

QUICK GUIDE

# Critical Components

OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION  
WHEN ISSUES ARISE

THE  
GROSSMAN  
GROUP

MUST-HAVES FOR  
ENGAGING WITH  
EMPLOYEES WHEN  
IT MATTERS ***MOST***



### WHAT IF

there were a  
“playbook” of the  
ideal components  
of an internal  
communication  
statement when  
issues arise?

What would those  
components be?

That was the question we asked more than 100 internal communication and senior communication professionals. And they told us which were most important ***and why.***

In the following pages, we define those top components and other key considerations—important to keep in mind for future communication as issues arise.

# STATEMENT COMPONENTS EVALUATED

Over 100 internal communication and senior communication professionals shared their perspectives on how important the following components are to a company's internal communication when issues arise:

**Concern**



**Empathy**



**Clarity**



**Timeliness**



**Authenticity**



**Unity**



**Company  
Reassurance**



**Flexibility**



**Belonging**



**Purpose  
Alignment**



**Ongoing  
Dialogue**



**Employee  
Involvement**



KEY FINDING



VIEW ALL 12 COMPONENTS

While the surveyed professionals agree or strongly agree that 11 of the 12 components are essential to an internal communication, **Concern**, **Empathy**, and **Clarity** were ranked as most important when they were asked about their top three.

Concern

58%

Empathy

55%

Clarity

48%

**Q:** *Of the above components, which are the most important for a company's internal communication to employees in times of crisis? (Choose up to 3)*

Continue for definitions of each component, the full ranking, and key takeaways.

# Top 3 | Concern, Empathy, and Clarity are most important for communicating with employees when issues arise

Break through to your employees by helping them feel seen

## 1. Concern

Addresses the safety and well-being of employees, either due to operational impact and/or because they are affected personally by the issue. Using this as a key screen is important, given the number of issues that organizations face each day.

“

*I think that a company should be held more accountable where they operate and less where they don't. It doesn't mean you don't care, but if you try to address everything then you end up spending your time doing that—and inevitably will alienate some because you didn't mention other places (and there are many) experiencing strife. You need to be fair about who gets noticed in a company where there are global operations.*

– SURVEY RESPONDENT

*Honoring people first must be the top priority.*

– SURVEY RESPONDENT

## 2. Empathy

Sets the right tone and shows empathy toward employees' challenges. It is human in its language and approach. Creates an environment where employees feel valued and respected.

“

*I think ... companies can acknowledge the uncertainty and heaviness of an issue without taking a position on the issue itself. For example, a company could recognize that employees are having to process a lot of awful information and stipulate that we want to make sure we take care of each other/ access resources we do have—and all of those things can happen ... without taking a position on the issue itself.*

– SURVEY RESPONDENT

## 3. Clarity

Communicates the organization's position on the crisis in a focused and purposeful way and consistently across leadership and management ranks.

“

*It's important that actions and rhetoric are aligned throughout the organization and especially across leadership and management ranks. That's what employees will notice.*

– SURVEY RESPONDENT

### ★ KEY INSIGHT

## LOOK THROUGH A HUMAN LENS

Adhering to these components should be viewed through a human lens. Employees show up to work and want to feel like they matter. That their leaders think of them as human beings—not just people who show up to do work.

# The Next Tier | Timeliness and Authenticity are also key to forging a strong connection

Don't let bureaucracy stand in the way of what employees need

## 4. Timeliness

Is timely and immediate. Provides a fast initial response and keeps employees updated on developments and changes.

“

*Getting a message out quickly comes with the likelihood that there are unknowns. Communications need to acknowledge what is not known as much as what is known. And that initial message can't be the organization's only message. This is not a one-and-done situation. The organization needs to provide updates as more information becomes available and continuing reassurances throughout the crisis.*

– SURVEY RESPONDENT

## 5. Authenticity

Demonstrates authenticity and is consistent with the company culture (e.g., values).

“

*Companies cannot be halted by fear when trying to decide what to do or what to say. Employees will appreciate a timely message that is authentic more than a pressured response.*

– SURVEY RESPONDENT

### ★ KEY INSIGHT

## VULNERABILITY DRIVES CONNECTION

Respondents said it's acceptable for executives to admit they don't always have all the answers to what's happening external to the company. And that's okay in the minds of your employees. What's important is to create a moment of authentic connection—that links back to who you are as a company and your shared values.



