

What Does Good Look Like?

A Quantitative Perspective on
BEST-IN-CLASS PRACTICES IN EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

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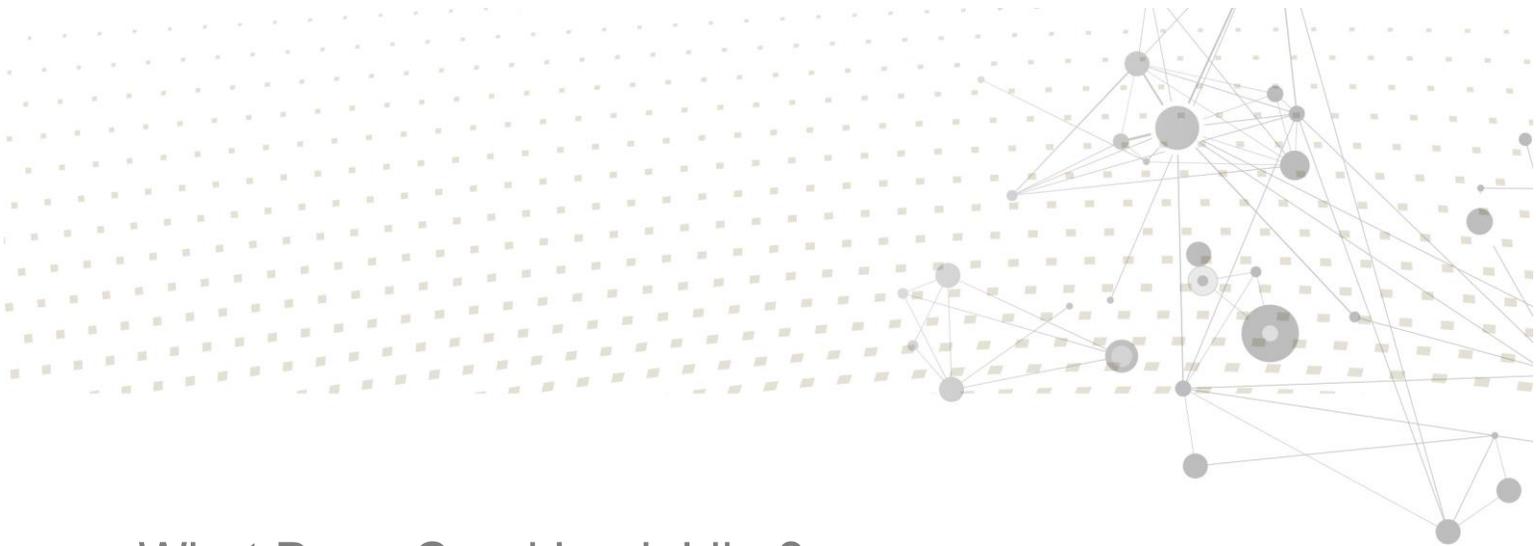
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What Does Good Look Like?

There's a story about the CEO of a growing global bank that was expanding its footprint in the Asia Pacific region. The company had launched a major change program, and its global people survey showed that employees were adrift and uncertain about the new vision and strategy, and how it would affect their work. Their leader cast a furtive brow toward the consulting team meeting with him to consider new employee engagement strategies. "What I want to know," he said, his eyes narrowing to a piercing gaze, is, 'What does good look like?' If we can discover what good looks like, we can continue the journey with greater confidence."

A few years ago, Richard Hollingham of BBC World Service wrote a wonderful article on the history of the Soviet space program. In the early days, the Russians built a three-man capsule – the Voskhod-1 – that was so cramped that the cosmonauts could not wear spacesuits. The story goes that one of the engineers warned the chief designer, Sergei Korolev, that the slightest leak of air would kill those on board. Korolev's solution was to appoint the engineer as one of the cosmonauts, figuring that this would help motivate him to make the capsule as safe as possible.



While the world of employee communication is not life or death, we all could take a lesson from the space pioneer, Korolev: Build a program that is employee-centered and airtight, making *us* the intended audience.

"What does the *audience* need?" Answering this question is what good looks like. It is one of the key questions the Institute for Public Relations' Commission on Organizational Communication posed two years ago, when it launched the first of three planned research projects – a two-part initiative setting a benchmark for best practices

our leaders make sure everyone “gets” the business objectives while driving awareness, understanding, alignment and action? If we’ve ever had it, how do we keep our seat at the table? How do we address the growing generational differences driving engagement among employees? With the dizzying array of tools and channels now available, how do we cut through the clutter to discover what really matters to employees? And how do we track and measure internal communication to show we’re making a real difference?

These were the questions posed in a two part research initiative for the first of three major research topics identified by the Institute for Public Relations’ Commission on Organizational Communication.

