

THE
GROSSMAN
GROUP
URNS 25

UPDATED
FOR TODAY'S
NEW NORMAL
*



USE THE RIGHT
CHANNELS
TO COMMUNICATE WITH
IMPACT

WITH SO MUCH VOLATILITY IN OUR WORLD TODAY...

It is more important than ever to communicate effectively with employees. The right message, delivered at the right times, and through the right channels, goes a long way toward building community and engagement. Particularly for many teams that have become hybrid, communication needs to accomplish a lot. It is one of the best and most powerful tools companies have in breaking down barriers and bringing people together. Communicators and leaders have a wide range

of options for communication channels today, and the list of channels keeps growing. Still, having access to so many channels doesn't always mean your messages are received, heard, understood, or acted upon. With more options to choose from, leaders need to ensure channels are selected strategically so employees aren't victims of information overload. Through this chapter, you'll get a quick overview of the key options and guidance on which channels may work best for your organization.



**FACE-TO-FACE
MEETINGS**



**VIDEO
CONFERENCE
CALLS**



**TRADITIONAL
CONFERENCE
CALLS**



**TOWN
HALLS**



PODCASTS



**WRITTEN
COMMUNICATION**



EMAIL



**TEXT
MESSAGES**



VOICEMAIL



BLOG



**INTERNAL
SOCIAL MEDIA**



INTRANET



**EMPLOYEE
SURVEYS**



INFOGRAPHICS



**NOTICE
BOARDS**



VIDEOS



**YOUR
CEO**



**EMPLOYEE
AMBASSADORS**



**FRONT-LINE
MANAGERS**



FACE TO FACE

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Facilitate discussion for immediate action
- Discuss complex, confidential, or sensitive topics
- Share high-level or detailed news/updates
- Ensure messages reach receivers
- Gather immediate feedback and input
- Encourage two-way dialogue

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Insist on an agenda/meeting goals and stick to them
- Respect time allotments—if people know you start meetings on time, they'll rarely be late
- Use flip charts to capture the discussion and build on others' thoughts
- Ask questions to check for understanding and listen to what's being said (or not said)
- Before you adjourn, assign next steps

6 REASONS TO USE FACE-TO-FACE:

1. Demonstrate importance
2. Interpret thoughts and feelings
3. Enhance your credibility and trust
4. Build relationships
5. Gather feedback in real time
6. Demonstrate respect when addressing sensitive issues



WHILE IT TAKES
MORE TIME TO HAVE
A CONVERSATION,
IT OFTEN **SAVES TIME**
AND CONFUSION
IN THE LONG-RUN.



VIDEO CONFERENCE CALLS

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

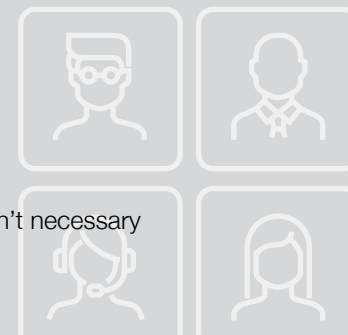
- Connect a team at times when they can't be together in person, while allowing for more intimacy than a phone call
- Enable screen sharing of valuable data in a highly visual and collaborative way
- Allow new team members to more quickly onboard, connecting faces with names
- Open up multiple communication queues, such as the body language and facial expressions of colleagues and clients

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Recognize that virtual meetings are different from face-to-face, requiring a different approach, meaning more care is needed for employees to open up
- Plan ahead with important support materials. Send the agenda ahead of time. When appropriate, provide background materials too, such as pre-reads, charts, and graphs
- Assign a facilitator to keep the meeting running smoothly, looking out for questions via chat functions
- Consider an icebreaker, inviting employees to share some introductions before launching into the business of the meeting
- Stick to firm timeframes and don't overload participants with too many objectives
- Ahead of the meeting, invite specific employees to contribute to portions of the meeting

