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INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AS A DIFFERENTIATOR FOR HEALTHCARE POST-PANDEMIC

DAVID GROSSMAN
ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA, CSP



Healthcare has always been a complicated sector with changes arising at every turn, and that reality has never been more evident than right now as new challenges resulting from the pandemic and a shift to digital medicine continue to reveal themselves. In fact, a January 2022 study from Boston Consulting Group (BCG) describes healthcare's new reality as:

DYNAMIC, DIGITAL, AND HERE TO STAY... ”

Complexity is the name of the game when it comes to today's healthcare industry. Whether you are a highly matrixed, multisite healthcare system undergoing a merger, or global pharmaceutical or medical device company looking to expand its portfolio, the common thread is complexity. Even with such rampant murkiness, one thing is very clear: good employee communication can turn strategy into action and keep employees focused on what matters, help them navigate through

the ever-present changes, and minimize disruption that can slow productivity, performance and engagement. But is it clear just how **BIG** of an impact quality employee communication can have on the bottom-line results for your healthcare organization? Part of the problem is executives measure communication in terms of inputs (the number of emails sent or town halls hosted) rather than by the one metric that actually counts: how well employees understand what's communicated.





While healthcare will always be complex, there's a real opportunity to ease one area of complexity by making internal communication a top priority.

Sadly, internal communication traditionally has been overlooked or undervalued. But the rapid transition to a predominantly remote workforce during the peak of COVID-19 highlighted the importance of a strong yet nimble internal communications infrastructure to ensure employees have the information they need to do their jobs, and as a fundamental element influencing company culture. The reality is, effective internal communications in organizations directly impacts engagement, productivity and organizational performance. Leaders in healthcare would be wise to seize the day and take action to make internal

communications work even harder in their organizations and contribute even more to organizational goals—whether upgrading channels and messages to be more audience-focused, using communication to connect employees to organizational priorities, building a function from the ground up or transforming the function from a good one to a *great* one.

Good internal communication gets the message out. Great internal communication helps employees connect the dots between overarching business strategy and their role. When the communication is good, it informs. When it's great, it engages employees and moves them to action. Quite simply, internal communication that's executed well helps people and organizations be even better.

Employees who feel included in more detailed communication are nearly

5 TIMES

more likely to report increased productivity¹

¹McKinsey Global Institute, April 2021

Despite the quantity of communication channels—flurries of emails, real-time instant messages, daily meetings, both virtual and in-person, continually updated intranets and more—today’s distributed workers aren’t receiving the quality information they need to help them connect the dots.

More than one-third of U.S. workers believe the volume of communications they receive is too high¹

Business leaders estimate their teams lose an average of 7.47 hours per week to poor communication—**that’s almost one full workday**²



of healthcare executives say poor intra-office collaboration **leads to mistakes** within their organizations³

If key communications are being lost in the frenzy, resulting in employees not knowing or receiving information about their company’s strategy and priorities, they cannot be expected to know how they can contribute to delivering on them through their daily work. Just as important, if today’s healthcare employees—many of whom neared burnout after serving on the frontlines of a global pandemic—don’t understand and connect with their company’s mission and vision, their commitment to the work, their leadership and the organization quickly wanes.

Add this to the ever-changing dynamics of the healthcare industry, from the regulatory environment to patient-care models, and you have a recipe for disaster in the form of misinformation and information overload that can lead to poor employee engagement, retention and even recruitment. At its worst, poor communication within a healthcare organization can literally be a matter of life or death with 52% of healthcare organizations experiencing communications disconnects that negatively impact patients daily or multiple times a week, according to a November 2019 article in the HIPAA Journal.

HALF

of healthcare workers report burnout amid COVID-19⁴

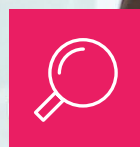


¹Gallagher's 2021 State of Internal Communications Report

²Harris Poll's Grammarly 2022 State of Business

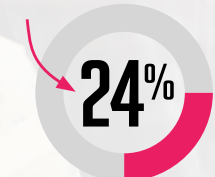
³Medical Economics, September 2019

⁴American Medical Association "Coping with COVID-19 Caregiver Survey"



The statistics are alarming when you consider disengaged employees significantly detract from organizational success, profit and growth—and perhaps most importantly from the service-oriented mission driving the healthcare continuum. On the flip side, when internal communication is done right:

Companies with highly engaged workforces are



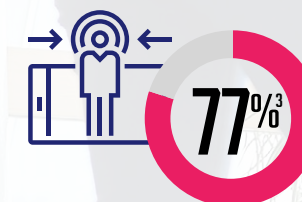
MORE
PROFITABLE¹



Physicians who went through communication training experience less work-related stress and

MORE
JOY AT WORK²

More informed employees outperform their peers by

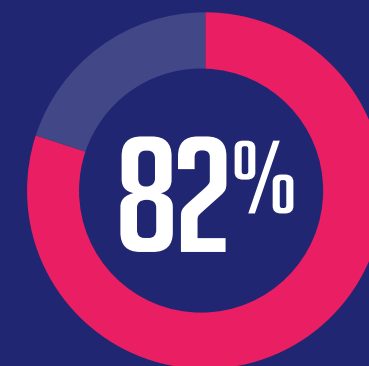


What does this mean for the healthcare employees in laboratories, clinics, offices, factories, and now at home? It means great communications can make or break the employee experience and, in turn, the culture of a company. Great communications can be the difference between good employees staying or taking their knowledge to a competitor. Great communications can be the reason a patient is able to access an innovative new therapy that will save their life. Ultimately, this means that communication is a key part of leadership and healthcare leaders cannot afford to ignore the importance of great communications as a driver of business strategy.

