to have,” internal communications became indispensable as employees left the office and began working remotely. Leaders relied heavily on the positioning, strategizing, and processes for which IC is known, and for the first time, many internal communicators got the seat they’ve always wanted at the leadership table as they led organizations and leaders on a path of authentic, effective communication.

Given the critical importance of IC, it’s essential that we hold onto leadership roles and lean into the incredible advances that we’ve made when industries needed us the most.

In our fourth annual Simplr State of Internal Communications report, the Simplr Research Team captured the state of the IC space to understand both the advancements we’ve seen and the setbacks the field is experiencing. Publishing the results is only half the story—Simplr aims to use this as a springboard to partner with other IC professionals to overcome the roadblocks that hinder us and continue to innovate and advance, and overcome.

The State of Internal Communications 2022 delves into:

- The state of internal communications today
- Methods and strategies to capture valuable analytics and measurement
- Evolving communication initiatives within organizations
- Executive leadership and their contribution to internal communication
- Technological challenges and the tools that get the buzz

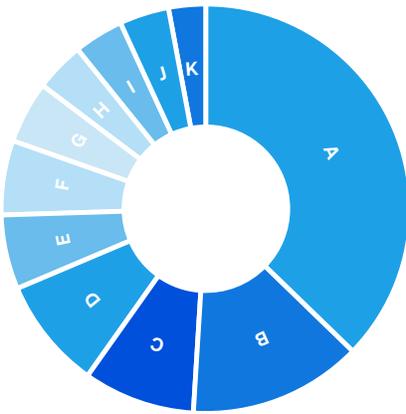


About our sample

← What is the size of your organization?

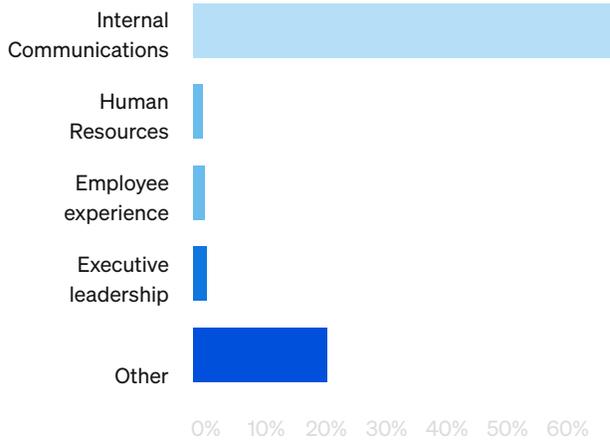
This year’s survey was distributed to more than 300 internal communications across all different industries predominantly in the United States from Simplr and Ragan’s distribution list. Respondents were incentivized to complete the survey with a chance to win a personalized Away carry-on suitcase upon completion. The survey interchangeably uses “leaders” to describe “excellent” and “above average” IC programs, and “laggers” to describe “below average” and “poor” IC programs.

Which best describes your industry?

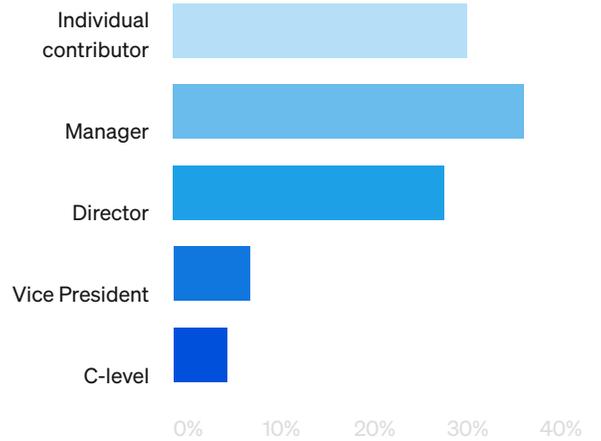


- A**
Other
- B**
Health Care and Social Assistance
- C**
Finance and Insurance
- D**
Software
- E**
Information Services and Data Processing
- F**
College, University, and Adult Education
- G**
Government and Public Administration
- H**
Other Manufacturing
- I**
Construction
- J**
Retail
- K**
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing

Which best describes your job function?



Which best describes your seniority level?



At the end of this survey, we asked 3 open-ended questions:

1

As you look ahead to the next 18 months, what are one or two of the biggest employee communications challenges that your organization will need to address?

In these answers, we found the main challenges revolved around technology, return to office/remote work, politics, employee engagement, and staffing/retention. We will point toward these trends in their respective categories.

2

What is one thing you wish you wish your executives understood about your role?

3

And finally, What was your biggest takeaway and learning from the last 12 months?

Current State of Internal Communications

We asked internal communicators to describe their companies' work models. In comparison to the previous two years, we are seeing that working primarily remote and fully remote organizations are not as common as it once was. After being separated from others some employees have the "itch" to get back into offices and have human interaction, and employers who are invested in office real-estate are encouraging return to office. On the flip side,

fully remote workers are able to properly set boundaries between work and life. Many parents are advocating to stay fully remote. To ease both sides, it seems that the hybrid model seems to be the answer, but time will tell if it's the only answer. 69% of respondents retain a hybrid remote/in-person model. With a majority of organizations being hybrid, that opens up opportunities to properly communicate expectations.

Flexible. In-office. Hybrid. Hybrid with flex. Fully remote. We've added so many new workplace categories since 2021 that it's difficult to keep up with all the variations. But will this trend last?

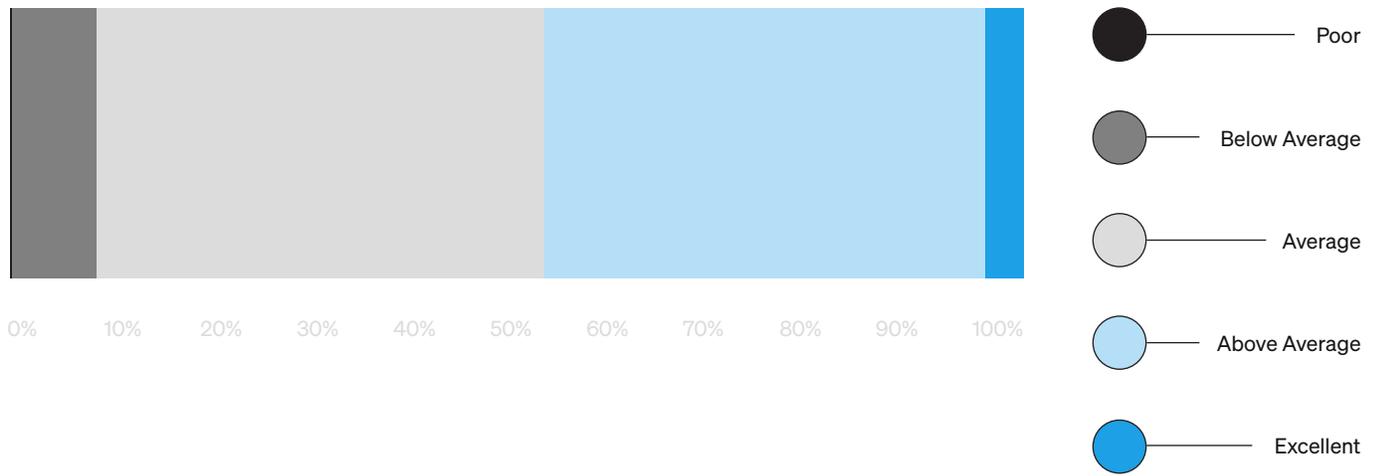
What best describes your company currently?



- We have a hybrid remote/in-person model
- We are working primarily remotely
- We are working primarily in-person in an office
- We are working full in-person in an office
- We are working fully remotely

We asked IC professionals to rate the state of their internal communications based on how they perceive their organizations. The majority of respondents rated their internal communications as average or above average—with only a few stating their internal comms were poor or excellent. Is the momentum that IC workers may have felt during the pandemic waning? Or is it the other way around? Have those in IC roles raised their expectations after they saw how much they could help?

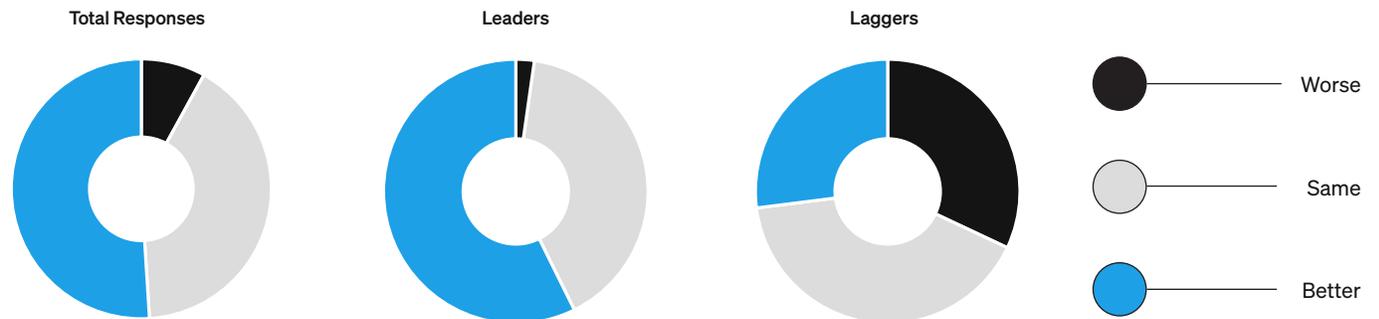
How would you rate the current state of your internal communications?