9 STEPS TO COMBAT VIDEO CONFERENCE FATIGUE:

1. Ask yourself, do I really need a video conference for this conversation?
2. Ensure you're in "speaker view," so you're focused on the speaker and not distracted
3. Avoid multi-tasking
4. Take notes
5. Build in breaks to your day
6. Have shorter meetings
7. Turn your camera off
8. Mute yourself when you're not speaking
9. Switch meetings to phone calls when video isn't necessary





TRADITIONAL CONFERENCE CALLS

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Gather large groups together on a routine basis for alignment, to share news, to advance project plans, or to simply connect on the priorities for the week
- Allow for more informal and efficient check ins
- Give team members a break from too many video conference calls, particularly at the end of the day when teams may feel drained by video

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Encourage more people to contribute by asking more specific questions of individual employees
- If one team member is dominating the conversation, shift the attention to a new topic or call on someone else to contribute
- Whenever possible, keep the calls short and to the point and adhere to strict timeframes
- Distribute summary notes with action items following the call for clarity and understanding

“ THE ART OF
COMMUNICATION
IS THE LANGUAGE
OF LEADERSHIP.

– James Humes, author and speechwriter





TOWN HALLS

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Provide leaders an annual or quarterly opportunity to bring together the full team to discuss business developments and plans
- Recognize individual or team accomplishments
- Help the full team see the big picture for the business and upcoming milestones
- Motivate employees with an inspiring vision for the company's future

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Don't just talk at employees; provide multiple opportunities for questions and conversation; during virtual town halls, this can be done with the chat function, Q&A moderator, etc.
- Avoid PowerPoint overload and dense slides that can turn off employees or bore them. Ensure the speaker is on video during virtual town halls
- Have a follow-up survey after the town hall to gain feedback and continuously improve
- Encourage leaders to host local meetings (virtual meetings work as needed) within two to three days after the enterprise-wide town hall so they can narrow in on key messages specific to their regions or functions



10 IDEAS FOR YOUR TOWN HALL:

1. Crowdsource questions
2. Use audience response technology
3. Hold a mini talk show
4. Use provocative questions
5. Feature a storytelling segment
6. Include case studies
7. Utilize gamification
8. Record your own "Carpool Karaoke"
9. Hold a real-time hashtag campaign
10. Incorporate an "Amazing Race" theme



PODCASTS

452
MILLION
HOURS

ARE SPENT
LISTENING TO
PODCASTS EACH
WEEK IN THE
U.S. ALONE³

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Share updates with people who are on the move (i.e., remote/traveling employees)
- Reach audiences that use the internet or portable devices frequently
- Elevate leadership visibility throughout the organization
- Tell stories or share a dialogue between key stakeholders on an important topic

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Use informal language
- Keep your message short
- Use podcasts as a platform for employees to not only hear from leaders but from peers to drive engagement
- Build a following by releasing new podcasts regularly

HOW COMPANIES ARE USING PODCASTS IN NEW WAYS:

Companies such as American Airlines use podcasts to update employees on company news. Their podcast, "Tell Me Why" covers the "why" behind decisions they make or the approach they take at the company, including the latest on charity-focused projects and monthly insights into the company's successes.

Spotify's podcast, "Life at Spotify," provides a behind-the-scenes look into what working at Spotify is all about. The episodes feature employees from around the globe chatting about their unique learning experiences, initiatives, campaigns, and more, that help them grow together and drive Spotify's company culture.





WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

(E.G., LETTER, MEMO, ETC.)