¹Gallup Employee Engagement and Performance, 2021

²American Medical Association, July 2017)

³Gartner, 2018



of business leaders are confident communicating with their direct reports, but only 68% of knowledge workers agree they receive effective communication from their direct managers⁴

⁴Harris Poll's Grammarly 2022 State of Business Communication

COMMUNICATION IS **MORE** THAN A “FEEL GOOD” PART OF ANY ORGANIZATION

It separates mediocre companies from great ones, unremarkable profits from excellent ones, discontented shareholders from happy ones, connected employees from frenzied ones during a time of crisis, and successful patient outcomes from increasingly prevalent chronic disease within populations...well, you get the picture. So, what are you waiting for? In the pages that follow, learn the value of, the strategy behind, and how to begin implementing a successful internal communication program that will enhance your own effectiveness, build strong teams, and ultimately make your entire organization more successful so you can get back to the business of improving health and wellness.

BUT FIRST, WHAT **IS** INTERNAL COMMUNICATION?

Internal communication is the exchange of information within an organization to create a shared understanding and then drive the behaviors and actions needed to move the organization forward. Effective internal communication also creates an open environment that encourages employees to exchange ideas with co-workers across functions, geographies, and even across clinical and operational lines. While communicating with fellow employees may seem like common sense, it's not always put into practice—especially in today's fast-paced clinical and biotech environments.

In an industry that is marked by transformation, the one mainstay in healthcare may just be change. Whether that change comes rapidly as a result of market pressures or over the course of time following revised regulatory parameters, the net result is still a high potential for confusion, skepticism, and mistrust for employees, which ultimately gets in the way of business getting done and care being delivered. That's why internal communication has become more critical today than ever before.

INFORMATION > UNDERSTANDING

BONUS

CHANGE COMMUNICATION:

A component of change management strategy that helps stakeholders understand what is changing and why, and how it will specifically affect them. It helps people move from where they are today to the desired “future state.”



Download our free tool, *5 Steps for Effective Change Communication Planning*, to learn simple ways to:

1 ASSESS

the situation, people, channels and needs

2 CREATE

a change communications plan to drive engagement and behavior

3 PREPARE

key people for their critical influencer role

4 EXECUTE

the plan with expectations to evolve and adapt materials based on the changing needs

5 EVALUATE

what should be stopped, started and continued based on metrics and listening

COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENTS THEN

COMMAND AND CONTROL

SEND AND MOVE ON

FORMAL, WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

INFORMATION UNFOLDS WITH TIME

ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL NEWS AND INFORMATION

VS NOW

EMPATHY, HUMANITY, AUTHENTICITY

ENGAGE, PARTICIPATE, INVOLVE

MULTI-CHANNEL, INTERACTIVE

EVERYTHING INSTANT AND
SHARED IN REAL TIME

PERSONALIZED COMMUNICATIONS
REACHING DIVERSE AUDIENCES



A blurred background image of a hospital hallway with a gurney in the foreground and people walking in the distance.

THE GREAT RESIGNATION

This unprecedented shift companies are experiencing due to a staggering transformation of the American workforce is one of the biggest concerns facing employers today and is hitting healthcare especially hard as the industry ranks as the **second largest sector impacted** by “The Big Quit.” While we can’t control a global pandemic stretching the healthcare workforce even thinner than it already was, we can make a difference when it comes to change fatigue.

Consider the following four factors and changes that are constantly creating ever-shifting contexts and engendering employee insecurity, uncertainty and fear...

BONUS

Download our free eBook

HOLY SHIFT #@\$!!*

to learn how to lead with heart to engage and retain employees during “The Great Resignation”—as well as get tips and tools for building a stronger culture employees are excited to be a part of.



CHANGE #1:

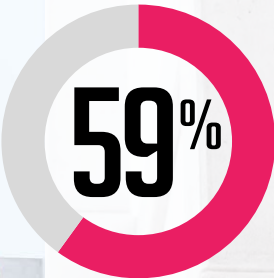
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT





Talk is cheap for today’s workforce—especially when it comes to leaders and their ability to build and maintain trust.

These days, organizations are under attack and protecting every asset. The pressure is mounting for leaders to find the answers, and employees, who need to stay focused and productive now more than ever, are numb from fear of the line between work and home completely blurring, of taking on more work, of the unknown, or of a combination of all three. Trust—in institution, government, the media, across the general population—is at an all-time low, which means employers have to work even harder to overcome the innate skepticism plaguing the workforce.



of people distrust others until they see evidence they are trustworthy...

...people also worry about being misled on purpose by misinformation (**up 7 points for business leaders, 8 points for journalists and reporters, and 9 points for their country’s government leaders**)¹



Today, employees are putting leaders of all levels on notice that when it comes to earning trust, they need to work harder. Social unrest, corporate scandals, and regulatory requirements from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and HIPAA, to name just a few, have led to greater expectations and regulations around transparency, and remain front-and-center in employees’ minds. In pursuing genuine trust, leaders need to strive for a consistency of words and actions that stand the test of time, and lead to a real relationship with employees. That relationship needs to be motivated by meeting mutually beneficial needs, not selfish needs that only benefit one party.

¹Edelman, “Trust Barometer,” 2022



Organizations are being challenged to become more trustworthy. We often hear about trust in the context of rebuilding it after a crisis. But to maintain long-term, positive stakeholder relationships, leaders must make trust an intentional organizational imperative.