IN THE BEGINNING:

The Origins of Best-in-Class Practices

The first phase of this research initiative began in 2011, and involved setting a benchmark for best practices in internal communication methods and practices in global organizations. In 2012, Commission members selected 10 companies to participate in the qualitative study based on the companies’ global scope and their perceived effectiveness in internal communication. These 10 companies – GE, FedEx, Johnson & Johnson, Cargill, Chevron, Navistar, McDonald’s, IBM, Petrobras and Toyota – are often on most-admired or best-places-to-work lists, and they have sustained market leadership positions in the dynamic global market. Their internal communication programs also are often recognized for excellence, as evidenced in awards they receive and the extent to which they are profiled in conference presentations and professional publications, among other forms of recognition.

The second phase, the quantitative industry survey, commenced following the socialization of qualitative findings, allowing our research team to fully absorb the depth of the qualitative findings and to gather meaningful feedback from stakeholders in our industry to inform the survey instrument development. These two components together help amplify the utility of survey findings

The results of this combined study are enlightening. It shows the humility of internal communicators when it comes to evaluating their own efficacy and contribution to company goals. It shows a clear-- and wide – gap between what internal communicators know to be important in building efficacy, and what they are able to do at their company. It shows that the ability to put important tools, practices, behaviors and ways of thinking into place builds efficacy. It also shows the beginning signs of a desire to adopt best-in-class practices, as well as revealing what practices need better value recognition.

BACKGROUND:

Exploration

In 2011, after identifying the need for research, the Institute engaged Washington, DC-based KRC Research to conduct the research. An independent, third-party global communications research firm, KRC specializes in market research that informs strategies and fuels thought leadership that ultimately deliver meaningful insights and actionable results. The research began with in-depth interviews with senior internal communication professionals from each of the companies. The interviews were not only important in their own right, but especially for the guidance provided in developing the second phase of work – a quantitative survey of global internal communication professionals, the subject of this white paper.

Through the initial in-depth interviews, KRC Research uncovered the mechanisms, tools and techniques that world-class companies employ for addressing everyday challenges, as well as looming or real crises. It also learned how companies approach priority areas within internal communication, such as digitization, talent retention, strategic planning, diverse languages, and establishing common knowledge across the organization.

The qualitative survey revealed four factors that contributed to these internal communication teams driving business value.

1. An organizational structure that connects internal communicators with the rest of the company—up and down the chain of command;
2. An innate understanding that strong internal communication will have a positive return for the brand and the company that need not be proven at every juncture;
3. An arsenal of tools and practices for both listening and communicating a message; and
4. A strong commitment to keeping employees across the company informed in a timely fashion, often before stories break in mass media and digital channels.

The companies involved were clear that they faced challenges common to all companies, are subject to many of the same pitfalls and problems that any company could face, and will admit to room for improvement in the work they do.

Nonetheless, the in-depth interviews helped identify 22 factors –both basic and more advanced – that leaders credit for their success in effectively communicating to employees across large, multi-national, often matrixed organizations.¹

The full findings from the qualitative phase were published by the Institute for Public Relations in the Spring of 2013, in a report titled “Best-in-Class Practices in Employee Communications: Through the Lens of 10 Global Leaders,” authored by Keith Burton, Gary Grates and Colleen Learch.

¹ The Commission White Paper “BEST-IN-CLASS PRACTICES IN EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION: Through the Lens of 10 Global Leaders” (IPR, 2103) can be accessed from the Institute’s website www.instituteforpr.org.



The 22 Factors of Success

1. Periodic assessment of employee perceptions
2. Have “listening posts”
3. Having a roadmap of organizational changes and developments
4. Having an internal stakeholder map
5. Having internal social media sites/platform
6. Internal communications lead having oversight of all key internal communications in the total organization.
7. Team leaders participate in total organization strategy session
8. Having an internal communications team leader report to the leader of corporate communications, or the company
9. Keeping employees informed in a timely manner
10. Keeping employees informed of the context of current issues
11. Keeping employees apprised of organizational change and development
12. Adopting an authentic voice for all internal communications
13. Communicating impact of organizational change
14. Utilizing messaging platforms consistently
15. Having measurements/metrics to benchmark strategies
16. Gauge employee engagement
17. Utilizing line of sight managers as communicators
18. Challenging the next generation of employees to contribute to organizational growth
19. An organization should be able to clearly and concisely articulate the purpose and value of change for its future success and for employees
20. Internal communicators should be seen as business people, with an expertise in communications
21. Strong internal communications will have a positive return for the total organization that need not be proven at every juncture
22. There are shared viewpoints up and down the chain of command.

Phase Two: The Quantitative Study

Measurement: Survey Approach and Findings

This second phase of the research project was designed to put these theories to the test, quantitatively surveying a sampling of the population of companies' internal communication practitioners. The survey sought to measure perspectives of current internal communication efficacy, assess the importance of the factors that the best-in-class leaders attribute to their success, and learn the extent to which these factors are currently in use or might be implemented in the future.

The online survey was conducted late in 2013 (October 2013 thru December 2013) online among internal communication professionals who were responsible for influencing decisions within their organization or worked in a consulting capacity with organizational communication teams. The survey was approximately 15 minutes in length and included both open- and closed-ended questions.