# Other Considerations | Unity and Belonging are key to helping employees feel supported

Demonstrate you're willing to adapt as the situation evolves

## 6. Unity

Encourages a sense of unity among employees and highlights the importance of supporting each other during challenging times.

## 7. Company Reassurance

Offers reassurance to employees by emphasizing the organization's commitment and providing resources for employees who need additional support as they navigate the crisis.

## 8. Flexibility

Acknowledges the uncertainty of the situation and expresses a willingness to adapt and change plans as needed.

## 9. Belonging

Helps employees understand they are welcome in the organization because of their beliefs or background. Creates an environment of belonging and inclusion.

## 10. Purpose Alignment

Links to the company's purpose.

## 11. Ongoing Dialogue

Provides additional opportunities to continue the discussion, including a call to action for employees to talk to their managers for additional support.

## 12. Employee Involvement

Provides the option for employees to participate and includes a call to action (e.g., donation).

### ★ KEY INSIGHT

## FOLLOW CORE PRINCIPLES

Respondents mentioned the importance of alignment before issues hit. We know, from experience, that it's a struggle to balance competing stakeholder needs when leadership is at odds over which are most important. Discussions around these priorities—including guiding principles—are key to help alleviate the disagreement that often accompanies significant issues. Delaying a message because of misalignment or other reasons can signal that those impacted or affected aren't important. This compounds how employees feel and can cause disengagement, skepticism, or worse, disruption.

## FINAL THOUGHT

Acknowledge that some employees will be disappointed if you take a stand, and others will be unhappy if you don't. Some might not like that issues are being discussed at all. Leaders and managers must be prepared for this, and remember that we're on a journey to bring empathy and compassion into the workplace. That **must** be the lens from which all communication occurs.

SAID ONE RESPONDENT...