BARBARA KIMMEL
CEO and Cofounder of
Trust Across America



CHANGE #2:

EMPLOYEE- EMPLOYER CONTRACT

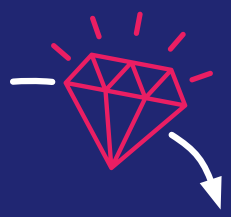
SIGN HERE:

The relationship between employers and employees is changing every day. Health-related organizations from start-ups to well-established systems are demanding more quality and productivity as they face intense pressures to reduce expenses and be profitable. At the same time, many frontline healthcare workers and those manning device and drug manufacturing production lines are being asked to risk their own lives at times, while their office-based colleagues have the luxury of working from home.

In the wake of significant business challenges, such as supply chain issues and a continuing shift in payment models from fee-for-service to outcomes-based funding, many organizations are making cuts across all areas of their operations—including employee training and development and benefits. Meanwhile, other organizations are dealing with increased pressure ranging from clinical workforce shortages and unions to additional technology-driven infrastructure costs and slowed approvals for taking discoveries that are not vaccine related from bench to bedside.

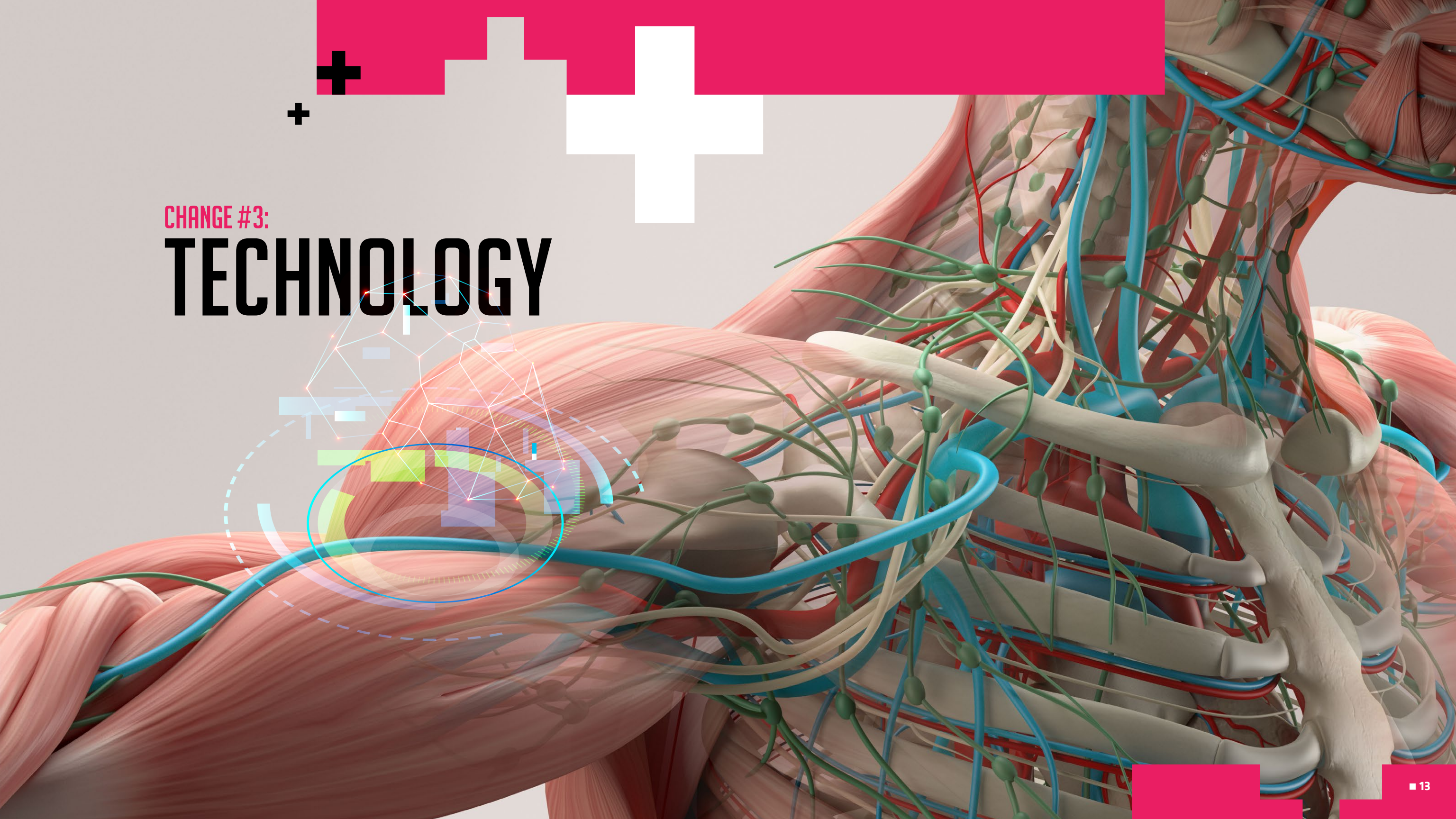
Either way, it's becoming increasingly difficult for employees to commit discretionary effort and to stay committed when the very foundation of what they expect from their employer can change in an instant. Because of this diminishing loyalty, one has to wonder if the employee-employer contract as we've known it still exists? The answer is no. The old "contract" has been replaced by a new "deal." The new deal is more of an understanding than a contract, yet it can still be stated explicitly:

ORGANIZATIONS MUST
MAKE IT CRYSTAL CLEAR
WHAT THEY EXPECT
FROM THEIR EMPLOYEES...



and what employees can expect from the organization—and employers **must** deliver on those expectations without fail.