For optimal coverage of internal communication professionals, the study utilized lists provided by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Men and women identified as leading internal communication in global organizations were randomly selected from the list and sent a personalized invitation to complete the survey. Reminders were also sent as a way to boost response rates. To supplement the core sample members of several other organizations, including The Conference Board, were also invited to participate in the study.

In all, 156 internal communicators participated in the research. A full explanation of the coverage, demographics and psychographics of the survey is included in the Appendix of this document.

Key Takeaways

The survey results tell us the following:

- Perceived efficacy in internal communications is **limited**. Respondents were reluctant to say that they contribute to the success of an organization, are as effective as they could be in evaluations, and even that they have goals that align with the total organization.
- **Most** of the "Best-in-Class Factors" identified in the first study are widely recognized as important. There is some variation in perceived importance which suggests that there's work to be done to bring light to the impact of these factors in an organization, and giving communicators a reason to see all of them as important.
- **Few** of these factors are widely implemented. The gap between perceived importance and implementation is consistent and large.

FINDING:

Perceived Effectiveness is Limited

Quantitatively, leaders are modest in evaluating their effectiveness in internal communication, revealing their perceived limitations and shortcomings. They are also careful in claiming that they contribute to the success of the total organization. About half rate their contributions to the total organization highly (top-two box)², and an additional one-third of the respondents put themselves at a more mid-point “contribute somewhat” rating. Ten percent are willing to say they do not contribute at all. Communicators are also reserved in saying how effective they are in evaluating outcomes of internal communication projects and having goals that reflect the total organization goals. This is in line with some sentiments of the interviewees in the qualitative research, who also reflected on how they could be more effective, or where they felt they fell short of goals.

² For a description of the survey methodology, see appendix 1

FINDING:

Most, But Not All Key Factors of Importance are Recognized

Tools and Resources	Organizational Structure	Practices	Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic assessment of employee perceptions • Have “listening posts” • Having a roadmap of organizational changes and developments • Having an internal stakeholder map • Having internal social media sites/platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal communications lead having oversight of all key internal communications in the total organization • Team leaders participate in total organization strategy session • Having an internal communications team leader report to the leader of corporate communications, or the company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping employees informed in a timely manner • Keeping employees informed of the context of current issues • Keeping employees apprised of organizational change and development • Adopting an authentic voice for all internal communications • Communicating impact of organizational change • Utilizing messaging platforms consistently • Having measurements/metrics to benchmark strategies • Gauge employee engagement • Utilizing line of sight managers as communicators • Challenging the next generation of employees to contribute to organizational growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An organization should be able to clearly and concisely articulate the purpose and value of change for its future success and for employees • Internal communicators should be seen as business people, with an expertise in communications • Strong internal communications will have a positive return for the total organization that need not be proven at every juncture • There are shared viewpoints up and down the chain of command about the total organization and the way to communicate
Color coded yellow	Color coded blue	Color coded green	Color coded orange

Factors of Importance. Of the factors of importance measured, nearly all surveyed find 13 of the factors important, mainly around what we would consider basics: timely and comprehensive communications to employees about issues and organizational change with a consistent and authentic voice across consistent platforms. Employee perceptions should be monitored, and internal communication leaders should be plugged into all levels of the chain of command. Included in this group are the following:

1. Keeping employees informed in a timely manner
2. Keeping employees informed of the context of current issues
3. Periodic assessments of employee perceptions
4. Keeping employees apprised of organizational change and development
5. Adopting an authentic voice for all internal communications
6. Utilizing messaging platforms consistently
7. Having oversight on all communications tasks and people
8. Communicating impact of organizational change
9. Communications leaders participate in strategy sessions for the company
10. Gauge employee engagement
11. Having an internal communications team leader report to overall corporate or communications leader
12. Have “listening posts”
13. Measurement to benchmark strategies

Five of the 13 factors feel more strategic and perhaps slightly more innovative, presenting a new way of thinking and doing for internal communication. However the importance of these factors is not recognized as widely. While these are factors that were identified as best-in-class enablers, the broader audience of internal communication respondents have not yet made the connection between the action and the implication. They do not yet see how these can contribute to internal communication effectiveness in the same way that they see other communications tactics. Included are the following:

1. Utilizing line of sight managers as communicators
2. Having a roadmap of organizational changes and developments
3. Challenging the next generation of employees to contribute to organizational growth
4. Having an internal stakeholder map
5. Having internal social media sites/platform

Of the 22 Best-in-Class Factors, few were in place at more than 75 percent of respondents’ companies – even those factors that are more widely seen as important. Most, though not all, say that their organization keeps