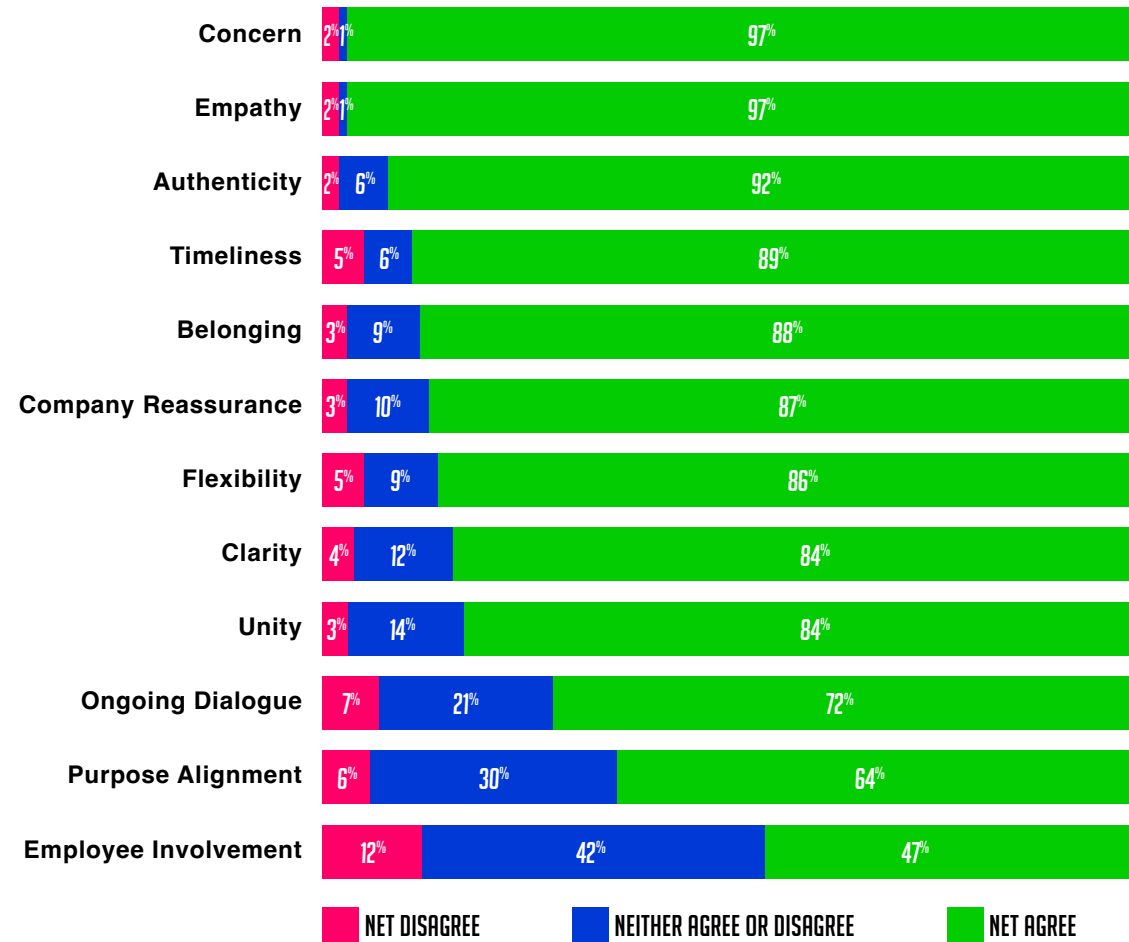


*On issues of foreign policy, I worry companies have gone too far in weighing in on these topics. There is a human element, but it's at a human level, not a political level. I struggle with commenting on every major issue as if CEOs were the Secretary of the State Department. Leaders must realize that taking care of the very people who work for them is what we're all after, and that's what our collective goal must be.*