An anatomical illustration of a human torso, showing the ribcage, lungs, and major blood vessels (red and blue). A digital overlay is present, featuring a network of green nodes and lines, a blue dashed circle, and a yellow-green arc. The background is a light gray with a large white cross and a pink bar at the top.

CHANGE #3: TECHNOLOGY

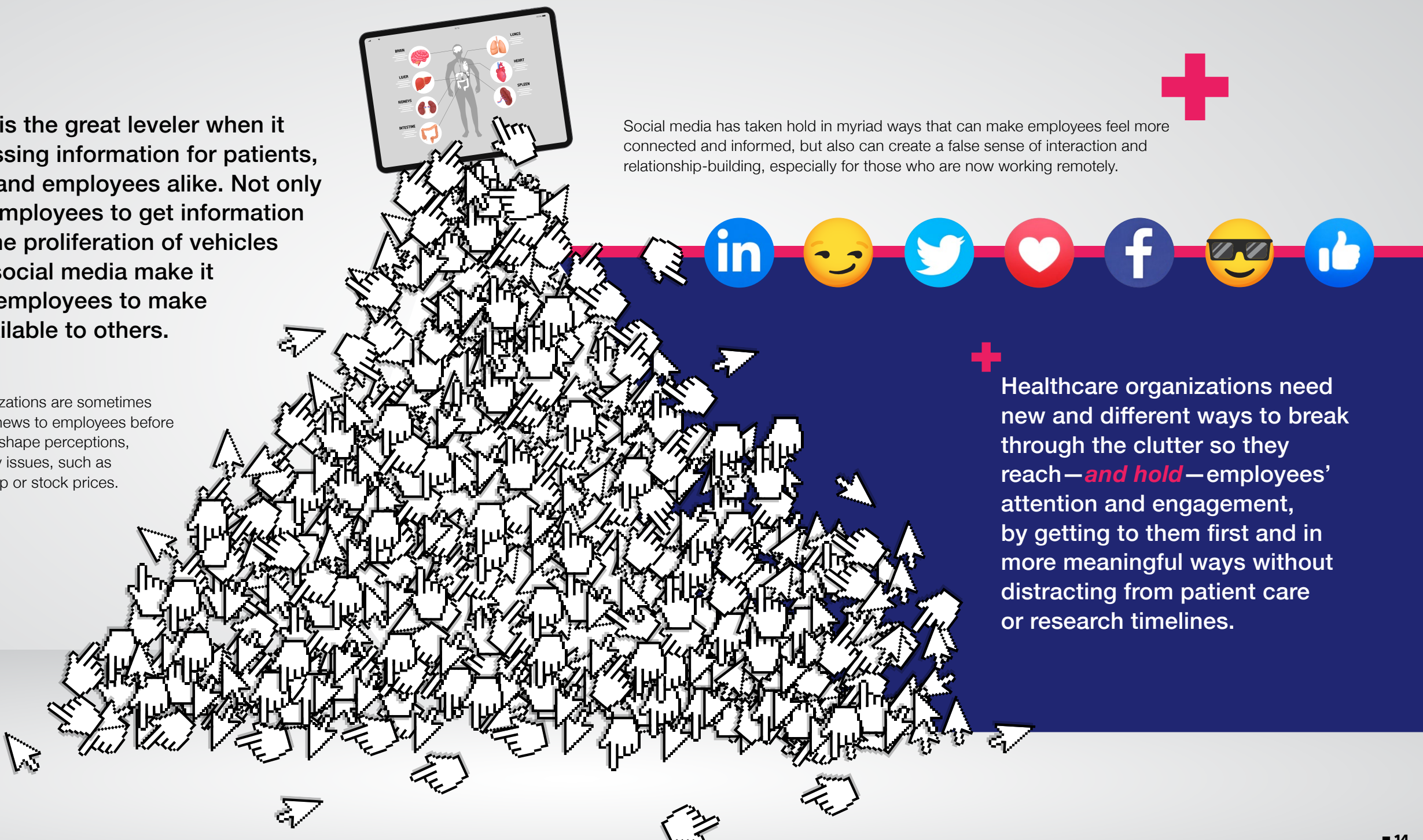


The digital age is the great leveler when it comes to accessing information for patients, care providers and employees alike. Not only is it easier for employees to get information more quickly, the proliferation of vehicles like blogs and social media make it a lot easier for employees to make information available to others.

At the same time, organizations are sometimes challenged with getting news to employees before the media and bloggers shape perceptions, and to share news of key issues, such as changes in key leadership or stock prices.

Social media has taken hold in myriad ways that can make employees feel more connected and informed, but also can create a false sense of interaction and relationship-building, especially for those who are now working remotely.

Healthcare organizations need new and different ways to break through the clutter so they reach **—and hold—**employees’ attention and engagement, by getting to them first and in more meaningful ways without distracting from patient care or research timelines.



CHANGE #4:

GLOBAL EVENTS

COVID-19 offered many lessons, not the least of which is that an ocean barely even slows connectedness from one continent to another, let alone a global pandemic. As the world becomes smaller and global competition intensifies, organizations are focused on new and different ways to boost performance and productivity. Moreover, healthcare leaders are taxed with creating positive margins in an uncertain and ever-changing global economy.



This directly influences communication as organizations try to find the best way to communicate with employees in different locations, with multiple languages, varying immediate concerns, and a variety of cultures and norms.



Organizations still need to communicate their messages, but in a way that is faster and appeals to the various cultural nuances, all the while contending with increased scrutiny from the public and government oversight.

Blurred geographic boundaries enabled by technological advancements, combined with the force of global events, supply shortages, political crises in various parts of the world, and intense economic pressures require organizations to make tough decisions that impact employees at all levels.