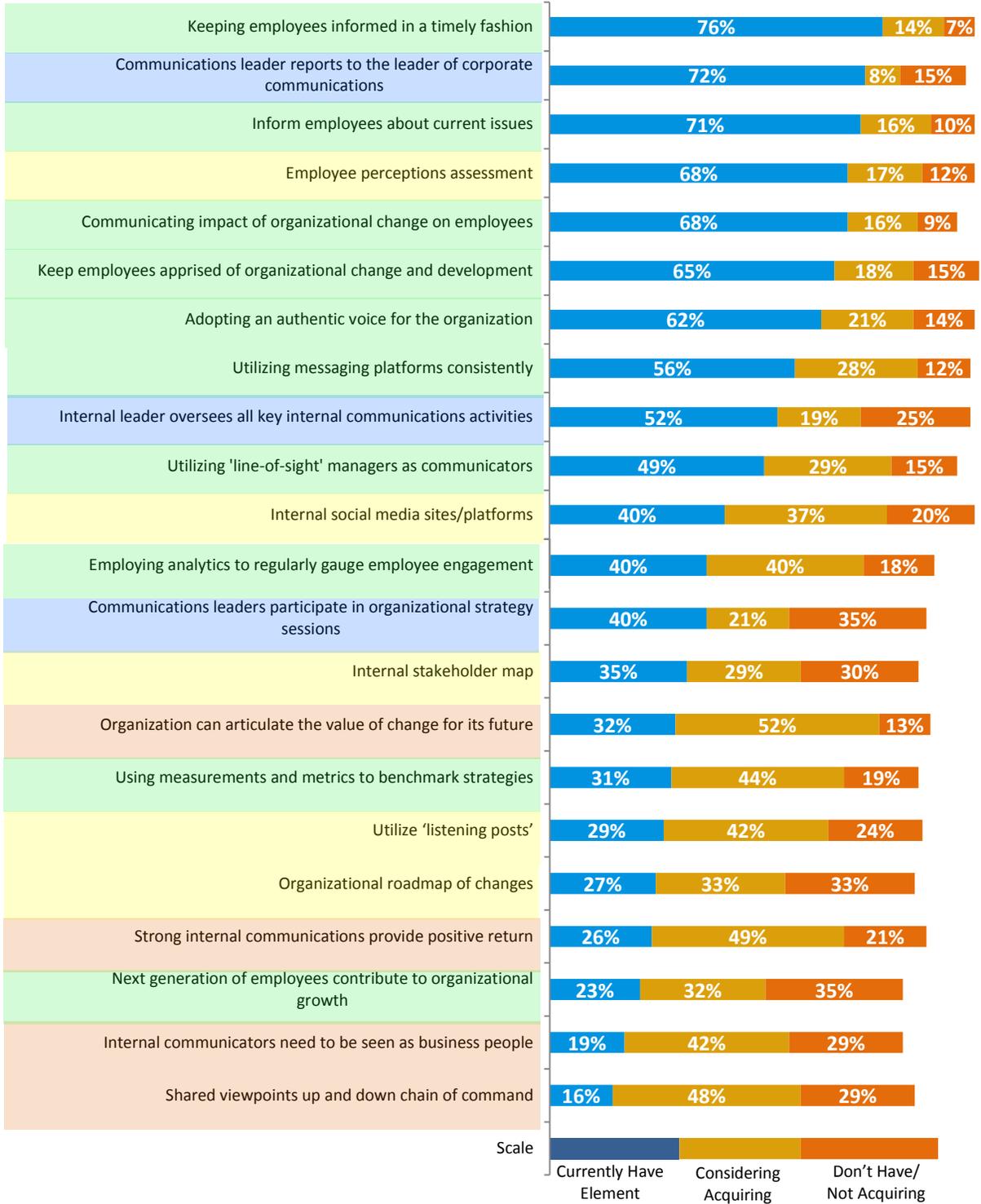
employees informed in a timely manner, and keeps employees informed of the issues at hand. Most, but not all, have a structure in place where the head of internal communication reports to the corporate communications leader. This suggests that even for the most important areas, getting the basics in order is still a challenge for some.

Fewer respondents shared that they are regularly assessing employee perceptions; keeping employees apprised of and communicating the impact of organizational change and development; adopting an authentic voice; utilizing consistent messaging platforms; or having oversight of communication tasks and people. Many of these can also be perceived as basics (regularly assessing perceptions, informing employees of organizational change), and between 50 percent to 70 percent are currently doing them.

For the most part, only a small portion of internal communicators who aren't currently leveraging these factors think that they will in future. Few see their organization adopting an authentic voice, having more oversight of communication or utilizing consistent platforms. This suggests that there's work to be done to more clearly show the value of these practices to an organization, and/or how their organization can adopt these practices. Even less (between 30 percent and 50 percent) are embarking on the more strategic, forward-thinking practices that our best-in-class communicators identified. The importance of these factors was not as readily recognized, and only a small portion of those who aren't already doing them plan to start in the future.

