



# How to perform an Internal Communication Audit

The value an Internal Communication Audit can bring to your organisation

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Championing the importance of two-way symmetric communication, Anthony is passionate about all things Internal Communication and advocates best practice strategic communication within organisations of all sizes and sectors. He holds a Master's in Internal Communication Management from Solent University, is an active member of the Institute of Internal Communication and a regular columnist in Strategic Magazine.



# 1

## IMPACT ON THE BOTTOM LINE

After almost 30 years of research, there is compelling evidence that Internal Communication has a measurable impact on business performance. From strengthening core processes and functions to shaping organisational culture, decision-making and employee performance, effective internal communication also plays a critical role in helping employees understand their role, feel a sense of purpose at work, and connect their contribution to organisational success, making it a decisive factor in an organisation's success or failure.



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Getting Internal Communication right needs to be mission-critical for any organisation, regardless of size, industry, sector, or location, because when a business gets it wrong, it can do great harm.

Poor Internal Communication depletes employee morale and reduces productivity (read profits). But what it will increase is your staff turnover and your recruitment rates to replace them, not to mention any potential reputational damage. All of these can, and will hit the bottom line, hard.

Yet, for something so critical to organisational success, there remains a lack of understanding about what Internal Communication actually involves. At its simplest, Internal Communication is the sum of all interactions and exchanges of messages between an organisation and its employees, and it is this collective experience that shapes understanding, trust and engagement. These interactions take place across a wide range of channels and formats, both online and offline, during and beyond standard working hours.



## 2

## GETTING IT RIGHT

Internal Communication involves an organisation using appropriate and purposeful methods to engage in meaningful dialogue with its employees. This requires not only sharing information but actively listening and responding. To do this effectively, organisations must understand what works, what doesn't and why, but how do Internal Communication leaders go about finding this out and, crucially, what do they do with the information?

To help, we've put together a guide for how to perform an Internal Communications Audit, which examines how effective any communication efforts are, and to help you produce actionable outputs that evaluate whether an existing Internal Communication strategy is delivering the goods.

# 3

## GETTING CLARITY

Businesses invest significant time and effort in auditing their finances, analysing their supply chains and making sure stock levels are monitored to ensure that their budgets are accurate and can be measured - yet few will apply the same logic to Internal Communication strategies.

Measurement of internal communications is usually left to the Communications Team, Marketing, HR, or even Governance and Administration teams to manage Internal Communication activity the best way they see fit.

To give you clarity, an Internal Communication audit identifies areas that are working well and where improvements can be made. It also helps to discover areas where success can be celebrated.



Without understanding how a business communicates and the impact it is having, leaders in the business at all levels won't be able to understand what's working and what's not.



## 4

## START WITH THE 'WHY?'

First and foremost, it is essential to be clear about why you are undertaking an Internal Communication audit. Without a defined purpose, audits risk becoming a purely tactical exercise rather than a strategic tool for improvement. An effective audit should examine existing communication activity and assess whether it is aligned with business strategy and delivering the intended impact on employees and the organisation.

Where an activity, channel or process is not adding value or supporting strategic objectives, an Internal Communication audit provides the evidence needed to decide whether it should continue, be refined or be stopped altogether. This clarity enables organisations to focus effort and resources where it will have the greatest impact.