The business of healthcare has, indeed, entered a new era that leaves communicators and leaders with the daunting challenge of keeping employees focused, committed and engaged in what feels like the eye of a hurricane. The good news is that good internal communication can create a consistently calm harbor even in the stormiest environments...

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND THE COMMUNICATOR'S ROLE

Achieving trust, credibility and, especially, engagement is the ultimate prize for employers. That is true now more than ever as team members serve as brand ambassadors with direct access to patients and customers, who (in today's consumer-driven healthcare environment) are the ultimate decision makers.

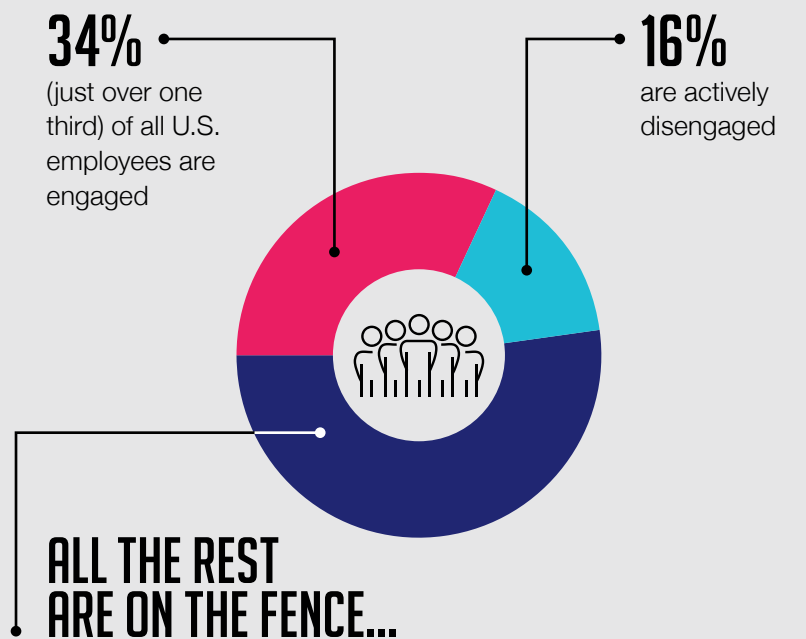
Communications—and *communicators*—play a key role in the engagement process. Great communication can engage employees if it cuts through the clutter to speak directly to them, and no one is better positioned than communicators to know how to connect effectively with employees.

First, employers and communicators must recognize that employee engagement is a two-way street, and furthermore that engagement is a gift an employee gives to an organization—that can be freely given or withheld at any time. It is up to these leaders to accept responsibility for making it that way.

Next, decision makers need to realize that engaged employees need more than just information. They need personalized communication and dialogue even when dealing with fast-paced clinical environments that aren't always conducive to a traditional approach to onsite meetings.

Communication professionals are at the heart of all of this interaction. It is up to them to facilitate effective communication between leaders and employees, and within individual teams. Yes, communication is everyone's responsibility, but it's up to the communicators to drive awareness and engagement. Engagement is the degree to which workers feel an emotional connection with their employer and organization—as that allows them to identify with, be motivated by, and be willing to expend extra effort for their employers (e.g., extra time, brainpower, or energy). In healthcare, more so than many other industries, employees are driven by a calling to serve, and engagement is what allows them to effectively answer that calling.

It also leads to an employee's willingness to advocate on behalf of the organization and brand. The sad fact is that, overall, employees aren't very engaged. This has a negative impact on productivity, results, patient satisfaction and many other aspects of the business.



¹Gallup, "State of the American Workplace," 2022

To understand how to connect with employees, it is important to recognize that engagement involves both emotional and rational factors relating to work and overall work experience.

The emotional factors are those that relate to an individual's personal satisfaction and the sense of inspiration and affirmation they get from their work and from being part of an organization. The rational factors, by contrast, relate to the relationship between the individual and the broader company. An example of this would be an employee's understanding of their role and their team's role, as they relate to the overall company objectives. You may not realize it, but you're actually engaging employees every time you:



HELP

them understand the realities of your organization as well as what is changing and why



CONNECT

the dots between the big picture of your mission, vision, values and strategy and what it means to them and their job



REINFORCE

that they can always trust you



ASK

for their thoughts, feedback and how they are doing

If engagement merely facilitated a more efficient working environment or a friendlier atmosphere, the business imperative to make it a priority wouldn't be as compelling. But the extra effort, the willingness to act as a champion and to advocate for your organization, the desire to provide value every minute of the day, makes engaging employees a critical success factor for any business.



DID YOU KNOW?

Disengaged employees have a staggering effect on business: In a company of 10,000 employees with an average salary of \$50,000 each, the cost of their disengagement is \$60.3 million annually.

That means that any budget reduction strategy that harms engagement can harm productivity, while strategies that support engagement can encourage productivity at little to no extra cost¹. This is felt around the world at a global level, but it also has very personal and immediate effects on organizations, departments, teams and individual employees.



COMMUNICATION ISSUES THAT DISENGAGE EMPLOYEES

1. Information overload
2. No clear understanding of business goals and priorities
3. Leaders who don't "walk the talk"
4. Lack of opportunity for dialogue and to provide feedback
5. Leaders who don't see value in communication and don't plan their communication
6. Communication is a "check-the-box" activity that is reactive, scattered and not relevant to employees' questions or needs
7. Withholding information or limiting its sharing
8. Limited access to managers and leadership
9. Being told to do something without the appropriate context
10. Hearing news in the media or community before hearing it from their employer

THE FACE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS TODAY...