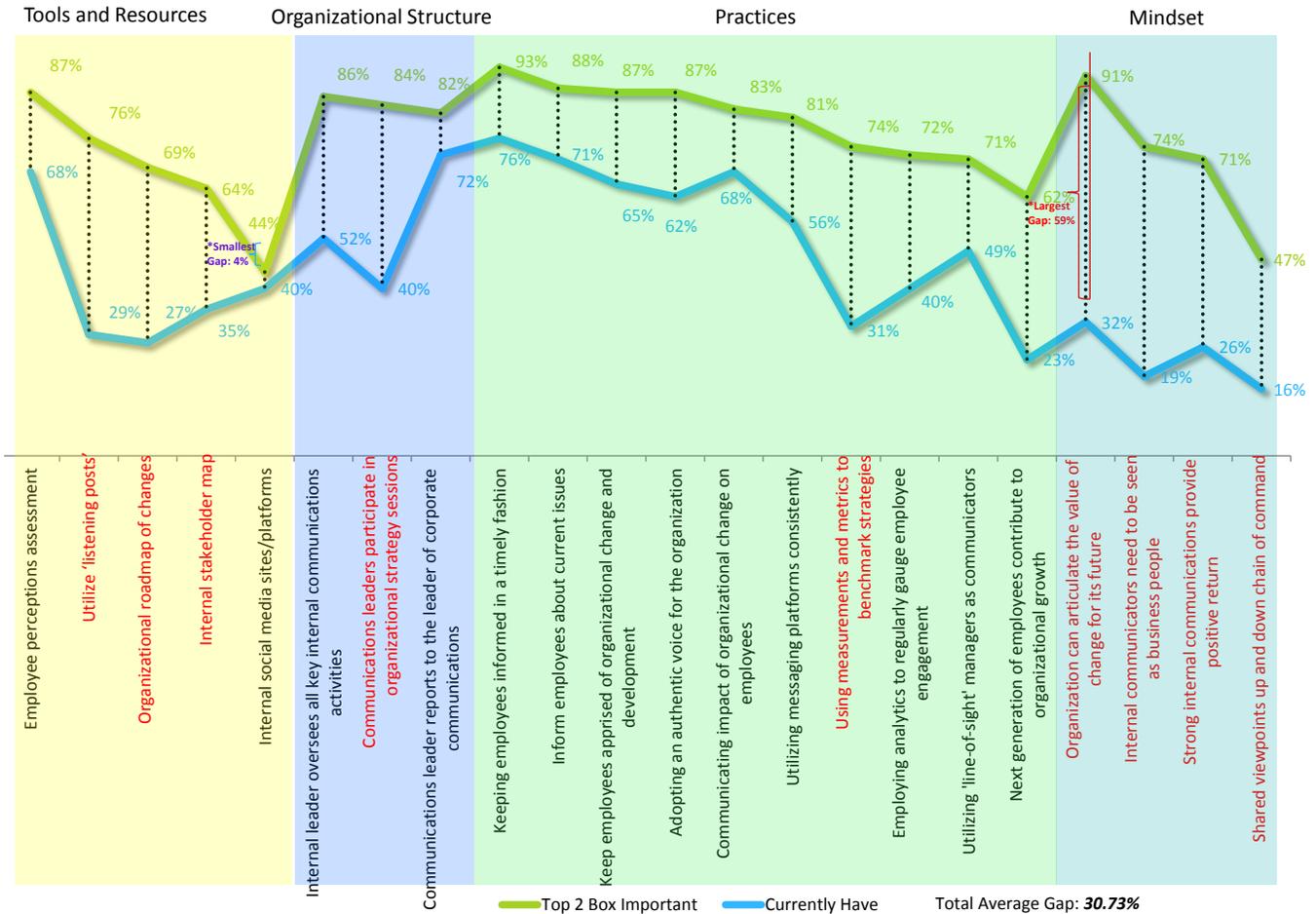
Possession

(% each statement is met)