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Share detailed information
- Provide a paper record of reference materials, policies, etc.
- Reach audiences with limited access to computers

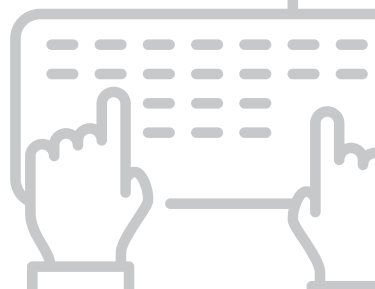
TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Keep messages short and to the point
- Use when additional dialogue or conversation isn't necessary
- Use headlines and subheads/bullets to lay out messages in an easy-to-read format
- Make it visually attractive for an easier, more memorable read

5 MUST DO STEPS TO PLAN ANY COMMUNICATION:

(SEE "TAKE 5" ON PAGE 137)

1. **OUTCOME** (*what*)—The business outcome you seek
2. **AUDIENCE** (*who*)—Your audience, where they are coming from, and what you want them to know, feel, and do
3. **MESSAGES** (*what are you trying to convey? why?*)—Given the audiences' mindset, list the 2-3 main messages to move them to action
4. **TACTICS** (*how and when*)—The most effective means of reaching your audience
5. **MEASUREMENT** (*listen for understanding and commitment*)—How you'll know when you're successful





EMAIL



MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Provide directional, important, and timely information
- Share detailed information and data
- Direct the receiver to an online source for more information
- Provide brief status updates

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Make the subject line relevant and meaningful
- Keep messages focused, easy to read, and brief
- Don't put anything in an email you wouldn't want publicly broadcast
- Indicate if you need a response (what and when)
- If it takes more than two to three emails to bring closure to a topic, make it a voice-to-voice conversation (it's probably too complex for an email)



DO USE EMAIL TO:

- Provide one or multiple audiences with a brief status update in the body of a message
- Deliver a longer message or information as an attachment to your intended recipients
- Give timely information consistently to a group of recipients
- Prompt the recipient to view web-based content or other content that's attached

DON'T USE EMAIL:

- To give bad or negative news
- To give complex or lengthy information or instructions
- When the recipient deserves an opportunity to give immediate feedback or respond
- When there might be nuance or context that can't be understood by written words; to express feelings
- After multiple back-and-forths, pick up the phone



TEXT MESSAGES

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Notify employees about security issues
- Provide weather and/or travel alerts
- Send meeting and event reminders

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Keep messages short and to the point
- Establish guidelines to prevent text message overkill
- Give employees an opportunity to “opt in” or “opt out”
- Know if there are certain times your company policy allows you to text

Did you know that

~83 BILLION

text and mobile messaging
app messages are sent
every day worldwide⁴

WOW!!!



⁴Combined data from Teodora Dobrilova, “TechJury,” 2020 & Statistica, “Mobile Messenger Apps - Statistics & Facts,” 2019



VOICEMAIL

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Communicate urgent, brief messages
- Request immediate response
- Ask simple questions that have quick responses
- Reach people when a meeting isn't possible
- Communicate with team members who are traveling

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- If working remotely, set your message to include your cell phone and/or home phone number so clients and colleagues can easily reach you
- Use if additional dialogue or conversation isn't necessary
- Avoid leaving a message about numerous topics
- Jot down what you're going to say before you say it; keep in mind the outcome you seek
- Begin with your main point. Leave your call-back phone number
- Indicate if you need a response (what and when)
- Keep messages short and to the point; don't ramble



**COMMUNICATION WORKS
FOR THOSE WHO WORK AT IT.**

— John Powell, film composer



BLOGS

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Create dialogue between employees and their leadership
- Demonstrate engagement from a leader(s) in a positive way, and hear their perspective on important topics
- Reach audiences that already use the internet frequently
- Share stories and inspire readers

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Be authentic; blogs require a different tone and point of view than other vehicles
- Keep messages informative, timely, and simple
- Use photos/visuals, section headers, and bullet points when possible to visually break up the content and make it easy to read
- Don't just post messages—reply to others' comments to create dialogue and an exchange of information
- Appoint someone to moderate the discussion in comments
- Develop and share guidelines on using personal blogs to disclose company information