The constant change that is today's healthcare environment has created a new challenge for communicators, especially because it's been accompanied by an evolution in the needs and expectations of employees.

Employees feel a greater need to be personally connected to their employer company and its leaders. In part, this is because they are more aggressive owners of their jobs and the companies they work for than they were in the past. Employees care about the organization they work for, what it stands for and how it affects them as individuals, and also the community at large. And as *The Great Resignation* proves, today's employees are willing to move from job to job in search of the employer that is the best fit for them. All this means that employers have to work that much harder to keep their best

employees and keep them engaged. One way organizations are addressing this engagement culture is through significantly higher benefit offerings. These aren't, however, always communicated in a way that helps employees fully understand what is available to them. Furthermore, the benefits value proposition alone can't do the job because benefits alone don't translate into loyalty for an organization. Today's healthcare workforce expects and deserves a comprehensive employee experience that aligns with the organizational brand and culture that drew them to join the team in the first place.

The reality is, organizations
don't inspire employees,
PEOPLE DO!

Today’s leader realizes that most problems in organizations lie in the absence of real, heartfelt communication, and understands the need to facilitate dialogue, “manage” conversations with employees and teams, and lead with heart. Heart First leadership is about championing empathy, humanity and authenticity to build stronger, trusting relationships that improve engagement, retention and revenue. Studies show that:



¹LeadershipIQ study, 2017
²Forbes Catalyst Survey, September 2021
³EY Consulting survey, October 2021

WHAT DO HEART FIRST LEADERS DO?

Understand the importance of self-care so they can bring their best selves to work (*managing stress, building resilience and coping skills to address change fatigue*)

- Listen intently to employees, help them prioritize what matters most
- Commit to doing the work to know their audience and balance that with the needs of the business
- Bring humanity and vulnerability to their leadership with a genuine desire to build connections
- Create a psychologically safe culture where people take risks and speak their truths
- Communicate authentically and with heart, not just their heads
- Work to become great storytellers to break through information overload and truly engage and inspire others

DO YOU REALLY UNDERSTAND YOUR EMPLOYEES?

Employees may join an organization because of its mission-driven mindset, charismatic leaders, benefits, or top-notch training, but how long they stay and how productive they are is also directly related to their *boss*.

Too often, managers view communication as a “to do” they cross off a list, a tactic for which the communication department is solely responsible, or a skill to be developed (similar to becoming a better presenter or listener). But communication is a learned skill—one that traditionally hasn’t been emphasized in organizations—and one that takes practice and planning.



THINK OF IT THIS WAY:

A pharmaceutical company doesn’t just decide one day that it’s going to put a new drug on the market and then “wing it.” It’s planned, tested and carefully orchestrated to ensure approval and a positive response. And, even then, there’s usually a lot of planning that goes into how the drug will be marketed.

The result is that internal communication today needs to involve employees in two-way dialogue—it’s no longer enough to just “distribute” information. The key to effectively communicating with employees through two-way dialogue starts with answering the key questions that all employees have. Whether employees ask them or not, there are several key questions on their minds—what we call *The Eight Key Questions™*.

These questions are a lot like Maslow’s hierarchy of needs—which purports that only after a person has fulfilled certain levels of needs can they begin to move to more complex levels of thought. Employees’ core questions are “me”-focused: questions that help them understand what’s happening around them and what it means to them specifically.

When the me-focused questions are answered, then employees can look beyond themselves and become interested in the “we”-focused questions. It’s important to remember that these are questions that employees think about, and perhaps ask, every day—whether they are new to the organization or veterans. When change happens—as it often does in today’s fast-paced healthcare environment—employees immediately go back to the me-focused questions.



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I AM YOUR EMPLOYEE

{WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE MINDSET OF EMPLOYEES TODAY}

- ✓ I’m not at a desk because I’m taking care of patients or customers, so **I don’t always see** the messages you send
- ✓ I don’t always have time to read up on what’s going on when **I’m focused on trying to save lives**
- ✓ **I’m most influenced** (and want to hear from) my manager and senior leaders
- ✓ If you want me to change my behavior, **I must trust** the person telling me to do it
- ✓ I’m more likely to pay attention if you make the impact **on me** clear and couch communication in a relevant style
- ✓ I appreciate repetition over time and **having a choice** of media when being addressed
- ✓ I’ll pay more attention if I’ve had a chance to provide input **up front**
- ✓ If I see the leaders in my organization **behaving how they want me to behave**, I’m more likely to pay attention

KNOWING WHEN COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL



ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

It's important to tell employees what's going to be different and what **they** need to do differently as a result of incoming change(s):

- When leaders need to take specific action to accelerate business results (e.g., top-line growth, operational, profits)
- A change in organizational structure (e.g., merger, acquisition, downsizing or reductions in force, site closure)
- New policies implemented in alignment with local or national public health guidelines, such as masking during the pandemic or vaccine mandates
- Survey results (including patient satisfaction) are not where they need to be
- Setbacks in product/pipeline development or regulatory headwinds
- Need to create and dominate new markets

DRIVING BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

Internal communication is essential if you need to drive new or different behaviors—or culture change. Employees need to know what's expected of them and what they need to do differently. This can apply to a specific initiative or project, or to broader behaviors for the organization at large.

CELEBRATION

Let employees know if the organization or individuals achieve specific milestones or wins that should be recognized. This keeps them interested, motivated and engaged.