Overall, 91% of participants stated that their communication stayed the same or got better over the past 12 months. 51% said that it has gotten better. When we compare leaders to laggards, the data shows that a majority of leaders (60%) believe that internal communications improved over the last year. But among the laggards, about one-third said that their internal communications suffered.

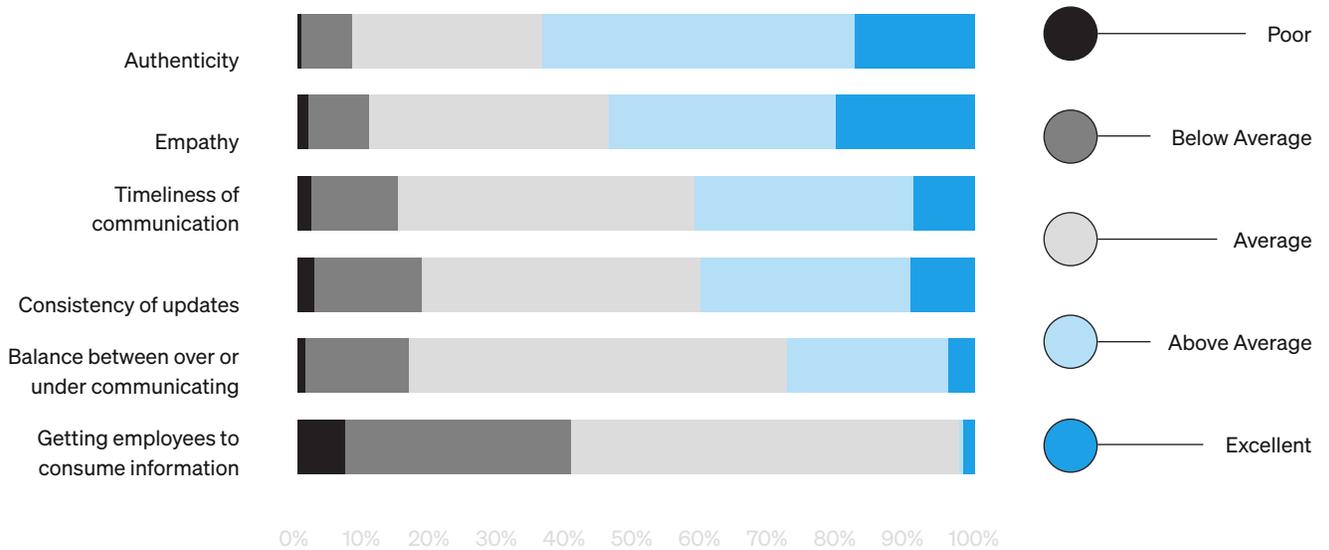
Most surveys can't make a case for correlation being causation, but this report, like so much in the tumultuous past year, turned that old saying on its ear. Those who rated IC as excellent also indicated that they thought it only got better in the last year, and leaders who rated IC as poor also believed it got worse.

Compared to this time last year, what is the current state of your internal communications?



Quality of communication

Describe your organization's internal communications:



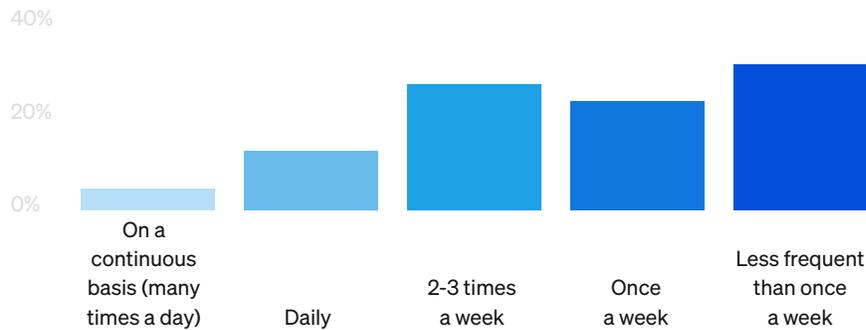
Internal communicators know the significance of what they do. We see in the chart above that they also know what they can and can't control. When it comes to authenticity and empathy, half of the respondents stated that their internal comms were above average or excellent. The high percentages in these two categories are refreshing, as employee communication practices have leaned into being more human and genuine over the years. Time spent in building narratives and messaging with real humans in mind is a major part of the IC role. Conveying authenticity and empathy in every message, on every channel is imperative.

The timeliness of communication, consistency of updates, balance between over and under communicating, and getting employees to consume information scored much lower than authenticity and empathy. The struggle to measure how employees consume information continues. Nearly 1 out of 3 respondents described that getting employees to consume information as poor or below average. Not only are employees' options for consuming external news competing with internal content, but inconsistency and inaccuracy in measuring consumption of internal content continues to burden IC practitioners. Establishing a clear understanding of the whole employee experience and using data to adjust how and when we communicate, may impact these numbers in the future.

When asked about the upcoming challenges in the next 18 months, employee engagement was a top answer.

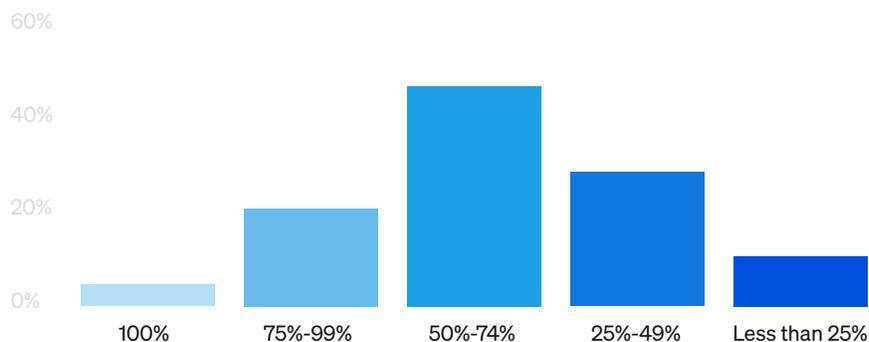
Frequency of communication

How often do you give company-wide updates to your employees?



The frequency of company-wide updates, obviously, varies from company to company, so there's no clear trend. With the ongoing struggle of finding the balance between under and over-communicating, this makes sense and aligns with the information gathered from the previous question. 30% of respondents, the largest group, said that they give company-wide updates less than once a week. Yet the next largest group of respondents reported sending out communications to employees two to three times a week. The mixed responses to this question highlight a need for both consistency—and best practice recommendations.

What percentage of employees are consuming major departmental and company-wide updates?