FINDING: The Behavior Gap

Gap Analysis: Importance vs. Possession

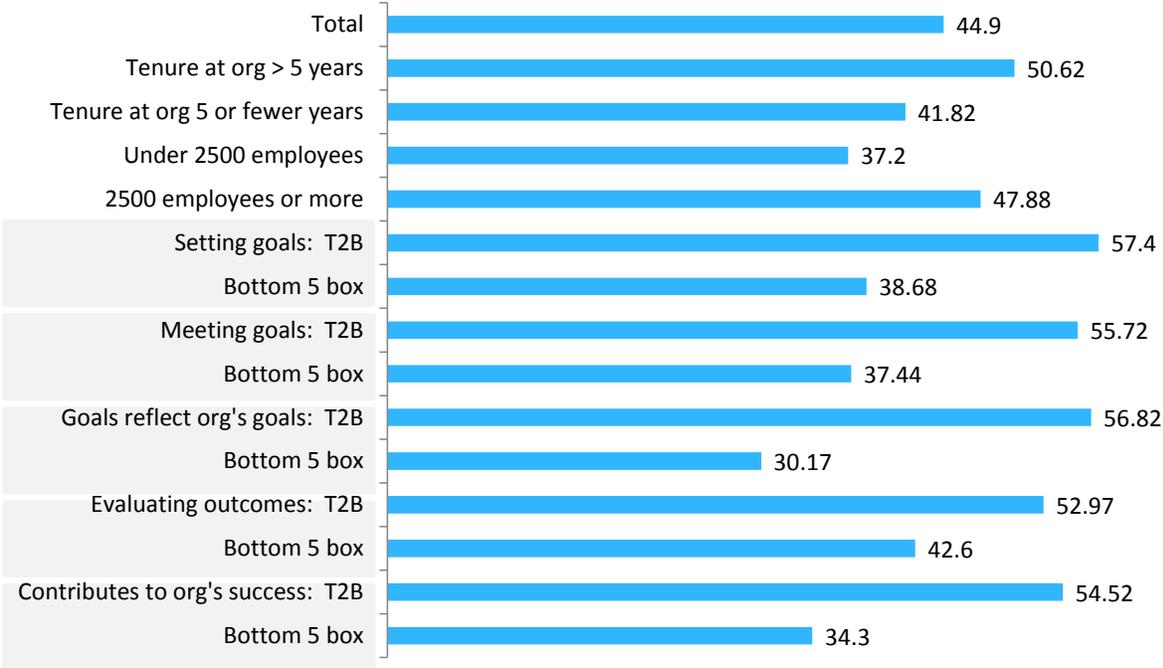


Indexing Current Behaviors

To better understand the adoption and effect of best-in-class behaviors, we indexed current behaviors for the 22 items on four dimensions: mindset, structure, practices and tools. The index is based upon a 100-point scale. The average index score is 44.9, falling below the mid-point of the index. This suggests that less than half of our internal communication respondents are demonstrating the 22 behaviors that characterize the best-in-class communicators interviewed during the qualitative phase of this project. Longer tenured communications leaders and leaders at larger companies tend to score higher on the index.

Two specific factors – perceived effectiveness in goal-setting and contributing to the organization’s success – drive a bigger difference in index scores. Organizations that set goals score higher, as do those who meet goals and whose goals reflect the organization’s goals. Those that evaluate outcomes also score higher, as do those that believe they contribute to the organization’s success. In fact, these attributes are the best predictors of a higher index score, as well as common characteristics of higher-scoring individuals. Higher-scoring individuals also describe their team as more effective in contributing to the success of the total organization, reflecting goals of total organization, setting and meeting goals. This validates what we learned from our interviews with best-in-class communicators: *these 22 factors really do help an organization be effective in internal communication.* However, while our best-in-class professionals have told us just how essential these 22 factors are for effective internal communication, our larger group of respondents have not yet arrived at those beliefs.

Factors of Importance Behavior Index (0-100 scale)



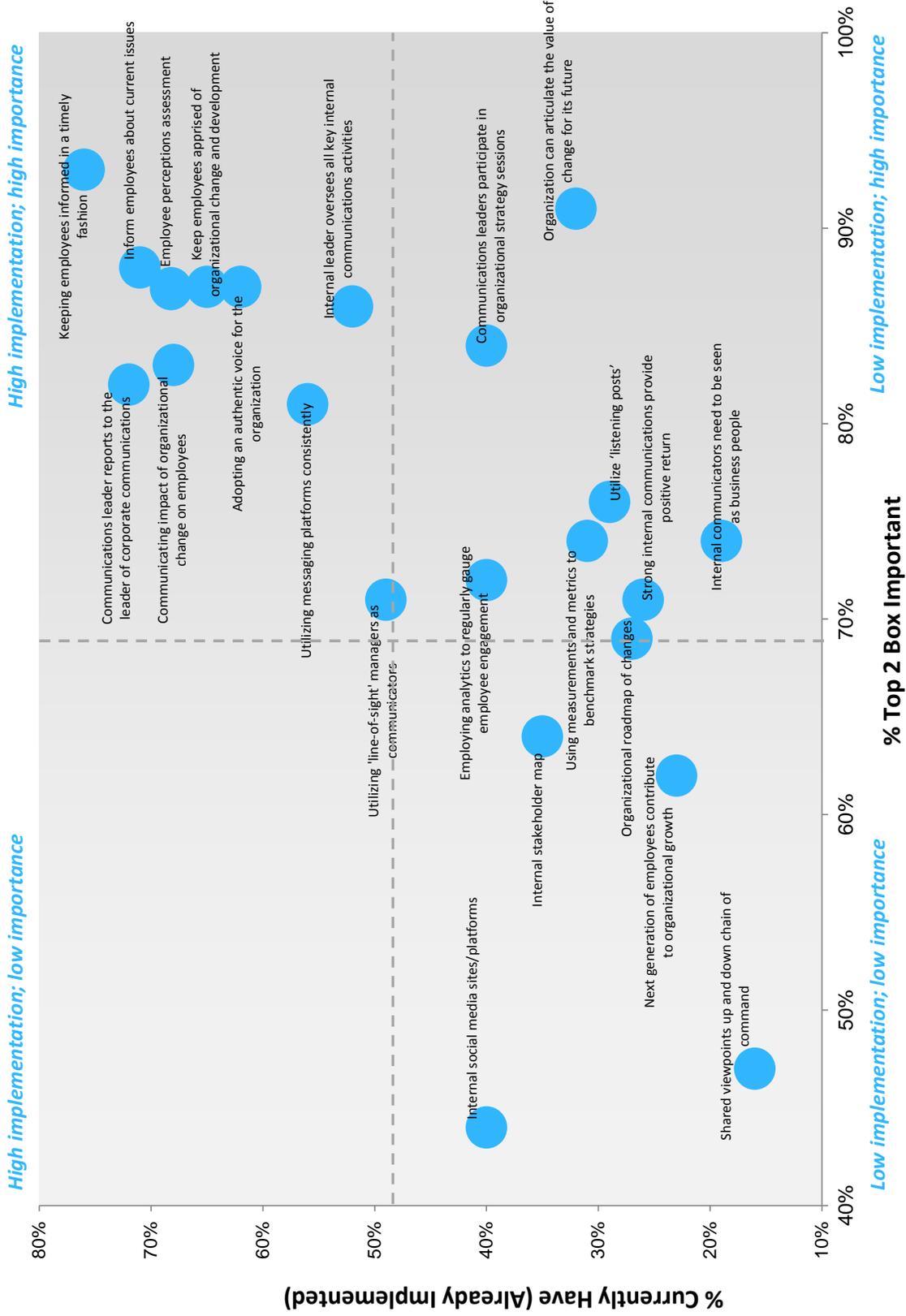
Perceptual Map: Perceived Importance versus Actions

