

## **Eighteen Internal Communication Strategies 1**

These tactics can get your team connected, engaged, and motivated

How you communicate a message is as important as the message itself. When it comes to internal communications, this certainly holds true. Company culture can give your organization a major strategic advantage in these changing times. But what your culture consists of—goals, values, and practices—must be effectively transmitted according to best practices if employees are going to understand and act upon them. Therefore, it's essential to focus not just on *what* you're communicating but also *how* you're communicating it.

The 18 internal communications best practices below can improve your internal communications strategy and get your team connected, engaged, and motivated.

### **1. Envision, strategize, and plan communications**

**“Good ideas need good strategy to realize their potential.”**

**—Reid Hoffman, founder, LinkedIn**

What do you want internal communications to do for your team and your company? How will you get there? Where does your communication process stand right now, and what needs improvement? How soon would you like to reach your goals?

Before anything else, use your answers to these types of questions to create an internal communications strategy or plan. How you lay it out is up to you; make it as simple or elaborate, general or specific as you'd like. A well-formulated strategy should keep you on track and make you're more efficient in reaching internal-communications success. At the very least, it will give you an idea of where to start.

## 2. Use the right communication tools

“I’m a great believer that any tool that enhances communication has profound effects in terms of how people can learn from each other.”

—*Bill Gates*

Your team is busy, so the last thing they need is an internal communications system that’s bothersome and full of friction. Fortunately, the rising focus on internal-communications best practices has brought numerous software programs that make that simple and painless. Keep your communications system that way to ensure your employees participate and actually enjoy it.

Tools that foster internal communications best practices include:

- Implementing company chat software like Slack or Microsoft Teams;
- Using cloud technology such as Google Drive whenever possible;
- Using one platform (e.g., Google, Apple, Microsoft) for all your email, calendars, documents, etc;.
- Avoiding email overload with visual communications through digital signage.

## 3. Be visual

“Visuals express ideas in a snackable manner.”

—*Kim Garst, CEO, Boom Social*

A commonly cited statistic says 65 percent of the population are visual learners, so chances are there are many of them in your workplace. When done right, visuals convey information in an easy-to-digest manner and have a more lasting impression than text. Instead of printing posters, we recommend going digital: Mount TVs in your offices and use them to display a rotating selection of visual messaging.

Consider using purpose-built cloud-based digital signage software—like Enplug—to display visuals in your office. These screens can serve a range of purposes, such as:

*Informing* your team of company announcements, job openings, sales and marketing metrics, or general information like breaking news and the weather  
*Inspiring* your team by displaying goals, accomplishments, or motivational quotes

Entertaining your team with social media feeds, live hashtag walls, or team photos

#### 4. Make communications entertaining

“Fun is at the core of the way I like to do business, and it has been key to everything I’ve done from the outset.”

—Richard Branson

Gone is the notion that it’s called “work” for a reason, and it’s not supposed to be fun. In fact, a 2013 [survey](#) by PGI found that 88 percent of millennials want to work in a “fun and social work environment.” Likewise, [90 percent of Generation-Z](#) value workplaces that offer opportunities for human connection. Work *can* be fun but also productive, and that includes internal communications.

For instance, Enplug has a channel in Slack titled “random,” where team members can share wacky news stories, funny YouTube videos, and anything else they find amusing. It’s a fun way for workers to blow off steam while building a sense of camaraderie.

#### 5. Include metrics whenever possible

“Anything that is measured and watched, improves.”

—Bob Parsons, Founder, GoDaddy

Being able to quantify and see how the company is performing can do wonders for your team’s work ethic. Metrics should inform employees of the company’s current and past performance, trends in performance, goals to reach, and progress made. You can use digital signage to [display metrics](#) throughout your office. Motivate your team on different levels by showing metrics for the company, departments or even individuals.

#### 6. Don’t lose sight of the big picture

“Appealing to a higher purpose helps everyone coalesce and work better together.”