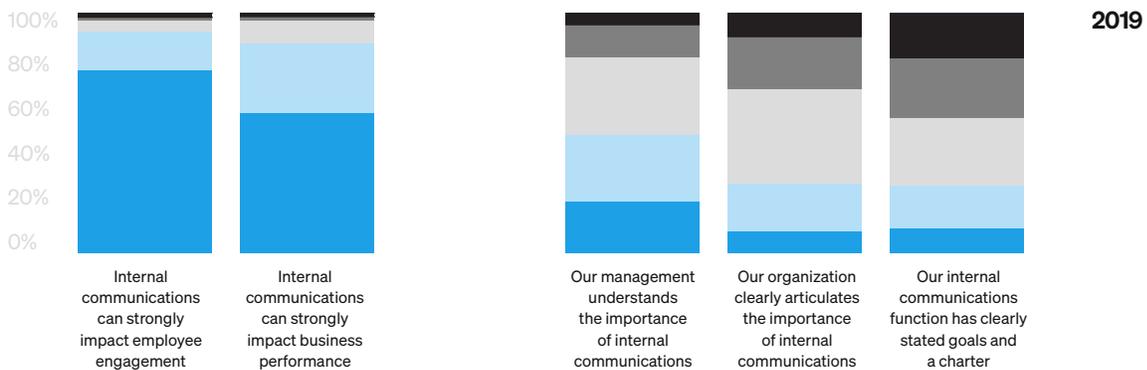
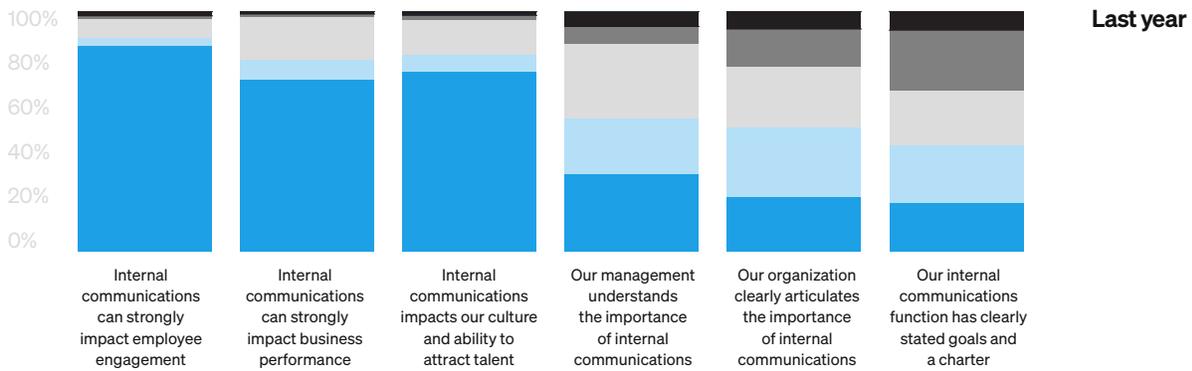
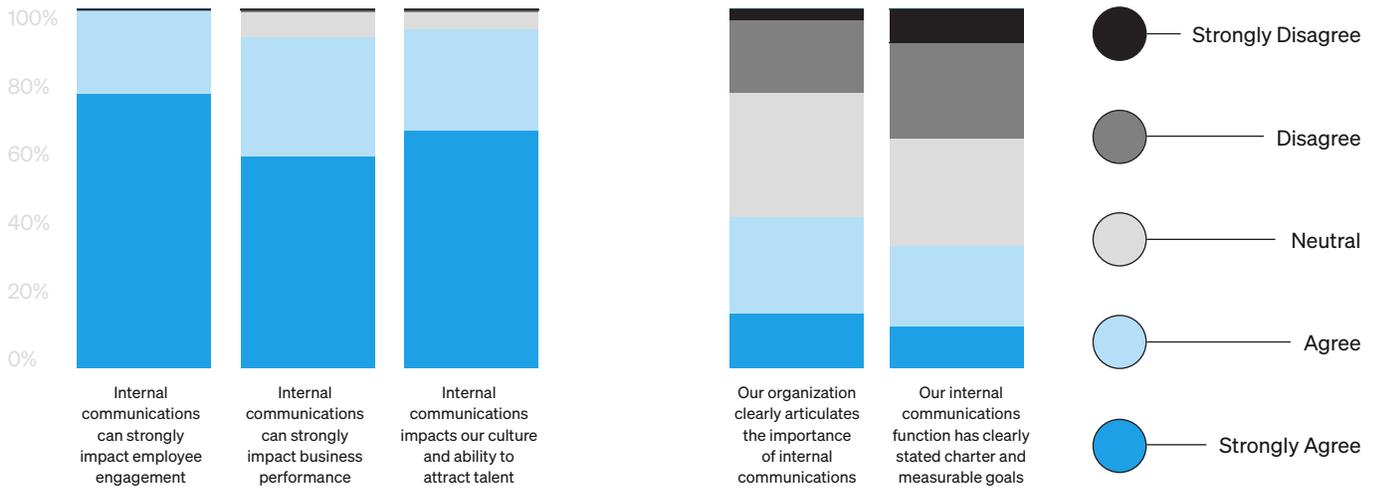


The above chart shows a nearly-perfect bell curve. A large share of the respondents reported that 50%-75% of employees do consume updates when they deem them "major." This was consistent among all respondents, regardless of the frequency of updates.

IC Professionals know their value

In the chart below, we asked a series of questions to help us understand the impact of IC within organizations. It's clear from the results that IC leaders know the impact their strategies and initiatives have on employee engagement, culture and recruiting, and business performance. The data also shows us that the understanding of—and advocacy of— impact varies among business leaders. The most concerning aspect of this data was the variation across established IC charters and stated goals. As the field continues to see a welcome spotlight on the importance of their role, it is more critical than ever that we build clear, measurable goals, and use this data to increase management's understanding and support of internal communications.

How much do you agree with the following?



Looking at the comparison chart below from 2021's report, it's clear that internal comms is getting more support from the overall business—with an increase of 15% year-over-year in those who agree and strongly agree that their organization is articulating the importance of internal communications.

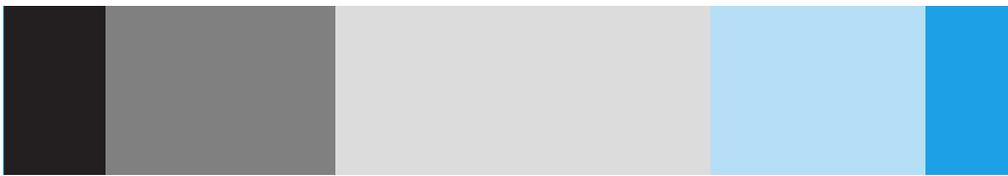
PRO TIP: IC is more likely to succeed when there is an established charter and stated goals.

Our organization clearly articulates the importance of internal communications:

This year



Last year



- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

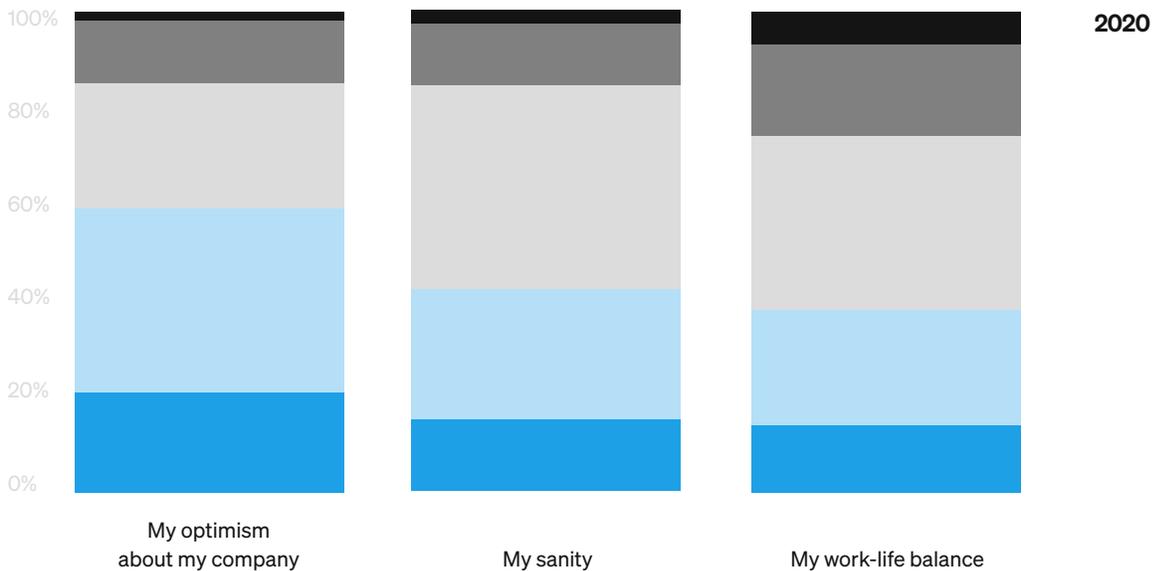
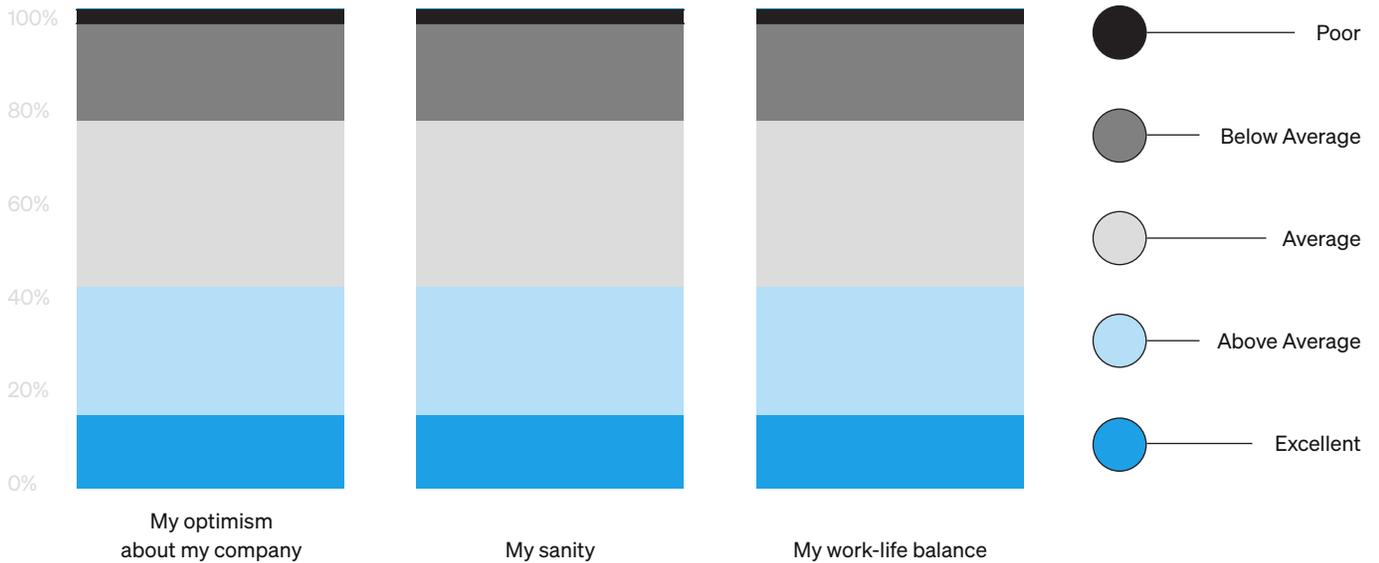


IC takes care of others—so, communicators—how are YOU feeling?