There's a mostly linear relationship between perceived importance of our factors, and tendency to practice these factors. Those appearing as most important are more widely practiced; however, there still is a big gap between those who see the factor as important and those currently doing it, indicating the theory is not matched in practice. Further, there are some highly important factors that are not incorporated into the workplace. This mapping also clearly shows that true importance of some of these factors is not yet recognized.

Observations fall into three quadrants on this perceptual map:

- a) **Low Implementation, Low Importance:** These are factors where leaders have not yet found their true importance, and have not yet implemented the practice.
- b) **High implementation, High Importance:** These are factors where implementation and importance are highest, but importance still outweighs usage.
- c) **Low Implementation, High Importance:** These are the factors where implementation is far below a generally high-recognized importance.

Perceptual Map (Importance vs. Behavior)



FINDING:

Mindset does not match behavior.

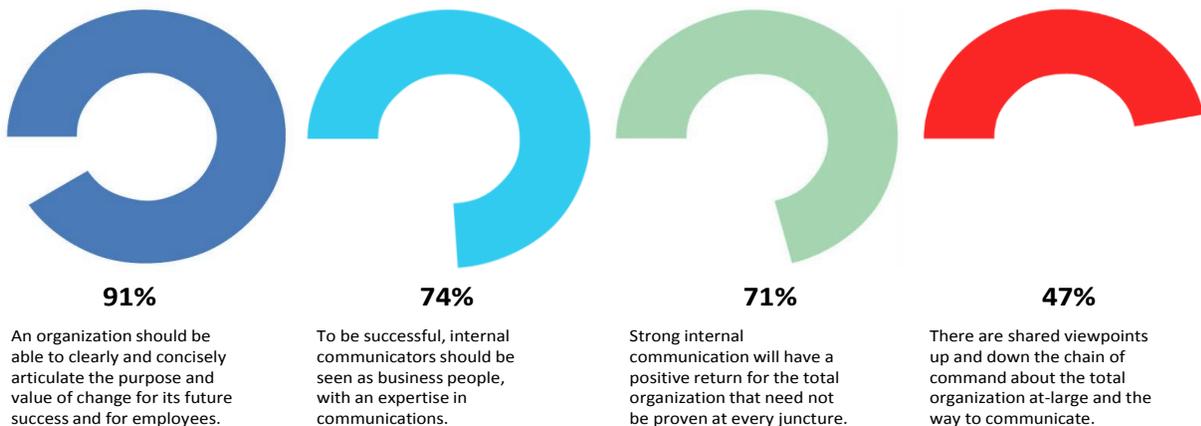
Best-in-Class Mindset

During the in-depth interviews, best-in-class communicators emphasized just how important the corporate mindset is for success in communicating throughout large, global and often matrixed companies. As we outlined earlier, they felt that an organization should be able to clearly and concisely articulate the purpose and value of change for its future success and for employees; internal communicators should be seen as business people, with an expertise in communications; that strong internal communications has a positive return for the total organization that need not be proven at every juncture; and that there are shared viewpoints up and down the chain of command about the total organization and the way to communicate.

Our quantitative survey shows that while nearly all are on board with the importance of clearly and concisely articulating the purpose and value of change for future success and for employees, few practice in this manner. Only a third of respondents say that their organization can clearly and concisely articulate its purpose and value. Twenty-five percent of respondents say that their company implicitly believes that the value of internal communications need not be proven at every juncture, and less than that say internal communicators are seen as business people in their organization. Fewer than 1-in-4 say that there are currently shared viewpoints about how to communicate across the organization.