**COMPANIES WHO WANT TO
REMAIN COMPETITIVE AND SUCCESSFUL
NEED TO ENSURE THEY INVOLVE,
MOTIVATE, AND INSPIRE COLLEAGUES.**

— Viktoria Tegard, Head of Internal Communications, Virgin Atlantic Airways





INTERNAL SOCIAL MEDIA



MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Establish open dialogue with employees
- Solicit feedback, which can be done with a formal poll or through the comments section
- Generate engagement among employees
- Integrate and share content from different platforms

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Have a committed team of ambassadors to participate on internal social media and act as the face of the company
- Engage users with interactive content and by integrating popular social platforms (when appropriate)
- Set up social groups so teams can collaborate on projects in real time



INTERNAL SOCIAL MEDIA COULD INCLUDE:

- Company blogs
- Intranet articles that enable commenting, sharing, or liking
- Team sites for collaboration and idea exchange
- Social platforms like Yammer, Workplace, Chatter, or Jive
- Company-curated (member only) LinkedIn networks
- Behind-the-firewall video channels
- Other opt-in conversation and collaboration sites (now commonly built into intranet platforms like SharePoint)



INTRANET

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Share successes, wins, and best practices with large audiences (e.g., a department, a location, or all employees)
- Provide access to applications, tools, and data
- Share photos or videos that may be too large for email distribution
- Encourage collaboration through blogs and other social media tools
- Serve as a go-to hub for essential information related to employee health and safety, company policies, etc.

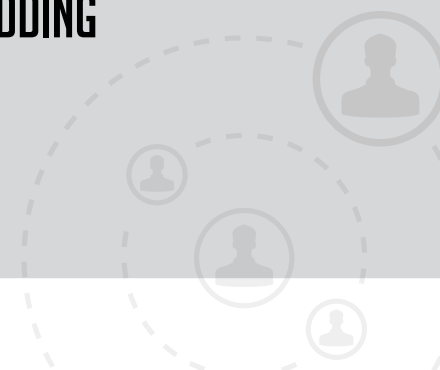
TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- It should serve as a tool to help employees do their job better/faster
- Ensure the site is easy to use and navigate
- Keep content simple and up-to-date for credibility
- Make it interactive (e.g., polls, feedback channels, leader blogs, front-line employee blogs)
- Include a contact person for more information
- Send email reminders with a link to call out items that are new to draw attention



REMEMBER:

YOUR INTRANET SHOULD PROVIDE INFORMATION THAT HELPS MAKE YOUR EMPLOYEES' JOBS EASIER. IF IT DOESN'T, YOU RISK ADDING TO COMMUNICATIONS CLUTTER.





EMPLOYEE SURVEYS

(E.G., ENGAGEMENT SURVEYS, EVENT-BASED
FEEDBACK POLLS, FOCUS GROUPS)

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Gather employee feedback and insights
- Measure the effectiveness or impact of programs, initiatives, communications, etc.
- Show employees their opinion matters

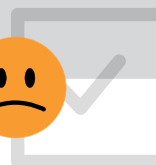
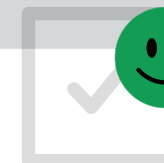
TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