Mental health in the workplace has moved to top of mind in the wake of organizational changes caused by the global pandemic. This year, we asked how those in IC roles are doing.

What we see is concerning. Two out of every three (68%) internal communicators say they feel their emotional state is average or below average. While respondents are generally optimistic about their organization and feel better about work-life balance (when compared to September 2020) it's clear that stability and balance still aren't totally in check. Respondents show an 8% decrease in their emotional well-being (we can see they rated themselves lower than they did in September 2020, with a weighted average of 3.13 in comparison to 3.40 when using a numerical scale where 1 = poor and 5 = excellent.)

How would you rate the current state of the following?



Key takeaways:

1

Most organizations offer hybrid workplace models, with employees returning to office work on a part-time basis.

2

Internal communicators are confident about their empathy and authenticity in communications but struggle with areas they don't control like timeliness, consistency, and information consumption.

3

IC professionals agreed enthusiastically with the idea that internal communication strongly impacts employee engagement.

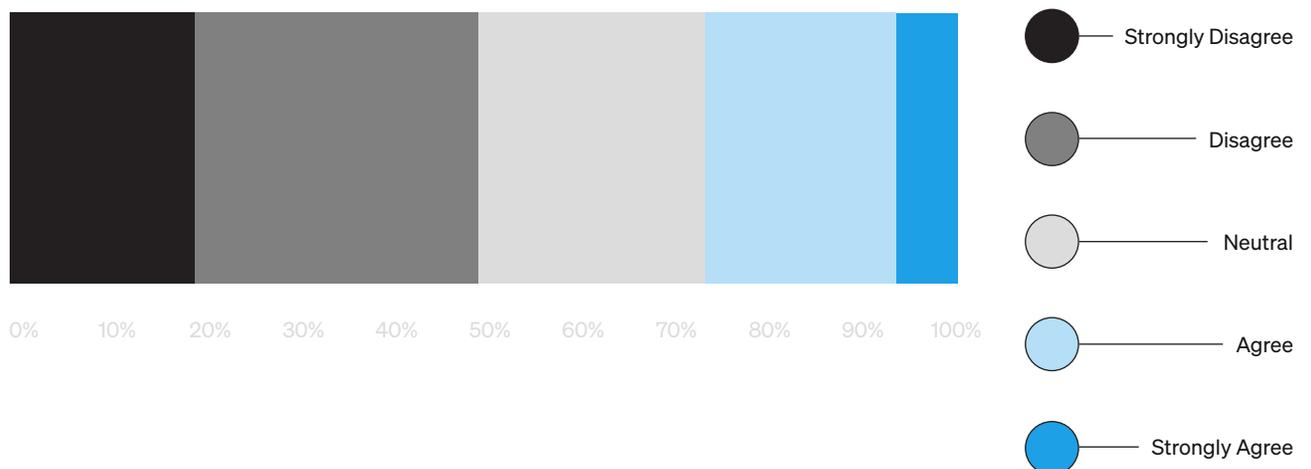
4

Internal communicators are feeling the effects of burnout with a lower-rated average for their emotional well-being when compared with last year.

Hiring and Staffing

Around late 2020 or early 2021, the term “Great Resignation” was coined. A record number of people were leaving their jobs. In 2022, there are growing fears of a looming recession and layoffs. This caused a lot of challenges for internal communications teams. Despite over 70% of respondents reporting that their IC teams stayed the same size or increased over the last year, 50% of respondents indicated that they strongly disagree or disagree that their IC team is adequately staffed to meet their organization’s evolving needs in comparison to only a quarter of the respondents indicating that they agree or strongly agree.

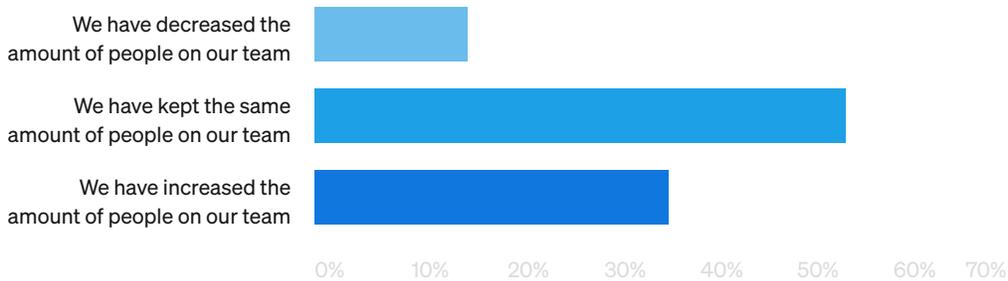
Our internal communications team is adequately staffed to meet our organization’s needs:



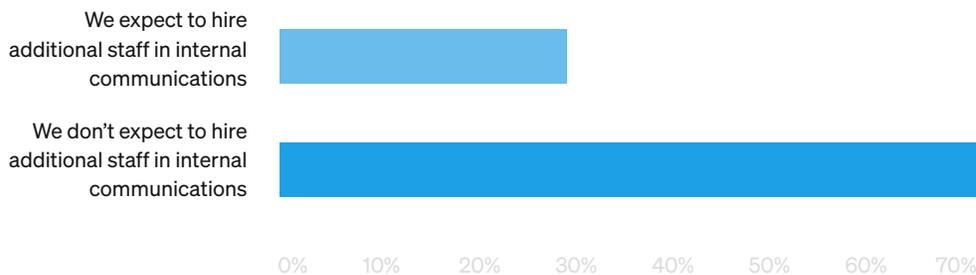
Hiring, staffing, and retention was a common answer for our respondents when asked about challenges they will likely face in the upcoming 18 months.

With burnout heavily trending, this is not a surprise. Unfortunately, it does seem like hiring is slowing down in the upcoming year which will surely increase burnout for IC professionals. All hope is not lost though, as we do see almost a third of respondents are still hiring and growing in the next year, which indicates that internal communications is still being prioritized in a slowing economy.

Which of the following describes the changes in size to your internal communications team over the past year?



Which of the following describes the hiring in your department for the upcoming year?



Key Takeaways:

1

50% of internal communicators don't feel that they're adequately staffed to handle their organization's needs.

2

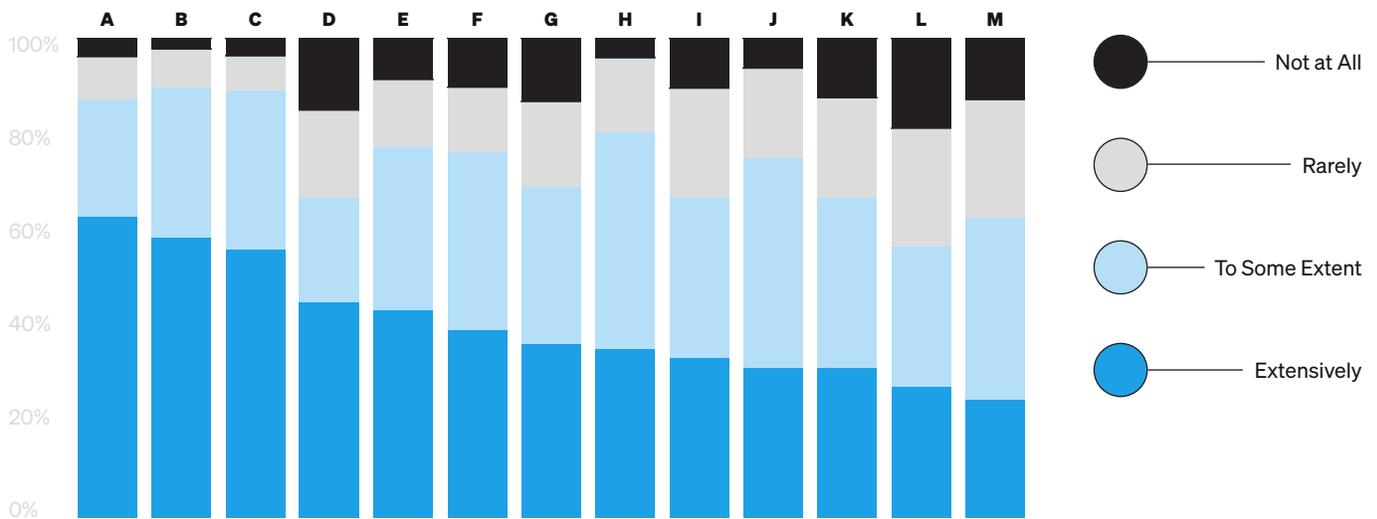
The hiring surge from 2021 is slowing, despite the need for additional employees.

Activities and Measurement

Internal communicators are extensively involved in a number of key areas:

A Sharing the company's corporate announcements	B Communicating organizational changes and updates	C Communicating your organization's vision and strategy	D Administering intranet related technology	E Ghostwriting for executives	F Communicating diversity and inclusion topics	G Communicating HR related policy changes
H Championing the voice of the employee	I Managing crisis communications	J Encouraging and capturing employee feedback	K Facilitating company events and logistics	L Communicating major news/political and world changes for your organization (Ex: Supreme Court rulings, Ukraine, etc.)	M Communicating and addressing mental health awareness	

To what extent are you involved with the following?