—Fran Maier, Founder, Match.com

Communicating specific, targeted information is fantastic, but it can come at the expense of missing your company’s overarching goals, mission, and other culture components. In addition to daily matters, be sure to communicate big ideas so that employees are reminded of them. Include your vision in emails,

digital displays, or internal newsletters to remind your team of the bigger picture. After all, they're an important part of something larger than them.

## 7. Provide channels for feedback and ideas

“Our secret weapon for building the best culture is open and honest feedback. Every team member contributes to our life at HelloSign, every day, so it's crucial for us to know what's working and more importantly, what's not working so we can constantly improve.”

—*Gina Lau, Team Operations, HelloSign*

Did you know that “feedback” is the shortest word in the English language containing the letters *a-b-c-d-e-f*? Aside from this interesting fact, feedback is vital to any company's survival and success. This includes feedback from customers, of course, but also employee feedback.

What's the value of a thought or idea if it's never expressed? Be sure to provide channels for your team to give feedback and share ideas, whether it's regarding the workplace, the current product, potential future products, or the company as a whole. It could be a company forum, a designated channel within your company chat software, a whiteboard in the office or a cloud-based service. Without these channels, brilliant ideas and helpful criticisms can be missed, which no company should afford to lose.

## 8. Encourage cross-departmental communication and collaboration

“Effective communication is an essential component of professional success whether it is at the interpersonal, inter-group, intragroup, organizational, or external level.”

—*Mike Myatt, founder and chairman, N2Growth*

If one of your internal communications goals is getting your employees to learn from one another, then cross-departmental communication is key. Hold a Q&A session or a special meeting between different departments to get them communicating, collaborating, and sharing insight. Enplug, for example, holds regular departmental Q&A sessions during which employees can ask questions to a team other than their own. In addition to what is learned, it keeps departments from feeling isolated from one another.

## 9. Avoid communication overload

“Effective internal communication not only connects people with one another, but also with the right information at the right time.”

—*Marijn Deurloo, CEO, imgZine*

The internet age has given us access to more information and instant correspondence than ever before, which can be both a blessing and a curse. With internal communications, keep in mind that less is more. Keep things simple, brief, and to the point. Consider sending out your internal newsletter less frequently or showing fewer metrics. Focus on sending the right information to the right people at the right time. Your team will thank you.

## 10. Don't just inform. Inspire action.

“Companies that want to remain competitive and successful need to ensure they involve, motivate, and inspire colleagues.”

—*Viktoria Tegard, head of internal communications, Virgin Atlantic Airways*

It's necessary to inform your team first and foremost, but your internal communications practices should ultimately lead to action. As Viktoria Tegard of Virgin Atlantic alludes to in the quote above, internal communications should *involve*, *motivate*, and *inspire* your team to go above and beyond.

You can do so by:

- Including calls-to-action in messages;
- Sharing motivational quotes, your company's mission and goals, etc.;
- Offering to reward individuals or teams for certain accomplishments.

## 11. Open the lines of communication

“Communication can't always follow the top-down model. With the fluidity of information in business today, leaders must be masterful listeners; they need to be able to receive as well as send.”

—*Joseph Badaracco, professor of business ethics, Harvard Business School*

Don't limit your “open door policy” to your physical office space. Your internal communications system should make it easy for any employee to contact another in the company, including upper management. When you open the lines of communication this way, team members will feel welcome to talk with each other rather than intimidated. Whether you're a large corporation or a startup, this

internal communications practice bridges gaps and helps build receptive, honest relationships between employees.

## 12. Maintain transparency

“Transparency starts as a mindset change.”

—Kevan Lee, content crafter, Buffer

As Kevan Lee at Buffer states above, transparency is more than just a policy; it’s a mindset. Transparency is crucial to your internal communications because it breeds trust, accountability, and open dialogue. If your team members feel as though they’re being left in the dark on certain matters, they may be afraid to ask questions and share their thoughts on those matters. Not all information can be made available to everyone, of course, but maintaining at least some transparency can have tremendous effects on the harmony and rapport within your company.