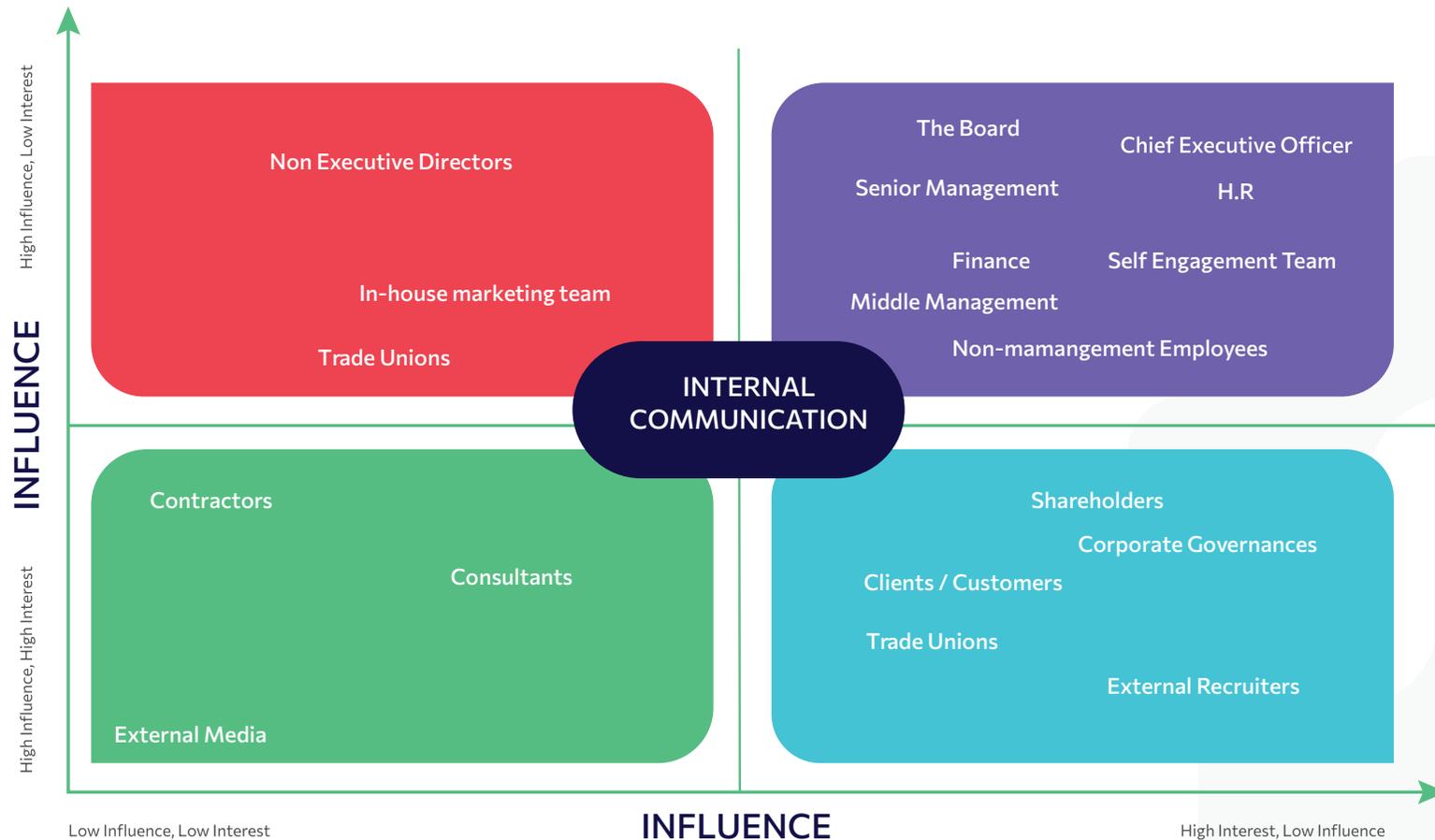
A clearly articulated why also strengthens your ability to secure senior-level buy-in. This is critical, as a robust and meaningful audit requires investment of time, resource and leadership commitment to ensure that findings are acted upon and lead to measurable improvement.



# 5

## IDENTIFY INFLUENCE AND INTEREST

Stakeholder mapping will help you identify the influence and interest that internal, and in some cases external stakeholders, have on your Internal Communication activity. By categorising stakeholders based on their influence and interest, you are able to identify key stakeholders and business areas, as well as channels to focus on during the audit.



## 6

# WHAT SHOULD YOUR AUDIT INCLUDE?

As much meaningful data as possible. This means gathering both qualitative and quantitative data to build a clear and accurate picture of how Internal Communication operates within your organisation and the impact it is having on employees and the business.

Quantitative data such as survey results, intranet analytics, data from other digital communication tools or attendance figures at internal events provides a strong starting point. It offers a baseline for measurement, supports benchmarking over time and helps demonstrate where Internal Communication is and is not having the intended impact.

However, quantitative data on its own only tells you what is happening. To understand the impact, you must interrogate the data to uncover what it actually means. For example, if 50% of employees open an email containing a monthly digital newsletter and 35% click through to read it, what does that tell you about relevance, understanding or value?

A less mature approach may view this as successful communication simply because information has been transmitted. In reality, transmission alone does not demonstrate impact or influence behaviour.