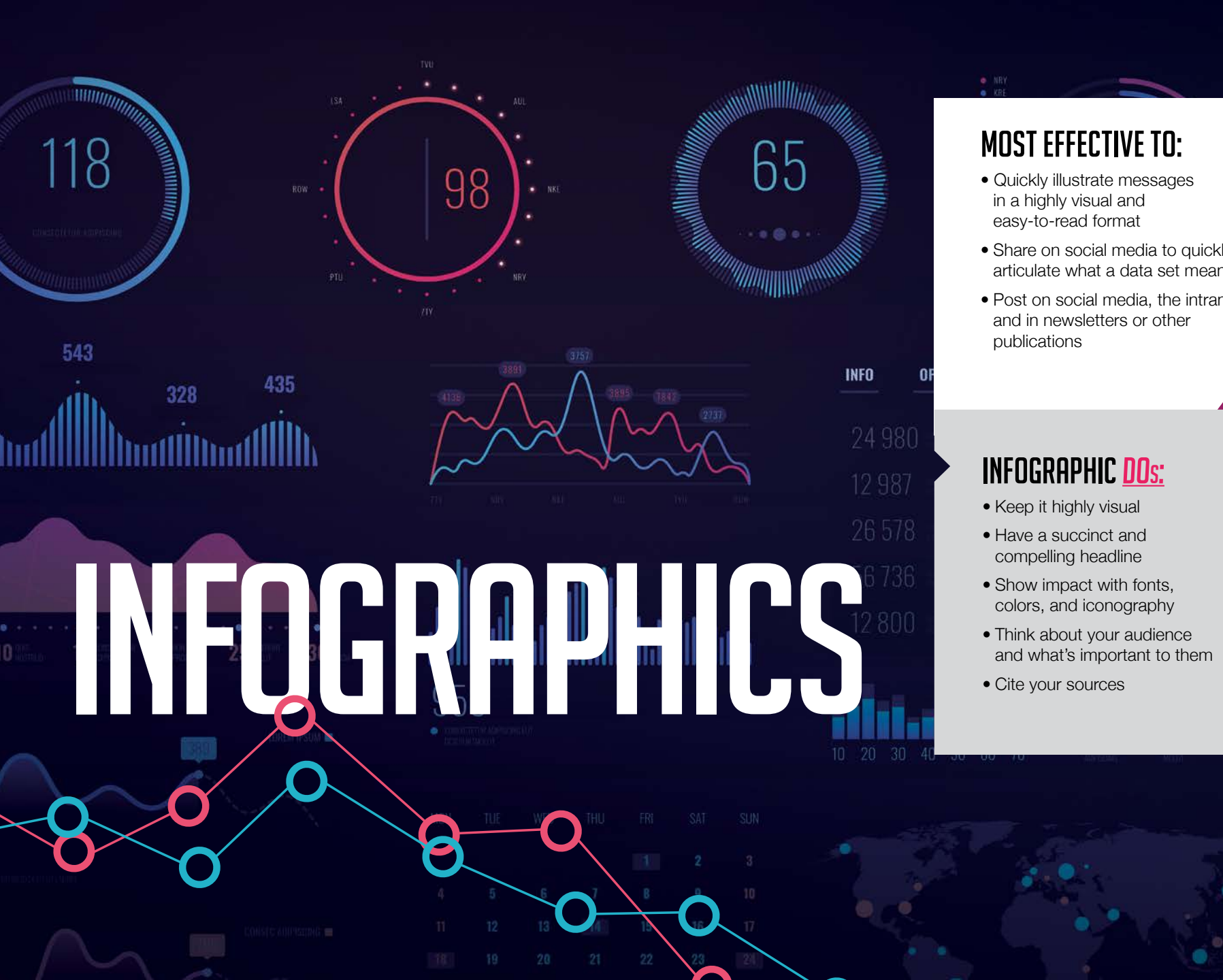
- Keep employees involved throughout the process; let them know what you heard and what will change as a result of their feedback
- Share survey results and communicate the areas of improvement on which you'll focus
- Take action on feedback



COMMON TYPES OF EMPLOYEE SURVEYS INCLUDE:

- Engagement surveys
- Surveys to know employees' understanding of a topic
- Employee communications need assessments
- Event-based feedback polls (such as after a town hall)
- Organizational assessment surveys
- Employee opinion polls
- Focus groups





MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Quickly illustrate messages in a highly visual and easy-to-read format
- Share on social media to quickly articulate what a data set means
- Post on social media, the intranet, and in newsletters or other publications

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Ensure that you have a top-notch graphic storyteller who can make the message clear and easy to process quickly
- Use in place of a PowerPoint presentation when you need to get a message across with few words and powerful images