Internal communicators are extensively involved in a number of key areas as shown above. This year, we added a new question to see how IC practitioners are handling the communication of major news and political world changes. Almost 60% of respondents indicated that they are somewhat or extensively involved in communicating those events. One of the most important new trends is IC's role in communication regarding politics. When asked about upcoming challenges they anticipate, many respondents referenced political shifts and the difficulty of knowing when or if to communicate about various events.

Another topic that has come to the forefront is mental health awareness, which 60% of respondents rated as becoming more relevant. 60% said that they are somewhat or extensively responsible for communications concerning mental health, which they feel goes well beyond traditional corporate messaging. As companies shift focus to how they impact the whole employee, concern for workers' emotional well-being has increased. Generational change, and Millennial and Gen Z employees are the major influencers of this shift because they value holistic viewpoints and well-rounded workplace experiences. Employees have a higher expectation from their employers, and, as we saw with the Great Resignation, employees won't hesitate to find a company they feel more closely aligns with employee needs.

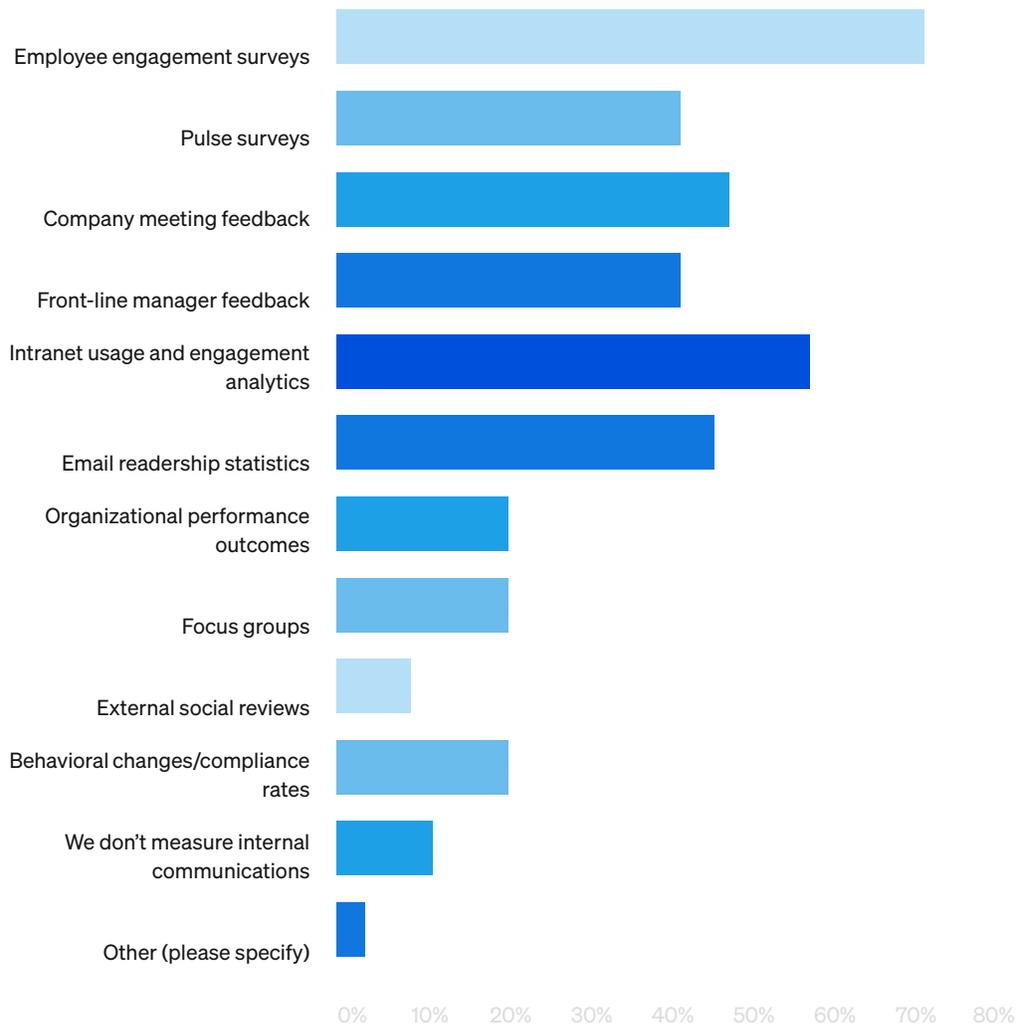
Current measurement tools

Capturing and analyzing employee sentiment is critical for understanding the effectiveness and impact of employee communications. We asked which tools IC practitioners currently use to measure internal communications.

The majority of respondents told us that they use employee engagement surveys, and intranet engagement analytics as their primary internal communications metrics tools while more than half of respondents stated that they use no other measurement tool. Despite the many avenues available to IC teams, just over 10% said they don't measure internal communications at all.

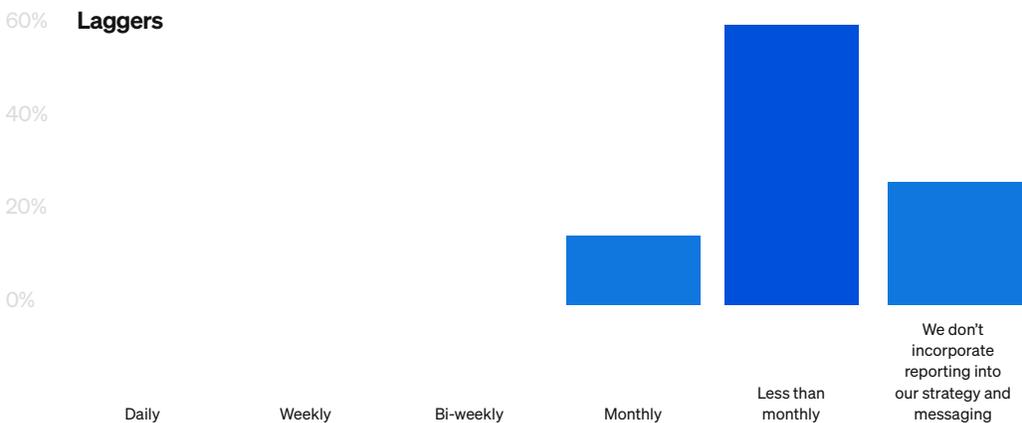
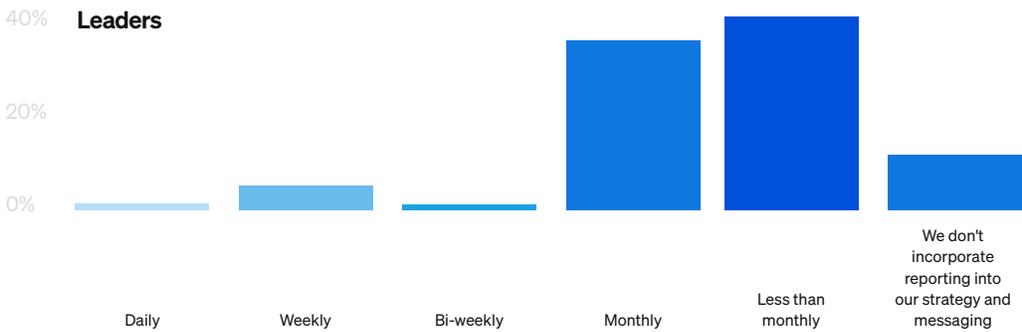
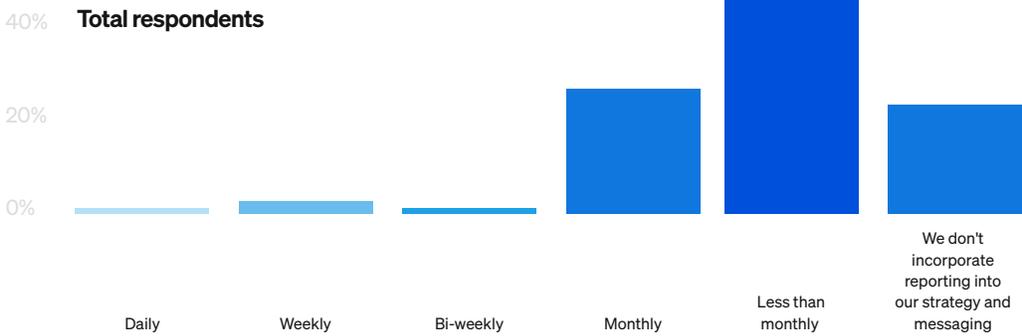
Without measurement, it's difficult to truly understand the success of internal communications and employee engagement. Collecting and utilizing data is important to garner credibility with executive leadership to display communication effectiveness.

Which of the following do you use to measure your internal communications?



