

How to demonstrate the value of internal comms and get noticed by your boss

NEWSWEAVER²
powering communications

The role of Internal Communication in large organizations is becoming more and more important, but internal communicators still struggle to get a seat at the top table where strategic decisions are made. In this guide we help you demonstrate the business value of Internal Communication to your stakeholders. We've also included insight into how segmenting your internal communications can help build better employee engagement. Plus, practical advice on how to get noticed by your boss - and become a key influencer in your organization.

Why your organization should invest in Internal Communication

Communication effectiveness impacts financial performance

Companies that are highly effective at internal communication are 1.7 times more likely to outperform their peers. We know this because Towers Watson have been measuring Return on Investment of communications for five years, and their most recent study of 604 large companies around the world confirms a strong link between superior financial performance and effective communication — regardless of industry, region or economy.

Good internal communication accelerates change

Companies highly effective at both communication and change management are 2.5 times more likely to outperform their peers as companies that are not highly effective in either area. The same Towers Watson 2011 – 2012 Change and Communication ROI Report shows that winning companies tend to:

- Convey a consistent story about their business,
- Create greater certainty, confidence and engagement with employees,
- Build a shared experience across diverse audiences.

Good internal communicators increase engagement

Nearly two-thirds of the companies Towers Watson surveyed report that line managers are taking on more responsibility when it comes to communication with employees. The role of Internal Communication is moving from just managing communications to helping managers communicate better. You and your team can help by providing them with the skills, tools and messaging to ensure they are successfully engaging employees.

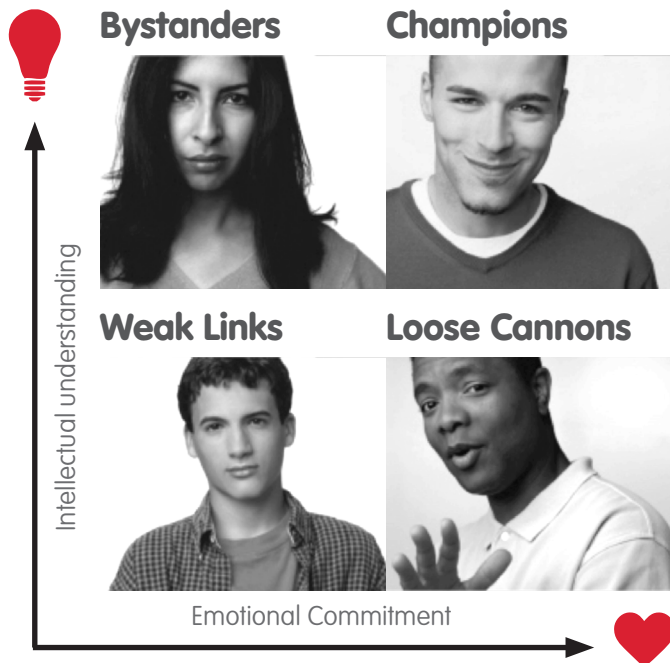
Important news has to come from the top within an organization

When it comes to strategic news there is no substitute for hearing it from the top. The VMA Group - a UK based Internal Communication recruitment company - saw a 25% increase from 2009-2010 in senior executives getting on board with the importance of good internal communications. Today over 60% of senior executives polled say they are making a stronger effort toward internal networking, with more leaders engaging directly with managers and front line employees. Your role is essential in ensuring messages from senior executives are engaging with the workforce, and that they are communicating news effectively to employees.

Segment audiences to build better employee engagement

Employee engagement within your organization is made up of two factors: **Hearts (emotional commitment)** and **Minds (rational commitment)**. Do employees understand where we are heading (**Minds**)? And do they really care (**Hearts**)?

Research by Ipsos MORI into more than 300 UK companies measured this emotional buy-in as well as intellectual understanding. They segmented employees into four categories of buy-in:



Weak Links are colleagues who neither understand your strategy nor care about their role in implementing it. According to research, an alarming 39% of employees fall into this category.

A **Bystander** is someone who may understand your company's strategy well but isn't emotionally committed to implementing it.

A **Loose Cannon** is positive, highly engaged and understands your company's strategy. They are emotionally committed, but may not be clear on where they should be applying their enthusiasm most effectively.

Champions understand the vision of the senior team and they are committed to helping make it a reality. Approximately 30% of employees fall into this category.

Target your communications to audiences

Here's an opportunity for you to create communication strategies based on employee engagement levels. It's all about segmenting your messages and targeting them for the greatest effect. Don't focus on the Weak Links. You will get better results faster by harnessing the strengths of your Champions, building the emotional commitment of your Bystanders and the intellectual understanding of those Loose Cannons.

For instance your field sales team may be highly committed to your company and your brand. But when you introduce a new product that takes them out of their comfort zone you will need to communicate the thinking behind the launch to build intellectual understanding of how the new line fits, supports and improves their beloved brand.

Or you might have a group of outsourced employees in a call centre who are dealing with your customers but do not feel much attachment to your brand. They will need more heartfelt messages that are aimed at building their emotional commitment.

Build your reputation as an excellent internal communicator

Here are six tips that can help you increase the success of your internal communication strategies, demonstrate the value of Internal Communication to your organization - and help you get noticed by your boss.

1. Send effective communications

Communicating effectively is essential for employee engagement and buy-in. Use the **WHY** technique to ensure your content is more likely to get read. Use this technique to structure everything you write into three sections, whether it is a few sentences, a short post or a lengthy article. It's particularly effective in turning dull messages into pithy calls to action.

Just think **WHY**

What am I writing to you about? People are busy. Tell them straight up and clearly what you are contacting them about.

Hook – Look for the hooks in your audience - the ones that help capture the 'Hearts' and 'Minds' of employees. What's in it for them and why should they read on? Make this your second line or paragraph.

You – What do you want them to do as a result of the message? It could be simply making them aware of an issue, through to changing a deep-rooted behavior. If you can't identify what you want them to do differently as a result of your message then ask yourself why are you communicating at all?

2. Practice what you preach

No one is going to trust you as a business partner in communications if you can't communicate well yourself. Accept speaking opportunities that come your way to improve your presentation techniques, voice control and body language. Record your performance and seek out honest feedback. Invest in speaker training; observe and learn from popular colleagues and always rehearse presentations three times before meetings.

3. Advise on your feet

Build your skills so you are viewed as a credible person who can think on their feet. Train yourself to give advice in the moment. When your boss or other stakeholders ask for communications help - always give sound advice at the time of the briefing. If you come back later with suggestions, your advice is less likely to be relevant.

4. Help your leaders communicate effectively

Help your executive team speak more effectively to employees - whether it is presenting, appearing on video, face-to-face, leadership comms or blogs. In times of crisis or time pressures, the temptation is to push out messages quickly to show management is in control. Help executives create and deliver communications that increase employee understanding and buy-in. Make them look great, and they'll be beating a path to your door.

5. Use insight and measurement to determine success

Measurement transforms Internal Communication from shooting in the dark to an effective management tool. Review communication channels and assess what metrics are generated from your communications. Establish Key Performance Indicators, and identify metrics that will measure this. Make sure they link back to your organization's vision and performance goals.

6. Share your successes with stakeholders

Your goal is to get a seat at the top table as a trusted advisor where the strategic decisions are made. Present successes in the form of real data and business insight. You will get noticed by your boss as a vital contributor to organizational success.

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Champion Two-Way Communication

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