## 13. Encourage company-related use of social media

“Not using social media in the workplace, in fact, is starting to make about as much sense as not using the phone or email.”

—Ryan Holmes, founder and CEO, Hootsuite

We know what you may be thinking: “Social media has no place in the workplace.” However, what if we told you it should actually be *encouraged* in some ways? Have your team share photos of themselves working and having fun in the office on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, and tag the official company page. It’s great not only for employee engagement and morale, but also for company exposure and putting a face on who you are and what you do.

## 14. Share industry news, trends, and insights

“If you don’t give people information, they’ll make up something to fill the void.”

—Carla O’Dell, CEO, American Productivity and Quality Center

Your team is not just part of a company; it’s part of an industry. All team members should stay updated on the latest industry scoop, from your CEO to your web designer. Encourage them to share news, market trends, opinion pieces, and other industry-related blurbs with one another. Similar to item 6 above, you want your team members to feel as though they’re contributing to

something bigger than themselves, and that they're agents of change, which are powerful motivators.

### 15. Use internal communications to recognize and praise success

“Recognition is not a scarce resource. You can't use it up or run out of it.”

—*Susan M. Heathfield, HR expert, About.com*

The slightest amount of praise can go a long way, especially in an age when employees want to feel valued and appreciated. A 2012 [survey](#) by the American Psychological Association found that employees who feel valued report “higher levels of engagement, satisfaction, and motivation,” so it's definitely something worth investing in. It can be as simple as announcing individual or departmental successes through your chat software, internal newsletter, or other channels. This best practice is beneficial not just for employee morale but also for your company's productivity and growth.

### 16. Create a customer-centric team with personas

“The best way to help team members focus on customers? Bring customers to life.”

—*Alison Davis, CEO and founder, Davis & Co.*

Davis suggests using internal-communications best practices to align your employees with customers. Create “profiles of typical customers, complete with photos, demographics, likes, and dislikes—including what TV shows they watch and snacks they prefer. That way, customers become vivid, tangible and top of mind.” Share these personas frequently with your team—in conversations, newsletters, or even through digital signage in your offices.

### 17. Promote employee resources and training

“Employees want to know their company is as invested in their personal and professional development as they are. Communicate which resources your company provides so employees don't miss out on fantastic opportunities.”

—*Belén Alemán, learning and development program manager, Meltwater San Francisco*

Your internal communications should consistently relay which benefits and resources are available to employees. This could involve everything from basic health insurance and 401K plans to company-sponsored seminars, off-site

training opportunities, and career-building workshops. Use a combination of email, chat, digital signage, internal blogs, or in-person team meetings to get the word out. By encouraging employees to invest in their own personal and professional development through your company, everyone benefits in the long run.

## 18. Think like a marketer

“It’s time for employee communicators to start thinking like marketers, delivering the right information to the right employee at the right time through the right channel.”

—*Shel Holtz, internal communications director and advocate*

Sometimes employee communication feels like an afterthought—getting the budget crumbs left behind by advertising, marketing, and PR. One of the most glaring examples is the lack of sophisticated tools for internal comms. Our colleagues in marketing are able to target messages and information to individuals based on a variety of criteria, yet most of what goes out to employees is one-size-fits-all.

As Dan Woods, the CEO of Evolved Media says, “Spotify knows what we listen to. Netflix can predict what we’ll watch. Uber knows exactly when and where to pick us up. All these tools make our nonwork lives easier. So why are we still relying on antiquated methods to communicate with employees?”

We have to use data to know what employees need and when they need it. At least a decade ago, IBM’s intranet home page featured information about what the individual employee was doing that day and linked to resources to help the employee get it done. Today, this kind of communication should be drop-dead easy across many channels—with the data that allow us to target relevant content to the right employees.

We need to sell the concept to leadership, though, if we’re going to get the budget necessary to deliver this kind of experience to employees. Relaunching the old intranet won’t cut it. We must commit to taking the same approach to personalized employee communication that our friends in marketing take with customers.



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