INFOGRAPHIC **DOs:**

- Keep it highly visual
- Have a succinct and compelling headline
- Show impact with fonts, colors, and iconography
- Think about your audience and what's important to them
- Cite your sources

INFOGRAPHIC **DON'Ts:**

- Use text heavy phrases
- Cover too many topics
- Use jargon or unclear language
- Forget a clear call to action





MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Share information that does not require action and is not urgent (e.g., recognize individual employees or teams)
- Inspire employees by providing an easily visible display of progress being made

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Establish guidelines for postings
- Ensure messages are easy to read
- Avoid clutter—remove outdated postings regularly
- Label different sections of the board to keep it organized by topic
- Use visuals and color to bring the notice board to life

WAYS YOU CAN USE NOTICE BOARDS TO CONNECT WITH ON-SITE EMPLOYEES:

- Label different sections of the board to keep it organized by topic (e.g., upcoming events, announcements, employee birthdays, or workplace anniversaries)
- Post notices about HR policies and other pertinent information
- Recognize individual employees or teams for outstanding work or for their contributions to the community
- Introduce new team members with a brief Q&A and photos
- Use photos and colorful paper to bring the notice board to life and decorate it for holidays
- Rotate content weekly to ensure content doesn't get stale and employees look at it regularly

NOTICE BOARDS



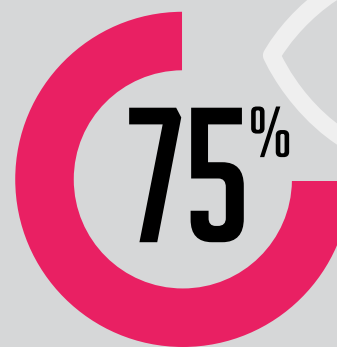
MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Provide information and training on specific programs/initiatives
- Serve as an opportunity to “show and tell” about new products, new people, etc.
- Crowdsource content and engage through comments and/or by linking to polls, resources pages, etc.

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Appeal to visual and audio senses
- Video doesn’t have to be highly produced to be effective; oftentimes small video shorts, with a clear message, resonate most with employees
- Make the videos fun and engaging
- Use subtitles so employees can read messages without audio as an option

VIDEOS



OF EMPLOYEES **ARE MORE LIKELY** TO WATCH A VIDEO THAN TO READ DOCUMENTS, EMAILS, OR WEB ARTICLES, ACCORDING TO FORRESTER



APPROACH TO CHANNELS

While the following are not always considered “*traditional channels*,” we think each of them are **critical** to getting any strategic message to resonate with employees.

CUTTING
EDGE





THE BACKSTORY:

There's no underestimating the growing importance of senior leader communications as a key communication source for ensuring any organization's success. Many recent studies have highlighted the critical importance of what CEOs say and the messages they impart. According to a recent McKinsey & Company study, a company transformation is 5.8 times more likely to be successful when CEOs communicate a compelling, high-level change story.

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

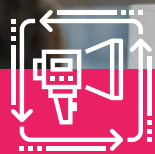
- Ensure employees are hearing the message “from the top”
- Help employees see their leader as someone who truly cares about the strategy's success and wants to inspire and support his/her team to do their best work
- Facilitate a culture of listening as well as dialogue

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Leaders need to understand just how much their communication matters to the success of any transformational effort
- Communicators should help leaders speak from the heart, and reveal more of who they are and what matters to them
- Avoid corporate speak/jargon in CEO communications (and all communications). Employees tune out quickly if the messages seem too formal or insincere



YOUR CEO



EMPLOYEE AMBASSADORS

THE BACKSTORY:

Employee ambassadors are becoming an increasingly critical and effective channel of their own. A growing number of organizations recognize that ambassadors—when trained well—can serve as an informal but highly valued extension of any communications team. A study from The Conference Board, *The State of Employee Advocacy*, found most companies surveyed were “either already capitalizing on their workforce as spokespeople for the brand on social media, or planning to launch a program in the very near future.”