THE BIG “OOPS”



{MISTAKES THAT CAN
SHUT EMPLOYEES DOWN}

- Inconsistent messages
- Talking at employees instead of with them
- “Spinning” messages vs. speaking truthfully (or delaying communication)
- Assuming employees are receiving and understanding the messages you send
- Not making information relevant and relatable
- Using language employees don't understand

HOW TO BREAK THROUGH (OR AVOID) COMMUNICATION CLUTTER

Communication at its best is about moving people to action.

Each time you prepare to communicate internally, first think about the business outcomes you want to achieve. Then, think about what you want employees to think, feel and do as a result of your communication. This will shape the messages you develop and help you choose the vehicle you use to share those messages. Employees need a chance to grasp an issue or topic—it needs to be on their radar—before they'll have an emotional response to it (that's the feel). And when employees feel strongly about a topic, they are much more likely to take action on it (that's the do). Without a call to action, it's just information.

It's also important to remember that repetition is critical to ensuring your audience received the message and understands what's expected of them. When employees hear the same message from their supervisor (their preferred source), the CEO, through the company Intranet or through the grapevine, they're more likely to take notice, believe it and, most importantly, act on it.

BREAKING THROUGH...

Plan all communication using a strategic approach that focuses on:



REMEMBER

EVERYTHING YOU DO COMMUNICATES,
YOU CAN'T NOT COMMUNICATE

FOCUS

on messages—people only remember three to five headlines, so make them count

CREATE

a platform with core messages to focus on and reinforce what's most important

PRIORITIZE

and streamline messages and the channels used to communicate them

ROLE MODEL

the action and behaviors you want to see from others

FIVE STEPS TO MEANINGFUL INTERNAL COMMUNICATION



ARTICULATE GOALS, VISION AND MISSION

You need to understand your desired outcome in the context of the organization's goals, vision and mission. This ensures that from the beginning you are thinking big picture: What are the outcomes you want to achieve, how do they tie to business priorities, and how do you need to shape your messaging to achieve those goals?

In the healthcare industry, perhaps more than any other, a strong articulation of the company mission can be a retaining force for employees even through the most turbulent times.

1



MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Develop key messages that communicate with, and speak to, the right audiences. Messages need to be clear, credible and resonate with your various constituencies.

A critical part of the message development process is understanding where your audience is coming from so you can make your messages powerfully meaningful to them. That's where research comes in. What data do you need to best understand your diverse audience sectors?

2



COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Building on the core messaging you have identified and developed, your next step is to create a plan that articulates the approach for achieving the goals identified in Step One through communication.

As part of this plan, you must:

- Identify the key audiences you need to reach
- Decide on the best vehicles for communicating the message (e.g., in-person meeting, newsletter article, letter from the president)
- Select the appropriate timing

3



IMPLEMENT

Once you reach the implementation phase of your communication plan, it's then up to you to put the ball into play and to begin communicating with employees. Using your established plan as a guide, you should use the various communications tools available to reach your employees with your powerful message where it will have the most meaning to them. This will ultimately drive the outcomes you seek.

4



EVALUATE

Start working on Step Five as you are also undertaking Step Four. This is the evaluation phase. This last step is critical in ensuring that you drive the desired behaviors or actions in employees. If you learn that this is not the case, step back and re-evaluate your plan.

It's important to be able to correct your course along the way if you find that something isn't working as you had anticipated or intended. At its core, Step Five is about assessing whether or not your communication initiatives have helped you achieve the desired outcomes you identified in Step One.

5

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

It's often said that what gets measured gets done. Although it may feel overwhelming or even impossible to measure the value of something as intangible as communication, the fact is there are definitive metrics by which you **can** measure success.



ONE ACCURATE
MEASUREMENT IS
WORTH A THOUSAND
EXPERT OPINIONS.

GRACE MURRAY HOPPER | Computer Pioneer

And the reward of understanding the impact of any strategic internal messaging plan is well worth the effort! Measurement helps create credibility for communication among an organization's employees and its leaders, and it ensures that communication has a place at the table in any strategic business discussion.

The key to successfully measuring communication is to focus metrics on the outcome (the action you seek), not the output (how you communicate). Since the goal of internal communication is to drive action and behaviors, it's not enough to know that a message was distributed to employees. Rather, measurement needs to focus on whether the message was received, heard and acted upon.

Measurement doesn't have to be complicated, time consuming or expensive. But it is important to remember that when measuring the impact and effectiveness of communication, both qualitative and quantitative results are ideal.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR MEASUREMENT

- Keep strategies simple and doable (*or they won't get done*)
- Use measurement strategies that already work for the organization
- Use measurement strategies that can live on after the initial metrics are complete
- Ensure senior management will champion strategies
- Ensure staff who participate in the evaluation process feel comfortable being candid, see the results, and have the tools to apply the feedback and/or results



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION MEASUREMENT TECHNIQUES



BUILDING COMMUNICATION METRICS INTO EXISTING MEASUREMENT VEHICLES

This enables you to connect to specific business and performance metrics, which helps drive accountability. For example, if your organization conducts an annual employee commitment survey, consider integrating a section (or at least several questions) about internal communication or specific tactics. Better yet, conduct a Communications Climate Index™ (an assessment that measures the specific cause-and-effect relationships affecting performance and engagement) to gauge your organization's health in relation to critical internal communication drivers.



GATHERING INSIGHTS THROUGH EXISTING BUSINESS METRICS

Pinpoint the level of employee understanding and action around key organizational priorities. How? Connect existing metrics to the outcomes you seek to accomplish through communication and establish a correlation to overall business results.



CONDUCTING A PULSE SURVEY

Identify a representative sample of your target audience and reach out to them for feedback on communications directed at them. Ask the survey participants a few questions to get a "pulse" for the impact of a communication. This can be done via conference call, email or an Intranet posting.