Data without meaning or interpretation risks becoming little more than vanity metrics for a presentation. Worse still, it may lead to misguided recommendations and actions that reduce the effectiveness and impact of your Internal Communication.

It is important to keep returning to the why. This is where qualitative data becomes the gateway to meaningful Internal Communication action and impact.

Qualitative data can be gathered through workshop feedback, staff interviews, face-to-face meetings, interactions with management, exit interviews and questions raised during team events. These approaches allow employees to share their experiences, perspectives and concerns in their own words.

This insight provides essential context behind the quantitative data and allows you to explore specific issues in greater depth. Returning to the digital newsletter example, if 50% of employees open the email and 35% click through to read the newsletter, qualitative insight enables you to understand why the remaining employees choose not to engage.

By exploring these reasons, you create opportunities to improve relevance, clarity and value. You also demonstrate that employee feedback is being listened to and acted upon, reinforcing trust and practising two-way symmetrical communication.





## 7

## WHO SHOULD UNDERTAKE THE AUDIT?

Agreeing on this at the outset is critical to delivering an ethically sound audit that will include candid feedback grounded in data to make a real difference within an organisation.

The most appropriate department would be the existing Internal Communications resource. Typically, this is either a standalone team (or person), or a Communications/ PR, Marketing or even HR team who provide Internal Communication support. However, if you are time poor and lack the resources or expertise to deliver the audit internally, you may want to consider outsourcing your audit.

This could prove particularly beneficial to help with impartiality, as well as facilitating focus groups and providing a fresh perspective.



## 8

# WHEN SHOULD YOU UNDERTAKE THE AUDIT?

An audit can be undertaken at any time, especially if you have not done it before. If you want to get a fresh perspective on your internal communication activity or if you are about to embark on a significant period of change, then perform an audit straight away.

### **Significant change can be:**

- Rapid organisational growth - either organic or through a merger or acquisition.
- New ways of working/ processes being implemented.
- Senior management changes.
- New technology systems for employee use.
- New projects being implemented. office moves or relocations.
- New products or services being brought to market.

Whatever the change, robust, empathetic and measurable Internal Communication is essential. All of these instances require careful communication, planning and engagement to ensure that employees are provided with the information they need via the channel most appropriate to them. Crucially, they must also be allowed to provide feedback on the change, which then should influence the correct course of action within senior leadership.



## 9

## WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN ONCE THE AUDIT IS COMPLETE?

One of the final stages of an Internal Communication audit is to communicate the results.

To maximise impact, findings should be shared upwards, downwards and across the organisation. This ensures clarity around what has been uncovered, why it matters and what will happen next as a result of the audit.

By drawing meaningful conclusions from the data collected, you will be able to make clear and strategic recommendations to relevant stakeholders. Once these recommendations are agreed, they should be translated into a practical action plan and timeline that addresses the findings, key takeaways and how performance will be measured over time.



## 10

## GETTING HELP WITH YOUR IC AUDIT

Planning and undertaking an Internal Communication audit does take time and effort, but the results will provide your business with essential information which will help to positively impact the bottom line.

ITPR can help in creating and undertaking an Internal Communications audit and then support the creation of a bespoke Internal Communications strategy that supports your business in the short and long term.

We have created an Internal Communication audit toolkit to help you to plan and deliver a meaningful and robust Internal Communication audit. If you would like to discuss how to execute your own Internal Communications Audit, how to get stakeholder buy-in, how to create, run and manage the data collection and then analyse the results, book a no obligation meeting with our Director.

## ABOUT ITPR

ITPR is a UK-based B2B technology PR consultancy that supports business growth through measurable PR campaigns to build brand awareness and drive sales lead enquiries.

Operating in the B2B Technology sector since 1990, the ITPR client portfolio consists of global enterprise software providers, large UK SME's and technology start-ups. ITPR delivers services that include content creation, message development, market research, media engagement, social media management, blogging, event support, and international media relations.

ITPR's B2B Technology PR campaigns use website analytics to measure how PR activity impacts the overall performance of a business' marketing, supporting lead generation and customer acquisition, providing measurable ROI to its clients' C-level executives.

Get in Touch. We'd love to hear from you:

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**Or book a free consultation at:**

<https://www.itpr.co.uk/book-a-free-consultation>