For those who do measure their internal communications effectiveness, we asked how often their teams analyze data from their tools to make adjustments to their strategy and messaging, and the results are fascinating. Leaders in the industry are more likely to analyze and make adjustments on a more frequent basis, while a large majority of laggards responded that they analyze effectiveness less than monthly or don't incorporate feedback at all. Analyzing employee opinions is vital to having a strong understanding of their organization.

How often does your internal communications team analyze data from employee engagement surveys, pulse surveys, and other reporting to make adjustments to your strategy and messaging?



Key Takeaways:

1

Internal communicators mainly use employee engagement surveys to capture feedback.

2

Those who tend to lag in the industry are less likely to analyze data to make adjust to messaging than leaders

3

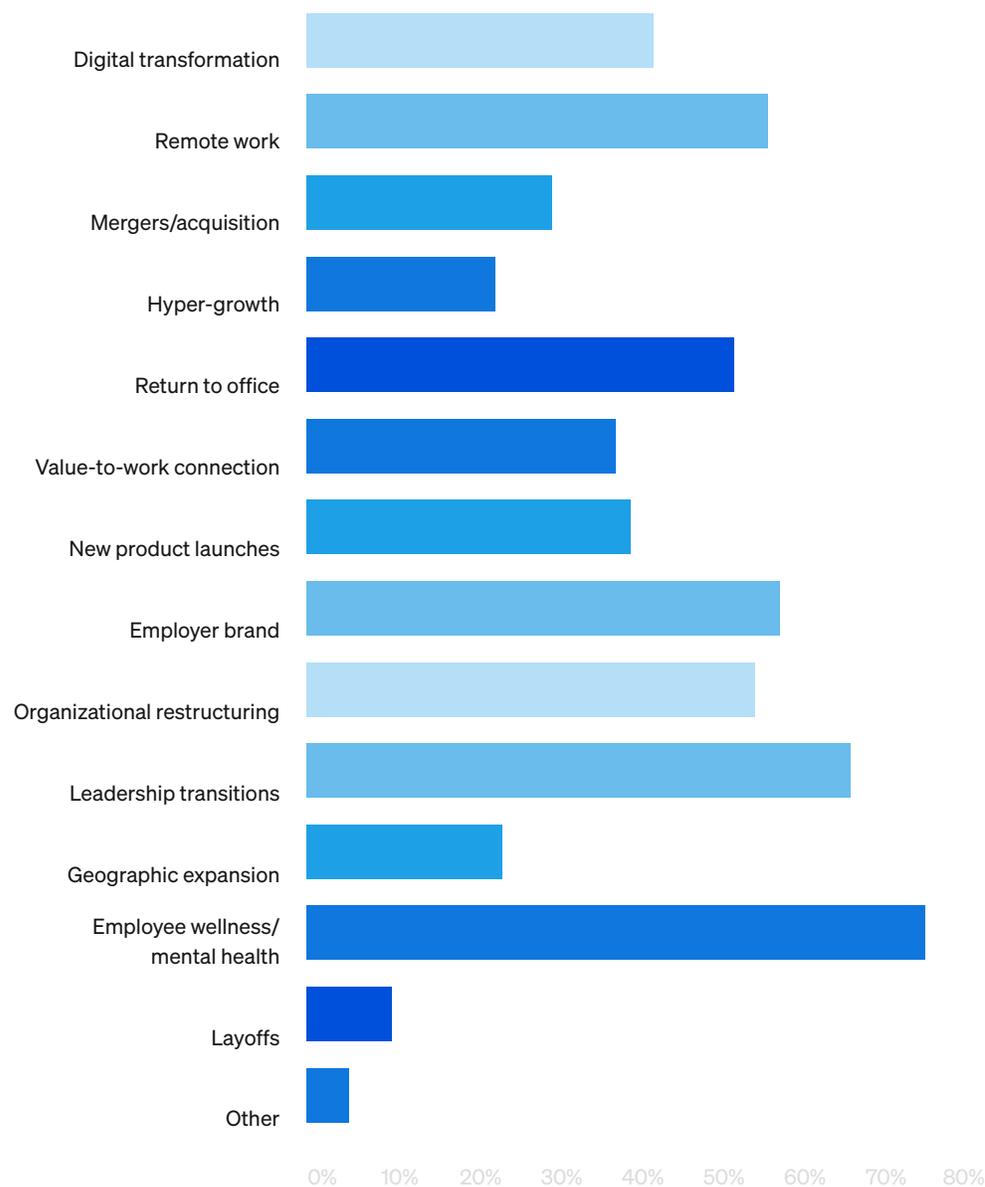
Less than a third of organizations analyze data more often than on a monthly cadence.

Company Initiatives

As mentioned previously, we see that employee wellness and mental health are becoming a major initiative that companies are prioritizing, with more than 75% of respondents indicating that their IC team is supporting that initiative. We've seen a shift in the past few years due to the pandemic that employers are taking note and wanting to focus on their employees overall wellbeing. Since the "Great Resignation", executives are creating mindfulness within the workplace and adding onto mental health benefits to ensure overall employee health in hopes of increasing retention. We also see trends in leadership transitions, employer brand, and returning to the office.

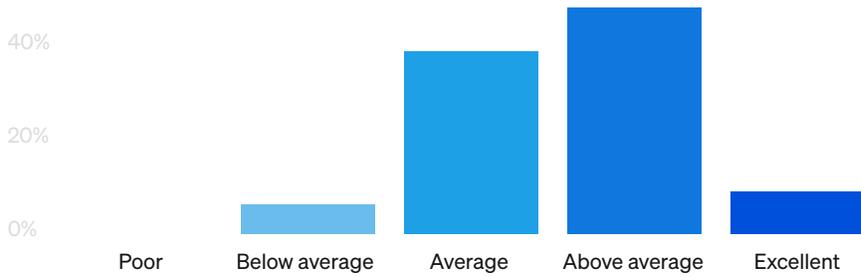
Internal communications is necessary to the success of these company initiatives. We see that in the past year, respondents mostly selected average and above average for the success of those initiatives focused on employee wellness and mental health.

What initiatives are your internal communications team supporting:



Initiative success

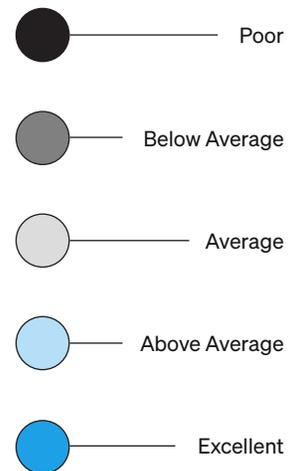
How would you rate the success of your company initiatives in the past year?



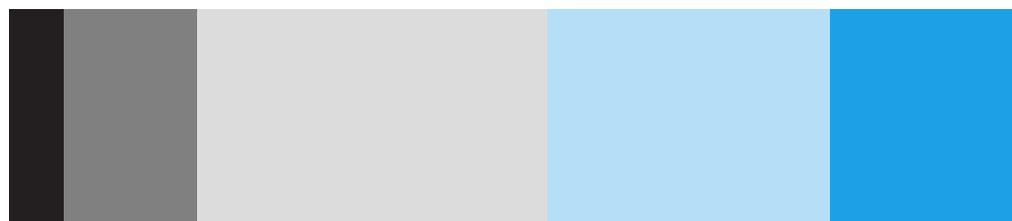
The disconnect in DEI

There is continued support of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. While companies typically have a strong stated commitment, we see that they fall short in the execution with fewer “above average” and “excellent” responses. When asked about upcoming challenges IC practitioners anticipate, DEI efforts were a top response.

My company's stated commitment to diversity and inclusion:



My company's actual demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion:



Key Takeaways:

1

Organizations have an excellent stated commitment to diversity and inclusion but fall short in the execution from the perspective of survey-takers.

2

Employee mental health and wellness is becoming a popular initiative for companies

3

Navigating remote work and returning to the office is still relevant

Executive Leadership Involvement

We all know having leadership support assists in overall messaging and retention of information, but having leaders truly understand the role of IC is a different story. We asked survey-takers what they would want their leadership to know about their role and surfaced some interesting trends in their answers.



They need to prioritize communications, including the development and implementation of a comms strategy for key organizational changes and updates.

That internal communications is equal to external communications/PR. It's just as important to frame messaging to internal stakeholders as it is to communicate with the media, public, and customers.

That it goes way beyond the word "communication." It's about creating engagement and culture so our company can meet its goals.

That strategic, well-planned internal communications is critical to the success of the company and to keeping employees informed, engaged, and motivated.

It's not just nouns and verbs. There are many ways to communicate, and we bring skills and experience to the table that can help them achieve their business outcomes.

I'm a marketing director with internal comms added to my plate. I need leadership to understand that internal comms requires its own communications planning, strategy and tactics.

That they should also be getting in front of employees; team members want to hear directly from THEM, not in a cascade.