CREATING A FOCUS GROUP

Gather employees to participate in an interactive discussion in which you ask specific questions about communications tactics. This can be done informally or in a more formal setting, depending on your organization's culture.



FORMING AN INFORMAL EMPLOYEE ADVISORY BOARD

Want to know how employees really feel about existing and new communication plans and strategies? Ask them. Gather a group of employees who can offer regular feedback and who can help measure success.



OVER-SURVEYED EMPLOYEES!

Measuring the impact of communication isn't always enough. Employees can come to feel "over-surveyed," and because they aren't always conscious or cognizant of results or action, the response rate and nature can be inaccurate. Use high-level assessment to measure where you and your employees are in relation to goals and strategies and use the information to take action and drive results.

UNACCOUNTABLE LEADERS!

At the end of the day, most people only do what they are accountable for because their reputations and/or jobs are on the line. Leaders need to know the importance of their roles as leader communicators and be held accountable. Ideally, communication should be a part of a leader's individual performance metrics so that communication is incorporated as a natural part of the organization and progress can be tracked.

DOING NOTHING WITH RESULTS!

Why did you bother to ask for feedback, gather employees, conduct surveys, and more if you aren't going to do anything with the results?! When leaders fail to act on valuable information that could help advance their goals, they not only squander an opportunity, but they also hurt their credibility and break down hard-won employee trust.

REMEMBER THE BOTTOM LINE WE TALKED ABOUT AT THE VERY BEGINNING?

We've come full circle. Whether you are just beginning to think about the importance of internal communication, you are in the midst of an existing plan, or you're measuring the success of your overall strategy, remember that this is all about the bottom line.

At its core, communication is an instrument of strategy as well as a strategy in itself.

It's an instrument of strategy because it helps you share your mission, vision and values with employees. It's a strategy because it will help you achieve specific goals. It creates a sense of community and trust with employees, creating a line of sight for them and engaging them to make the business successful.





SO WHAT'S THE PAYOFF?

Employees understand the big picture *(and how they fit in)*

They feel valued, listened to, and like an important part of the team and the organization.

Employees are more productive and there is meaning to their work

As a result, they contribute more and feel better about their contribution and the organization, so they stay on the job and help move the business forward.

Better, Heart First leaders

Communication is about championing empathy, humanity and authenticity to build stronger, trusting relationships, which improve engagement, retention, and business results. When you lead with heart, you help people be their

best selves, bring a greater sense of purpose and meaning to every member of your team, and inspire them to achieve so much more for themselves and their organizations.

Vigilant managers who have an ear to the ground

For organizations to attract, create and retain an engaged workforce, they must be committed for the long haul. Building trust and credibility to keep employees engaged requires effort, but it's worth it. It takes only seconds to lose employee connection and interest.

A culture of communication

Just like a patient's journey to health and wellness, the employee engagement journey is a continuous one. Communication is not an "event." It is a continuing process. You must work every

day to ask the right questions, answer others appropriately, and communicate openly and honestly with employees. When they see you making that extra effort, they'll do the same. By moving away from lip service and toward positive action, you drive positive results.

Organizations that understand, prioritize and constantly strive to achieve better internal communication are a breed apart. They achieve trust and credibility. They enable employees to do their jobs better. They create a constructive workplace that encourages growth and a common sense of purpose. From all this, there can only be one result: Higher levels of performance.

Whether your organizational focus lies in patient care or research and development, implementation of an effective, strategic internal communication program most certainly is a driving factor in the overall health of your organization, and in turn, the lives of those you serve.

WE HAVE WORKED WITH MANY LEADING HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS AND COMPANIES TO IMPROVE HOW THEY COMMUNICATE (AND ENGAGE) WITH EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING:



Helping a CEO at a health benefits organization increase communication effectiveness scores by double-digit percentages.



Measuring the effectiveness of a health agency's internal communications and developing an actionable improvement plan.



Supporting integration efforts for several health systems going through mergers to unify the workforce around a common culture.



Assessing internal communication channels of a health system and establishing an improvement plan.



Communication skill-building for pharmaceutical sales representatives to optimize physician calls and lunch-and-learn sessions.



Activating leaders to inform and inspire their teams to deliver on organizational strategies.



Planning senior leader retreats to align teams on strategy and cultivate high performance leadership teams.



Articulating leader and organizational messages to connect employees to what matters most, drive performance and manage change.

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David helps leaders drive productivity and get the results they want through authentic and courageous leadership and communication. He's a sought-after speaker, advisor to Fortune 500 leaders and member of the Forbes Communication Council. A four-time author, his latest award-winning book, **"Heart First: Lasting Leader Lessons from a Year that Changed Everything,"** features interviews with 30+ leaders inside a variety of organizations, each of whom share extraordinarily candid insights and unique leadership lessons. His leader**communicator**™ blog is ranked the #1 blog on communication

by Feedspot six years in a row. David is Founder & CEO of The Grossman Group, an award-winning Chicago-based strategic leadership development and internal communications consultancy. The Grossman Group's clients include AbbVie, Allstate, Form Technologies, Kaiser Permanente, Lockheed Martin, Novartis Gene Therapies, Southern New Hampshire University, and more. David is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), an MBTI® Certified Practitioner, a Prosci Certified Change Practitioner and taught graduate-level internal communications at Columbia University in NYC.

David has been featured in:

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

NBC NIGHTLY NEWS

TODAY

Chicago Tribune

FAST COMPANY

Los Angeles Times

The Grossman Group is proud to be a Diverse Supplier through the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce since 2008.