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Build a greater sense of unity among employees as “one team”
- Help to engage employees who want to play a bigger role in supporting the brand
- Push out highly effective and authentic voices in discussions of the company’s strategy and value proposition

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Know the risks and how you’ll manage them. Before launching a program, make sure ambassadors understand the ground rules: No profanity, hate speech, bullying, inappropriate links, etc. Ambassadors also need to ensure all posts comply with FTC and SEC regulations.
- Involve employees in setting up the programs, train your ambassadors well, then trust them. No one wants to hear from employees who seem like blind supporters of the brand—genuine voices are key.



FRONT-LINE

MANAGERS

THE BACKSTORY:

Increasingly, organizations are seeing the important role that front-line managers play in employee communications. While employees rank managers as their most preferred information channel, many managers feel ill-equipped to communicate consistently, according to research from Gartner. And more than a third (36%) are challenged in responding to negative reactions or difficult questions from their team members. In addition, 80% of change is driven at the manager level and 50% of managers are resistant themselves, according to Prosci data. When trained and prepared well, managers can be a major factor in any strategy's success.

MOST EFFECTIVE TO:

- Help front-line employees know exactly what they need to do to support a particular strategy or initiative
- Establish managers as personally standing behind the company's path forward

TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES:

- Take the time to ensure managers have the right training and resources to serve as a powerful communications vehicle
- Provide managers talking points and sample Q&As so they are most prepared to answer employee questions
- Give managers a template for generating regular discussions with their employees during shift huddles and other team meetings



DAVID HELPS LEADERS DRIVE PRODUCTIVITY AND GET THE RESULTS THEY WANT THROUGH AUTHENTIC AND COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION.

David is both a teacher and student of effective leadership and communication. He is one of America's foremost authorities on communication and leadership inside organizations, and a sought-after advisor to Fortune 500 leaders. By acting as an advocate for employees and as a **thoughtpartner™** to senior management, David helps organizations unleash the power of communication to engage employees and drive performance.

David is the Founder and CEO of The Grossman Group, an award-winning Chicago-based communications consultancy focused on organizational consulting, strategic leadership development, and internal communications. Clients include Abbott, Amsted, DHL, General Mills, Grubhub, Johnson & Johnson, Kimberly-Clark, Lockheed Martin, Novartis, and Stanley Black & Decker, among others.

David is often quoted in media, providing expert commentary and analysis on how leaders and companies can build trust and keep employees engaged through crisis and change, employee well-being and burnout, and more. He's been featured on "NBC Nightly News," in *CBS MoneyWatch*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Directors & Boards*, *Forbes*, *Great Place to Work*, the *LA Times*, *Newsweek*, and the *World Economic Forum*.

David is a five-time award-winning author. His popular book *Heart First: Lasting Leader Lessons from a Year that Changed Everything* is now in its second edition, *Heart First: What Exceptional Leaders Do in Extraordinary Times*. *Heart First* continues to be applauded by leaders at all levels for the practical approaches and rich stories of heart first leadership, told by senior leaders around the globe. In addition, David has published a version of *Heart First* for emerging leaders, which is praised by students, young professionals, and educators for inspiring the next generation to lead and make an impact. David's leader**communicator™** blog has been ranked the number one blog on communications by Feedspot eight years in a row.

David is a member of the Forbes Communication Council, the Arthur W. Page Society, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), and is a Trustee to the Board of the Institute for Public Relations (IPR).

Twice named PR Week's "Boutique Agency of the Year" and PProvoke Media's "Employee Communication Agency of the Year," The Grossman Group's work has won all the "Oscars" of communication. The Grossman Group is a certified diversity supplier. Prior to founding The Grossman Group in 2000, David was director of communications for McDonald's.

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