## Respondents indicated which components of internal communication are important

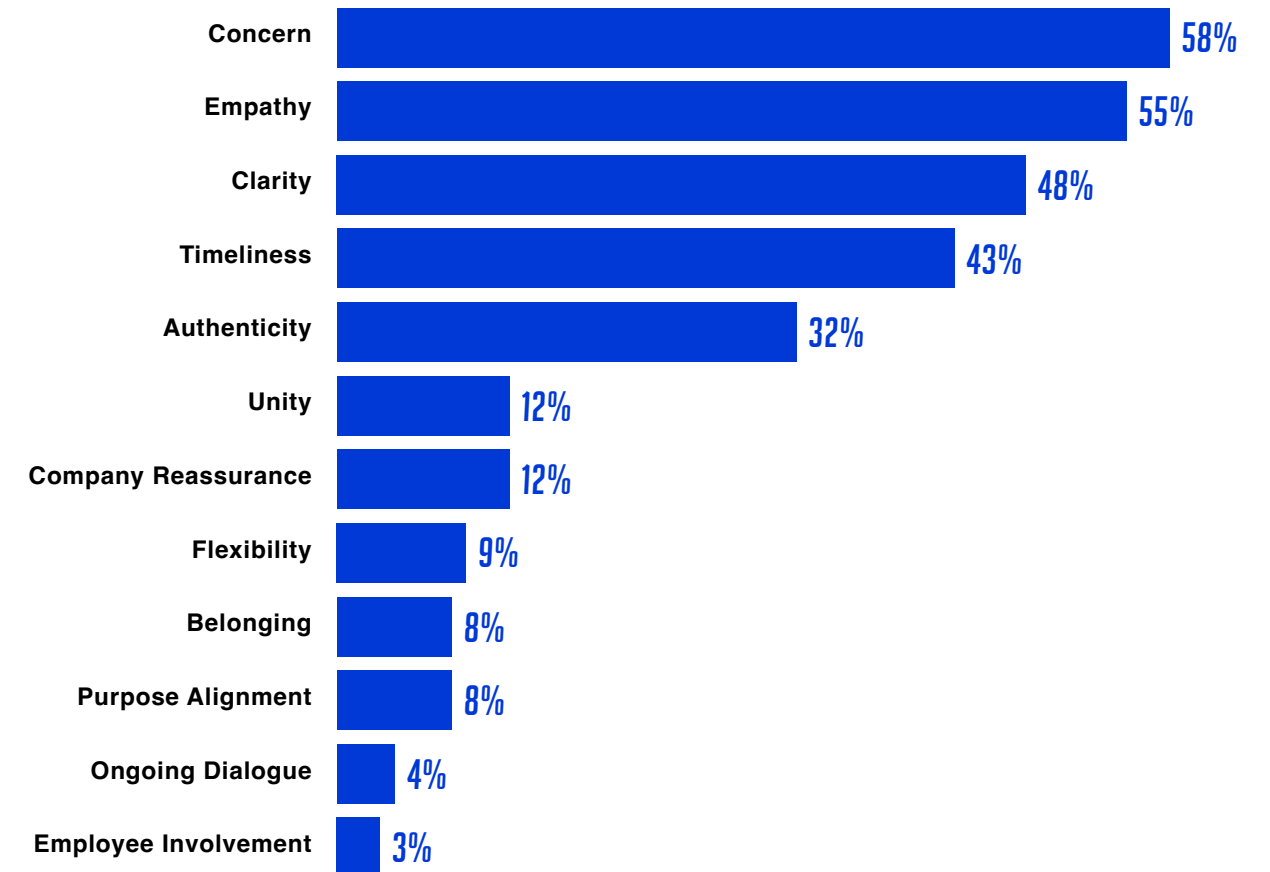
11 of 12 considered important



**Q:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following components are important to a company's internal communication to employees during times of crisis?

## Of those, respondents indicated the top three they believe are most important

Concern, empathy, and clarity ranked as most important



**Q:** Of the above components, which are the most important for a company's internal communication to employees in times of crisis? (Choose up to 3)

# DEFINING STATEMENT COMPONENTS

## 1. Concern

Addresses the safety and well-being of employees, either due to operational impact and/or because they are affected personally by the issue. Using this as a key screen is important, given the number of issues that organizations face each day.

## 2. Empathy

Sets the right tone and shows empathy toward employees' challenges. It is human in its language and approach. Creates an environment where employees feel valued and respected.

## 3. Clarity

Communicates the organization's position on the crisis in a focused and purposeful way and consistently across leadership and management ranks.

## 4. Timeliness

Is timely and immediate. Provides a fast initial response and keeps employees updated on developments and changes.

## 5. Authenticity

Demonstrates authenticity and is consistent with the company culture (e.g., values).

## 6. Unity

Encourages a sense of unity among employees. Highlights the importance of supporting each other during challenging times.

## 7. Company Reassurance

Offers reassurance to employees by emphasizing the organization's commitment and providing resources for employees who need additional support as they navigate the crisis.

## 8. Flexibility

Acknowledges the uncertainty of the situation and expresses a willingness to adapt and change plans as needed.

## 9. Belonging

Helps employees understand they are welcome in the organization because of their beliefs or background. Creates an environment of belonging and inclusion.

## 10. Purpose Alignment

Links to the company's purpose.

## 11. Ongoing Dialogue

Provides additional opportunities to continue the discussion, including a call to action for employees to talk to their managers for additional support.

## 12. Employee Involvement

Provides the option for employees to participate and includes a call to action (e.g., donation).

# INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS: Issues Resource Hub



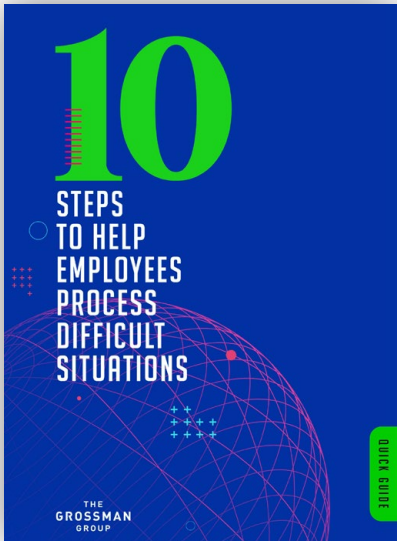
**WHITE PAPER**

Big Miss: Far Too Many Organizations Are Silent About the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict



**QUICK GUIDE**

10 Steps to Help Employees Process Difficult Situations



**KEY FINDINGS**

Study on Internal Communications About the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict



**QUICK GUIDE**

Critical Components of Internal Communications When Issues Arise



## About us

The Grossman Group is an award-winning communications consulting firm that specializes in internal, leadership, culture, and change communications. Led by founder and CEO David Grossman, The Grossman Group is celebrating more than 20 years of engaging employees and helping leaders lead with heart to drive performance.

Its team of senior **thought**partner™ consultants work with companies of diverse sizes and industries to accelerate business through employee engagement and internal and leadership communication. The Grossman Group is a Certified Diverse Supplier through the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce since 2008.

---

See what sets  
**The Grossman Group**  
apart from other  
**communications agencies.**

THE GROSSMAN GROUP DIFFERENCE

CONTACT US



# THE GROSSMAN GROUP

CELEBRATING  
**20<sup>+</sup>**  
YEARS  
OF ENGAGING EMPLOYEES  
AND HELPING LEADERS  
LEAD WITH HEART