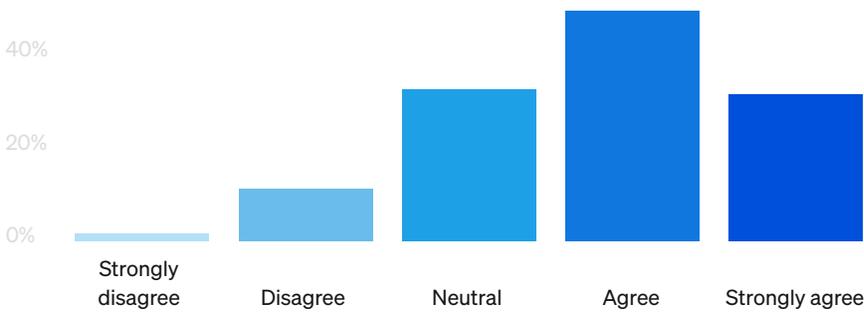
There needs to be not only buy-in from executive leadership but active participation, especially from more than just the CEO.

They need to prioritize communications, including the development and implementation of a comms strategy for key organizational changes and updates.

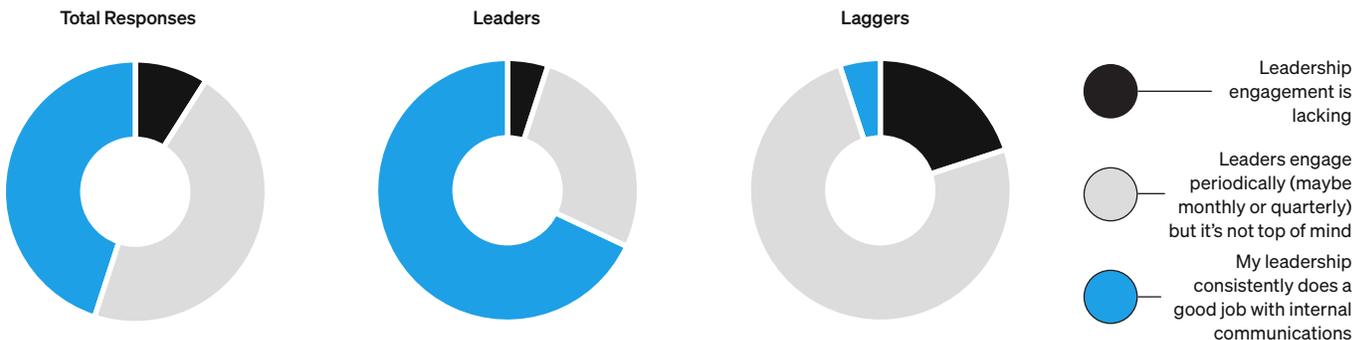
That their ACTIVE involvement in authentic, regular connections to employees is paramount.

A majority of our respondents agree or strongly agree that their management understands the importance of internal communications, but where we see the leaders in the industry shine is how engaged their executives actually are in IC. For those who identified themselves having an excellent or above average state of internal communications, it's clear that there is strong engagement from executives with almost 75% of respondents answering **"My leadership consistently does a good job with internal communications"** while those who identified themselves having a poor or below average state of IC, have lower executive engagement. Good communication results from a partnership between leadership and IC. Executives shape the message and voice while IC consults and refines with their expertise.

Our management understands the importance of internal communications:

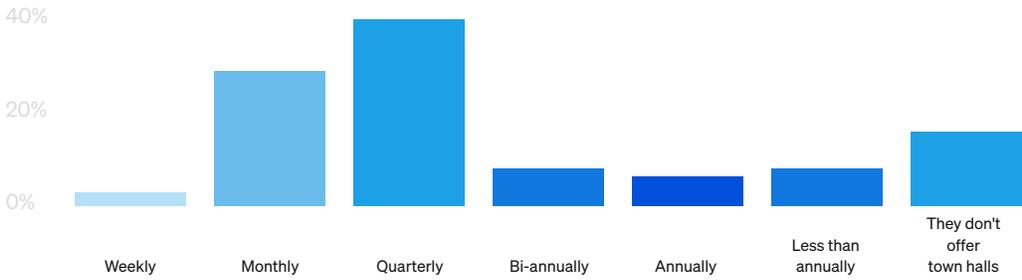


How engaged are your executives in internal communications?



In the past two years, we saw the rise of executive leadership hosting town halls and “Ask us anything,” a trend that’s here to stay. While about 15% of respondents stated that they don’t offer town halls, just under 40% of leaders host them on a quarterly basis, and 25% host them on a monthly basis.

How often are leaders offering town halls or "Ask Us Anything" sessions?



Key Takeaways:

1

Most leaders understand the importance of internal communications

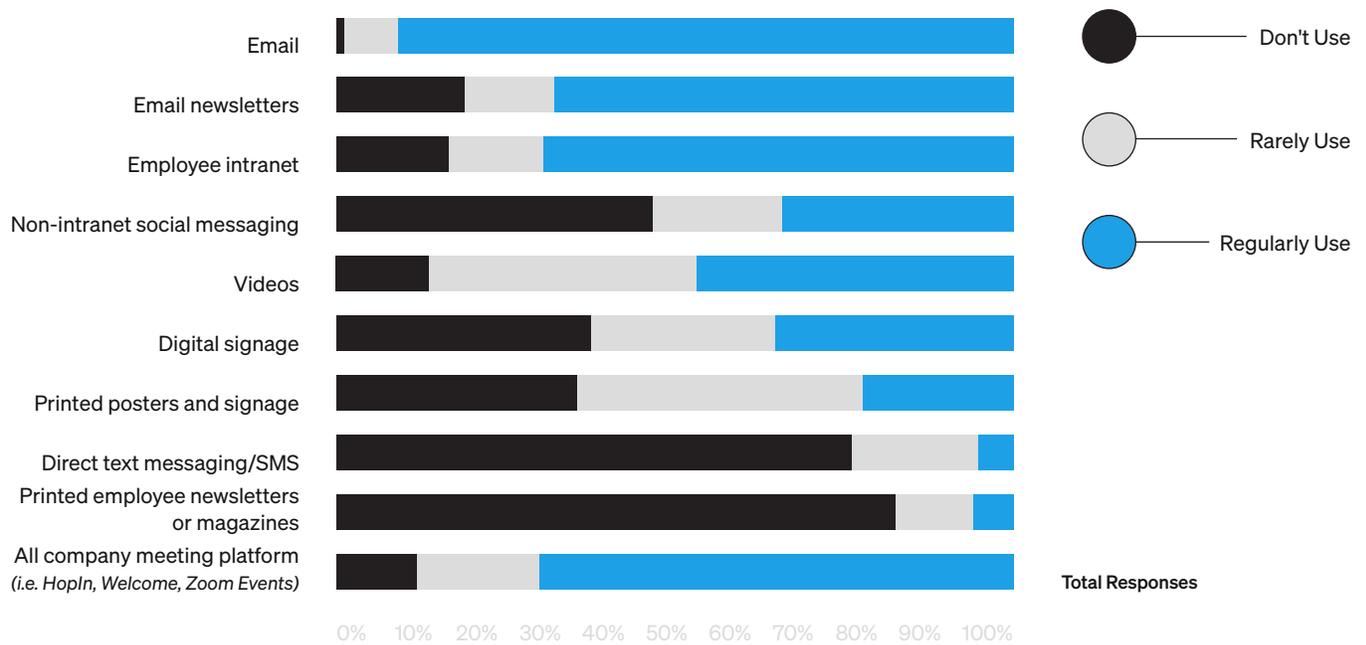
2

Industry leaders have executives that are consistently engaged and doing a good job with internal communications

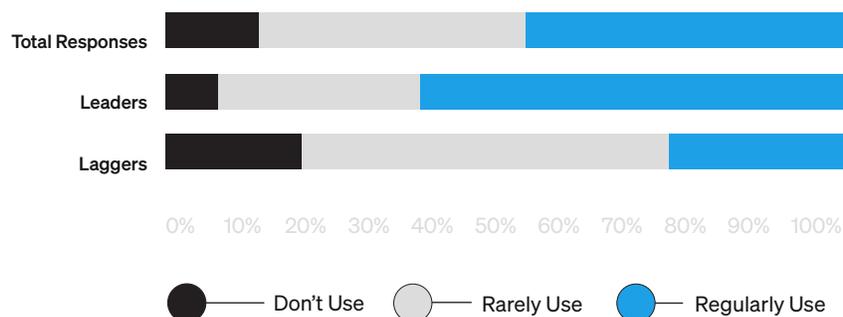
Internal Communications Technology

While no two organizations have identical tech stacks, emails, newsletters, intranet, and all company-meeting platforms are heavily used in internal communications. We're seeing a step back from printed materials and direct text messaging. Over 60% of leaders use videos in their communications, whereas 75% of laggards responded that they are rarely using or not using videos at all.

How often do you use the following technology:



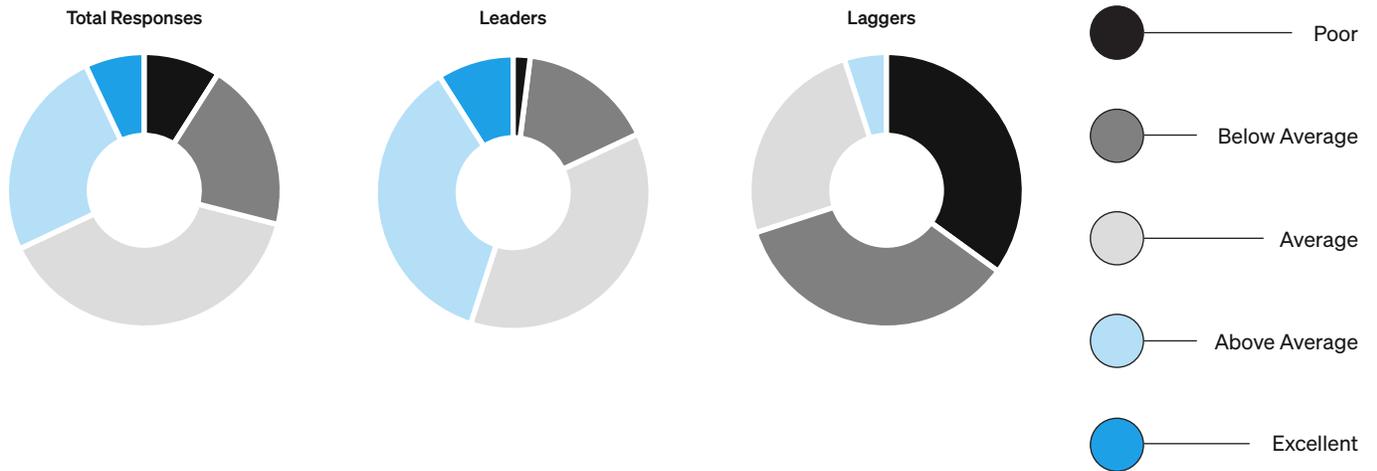
Does your organization use videos for internal communications?



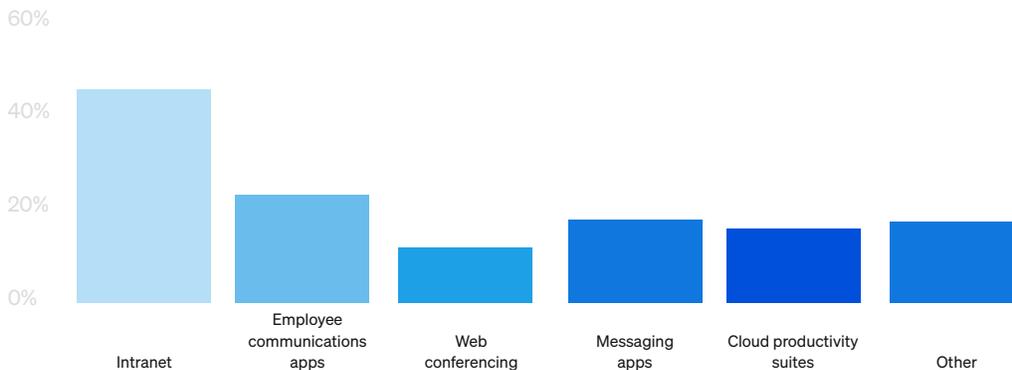
PRO TIP: Utilizing video increases engagement. Employees want to have that human connection.

We know that technology is vital to the success of internal communications. Having technology that assists in effective communication is a necessity. Leaders report having a higher average rating for whether their communications platform meets their needs than laggards. When we break down the tools that employees are most dissatisfied with, we see that over half of respondents selected intranet. It's important to select an intranet that supports organizational needs.

My current internal communications technology platforms ability to meet internal communications' needs:



Which of the following tools in your Communication Tech Stack are your employees most dissatisfied with?



Key Takeaways:

1

Email, newsletters, and intranets continue to be frequently used for internal communications

2

Leaders utilize video in their internal communication more frequently than laggards

Conclusion

Internal communications has experienced many changes over the past year. Getting a pulse on these changes and accurately understanding the information and trends is valuable to continue to improve communications. Shifts in the make-up of the workforce and the overall environment shape the individual trends we're seeing. Our respondents surfaced concerns about technology, return to office/remote work, politics, employee engagement, and staffing/retention. We've outlined those concerns and see that the trends will continue into the foreseeable future, and recommend that internal communicators learn best practices to combat these issues.

Final Takeaways:

1

Leadership involvement is vital to the success of internal communications. Get leadership involved.

2

Technology should support and assist internal communications goals - prioritize a good intranet because that's the top technology that internal communicators are unhappy with.

3

Industry leaders more frequently analyze data from employee feedback to make adjustments to their strategy and messaging. Don't just collect the data, use it and let it guide organizational change.

4

Internal communications continues to be prioritized in terms of staffing, with most organizations maintaining or increasing in size in the last year.

Appendix 1

The State of Internal Communications surveyed over 300 internal communicators, at the end of the survey we asked a few open ended questions. Here is a selection of the responses from the question, **“What was your biggest takeaway from the last 12 months?”**



Communication — especially consistent communication — is key to keeping employees on board.

Collaboration is key, and over-communicating can sometimes do more harm than good.

Direct communication from leadership is essential. The need to not only lead by example but have a servant leadership mindset and be present for your organization, to set the cap and clearly communicate the vision, roadmap and exceptions through transparent and open lines of communication is what makes or breaks companies in the current work landscape.

A company can only succeed in internal communications if they are willing to make an investment to improve them.

That data is essential to help improve the internal communications experience for employees — without it you're virtually blind to the type of content people want to consume, the main issues they are facing and the best way to reach different audiences.

The importance of flexibility as it was a continually changing landscape.

We need to get much better at mastering the hybrid work environment.

Our team takes on A LOT of responsibilities but we need more bandwidth.

We've been working through numerous change management initiatives -- gaining buy in for a more comprehensive strategy that includes multiple touchpoints across many channels.

Communication is more important than ever in a hybrid environment.

People like to be heard and understood.

Employee burnout is real and without a strong company culture that is actively communicated, we're having trouble holding on to talent.

People want to keep remote working options, people expect more work life balance, people are still very stressed.

The only way to scale internal comms is to inspire, train and enable people to do their own communications.



We haven't prioritized employee communications the way we should. They always need to be the FIRST to know.

Internal comms is a universal concern and very few companies have it figured out.

The leadership support we have received in internal communications has been key in successfully navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. Their high-touch, consistent communication approach has helped employees to feel safe and cared for by the organization. It is both critical and incredibly hard to maintain strong employee culture in a hybrid work environment. I think about this challenge every day.

Staff can adapt to new technology and ways of working when it's a priority. Staff value internal communications now more than ever.

Keeping communication clear and easy to understand is just as important as frequency of updates.

We do not invest in our internal communications as much as we should.

People prefer one newsletter to many separate emails.

Finding a balance in a new hybrid format between productivity of at home work and collaboration at the office.

Clear and effective employee communication is essential to organization wide success.

Our org is changing and our culture is changing so we need to get feedback more frequently to keep up with the needs of our employee base.

The importance of balancing need to know, what to know and nice to know communications for employees and which platforms are the best platforms to reach them on depending on the comms being shared.

Appendix 2

For the second open ended question, we asked, **“What is one thing you wish your executives understood about your role?”** We shared some of these insights in the executive leadership section of this ebook, but here are additional selected responses.



That internal comms is at the very epicenter of so much, and therefore has the ability to influence more than they think. Working with us might feel inconvenient and disjointed at times but is ultimately the right call.

As internal communications compete for employees' attention which is more and more split, leadership is quick to only want to focus on fast, high level, communications that employees can consume quickly and get on with their day. While creating accessible and engaging content to grab employees attention is important, some communications isn't about informing or updating on a given topic but helping to drive behavioral change. The need to balance quick "fast food" communications with providing the deep dive and repetitive messaging that will drive action is sometimes lost. Advocating for doing both in today's real time world is hard, but if we don't we risk only making a superficial impact that won't drive the culture and results we are trying to support. Both are needed, to hit short term objectives and address immediate needs while still working towards the long term goals and systemic improvements we needed to succeed. How much work (time, strategy, editing, repeating messaging) goes into getting an employee to understand a new initiative.

The value that quality Internal Comms and our intranet bring to the organization.

The research/thought/time that goes into collecting and analyzing staff feedback (from carefully wording surveys to keeping responses in context and remaining objective and not taking replies personally)

How much we need continuous reinforcement from them about the need for employees to take personal accountability for reading the communications that are delivered.

I need all leaders to engage and supply content for our intranet rather than expecting me to pick up on everything and put it out there.

That IC isn't just about sending announcements out and putting stuff on the intranet. We're powerful strategic partners and are very often the 'canary birds' who can help identify potential curveballs way ahead of the curve and plan for them and help control the narrative.

Communications is truly the heart of the organization — getting communicators involved earlier means better communication overall. Communications teams represent the bridge between employee and leadership — and can help connect the two.

I can help. I can be an asset. I'm not just a person in a comms position. I can boost comms efficacy if you were open to some change.

That communications now play an integral part no just in internal engagement but in retention and recruitment, and even in business success.

Communications has a part in nearly everything we do, so we either need more support or to prioritize only the highest level projects.

We have to be involved from the start and part of the discussion on announcements, messaging, etc. — no matter the originating department. And executives should be much more front-and-center to employees and communicating directly to them to foster a greater sense of inclusion and impact.

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 UKG, AAA, Vertex Pharmaceuticals, DocuSign, Eurostar, and Coursera. 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.

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