Mindset

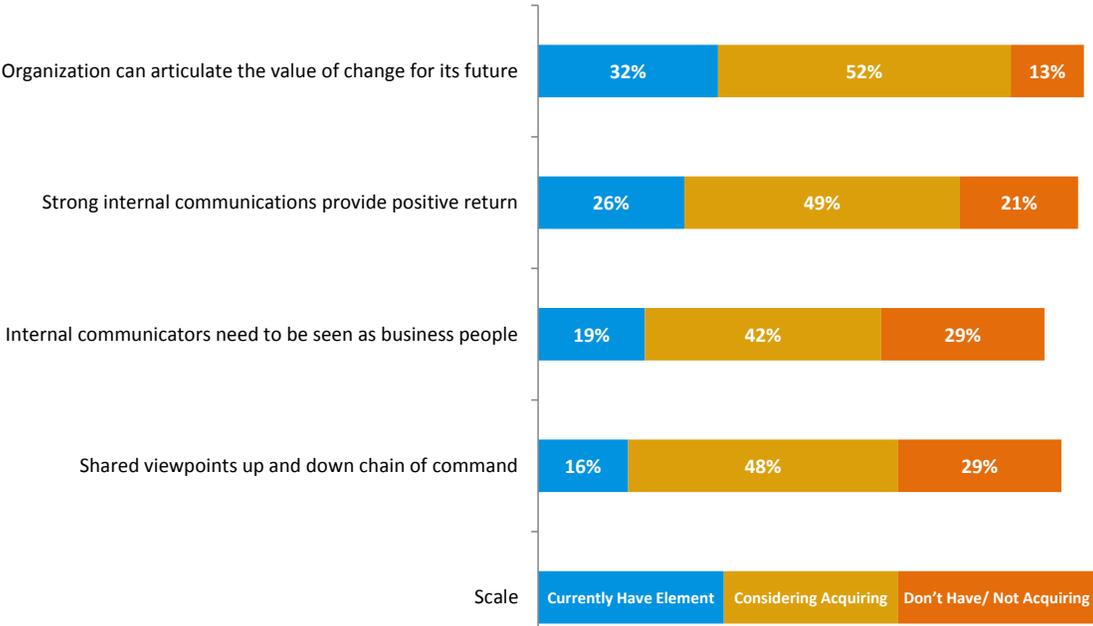
(% finding each belief to be of high importance (top two box))



FINDING:

Emerging Tools and Resources are Appreciated but Usage is Limited

Mindset



Best-in-Class Tools and Resources

Critical tools and resources are used for effective communicating in great companies, according to our best-in-class communicators. Included are:

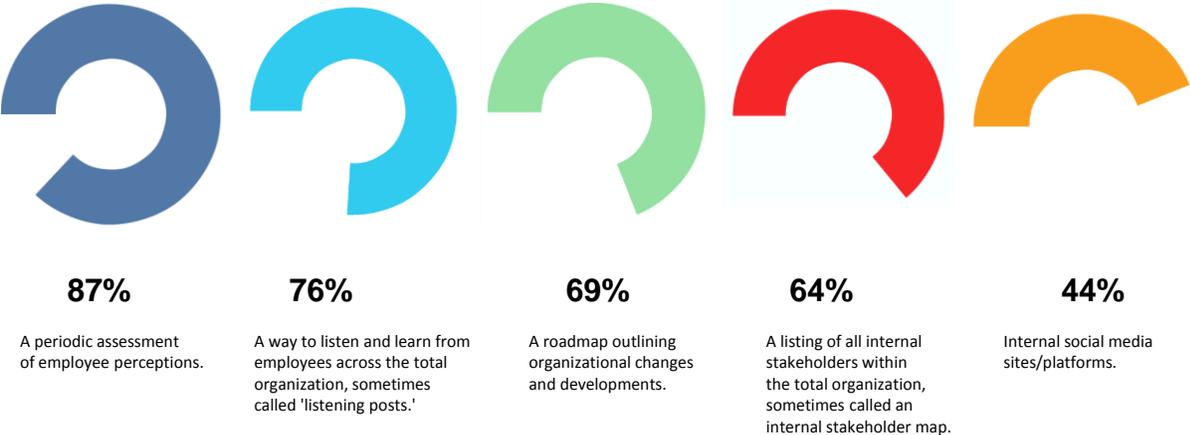
- A periodic assessment of employee perceptions;
- A way to listen and learn from employees across the total organization (listening posts);
- A roadmap outlining organizational changes and developments;
- A listing of internal stakeholders within the total organization; and
- Internal social media sites/platforms.

Most internal communication leaders surveyed agree that a periodic assessment of employees and listening posts are important. Many also agree that a roadmap outlining organizational changes and developments matter. Fewer see the importance behind stakeholder mapping and far fewer have yet to feel that internal social media outlets are important.

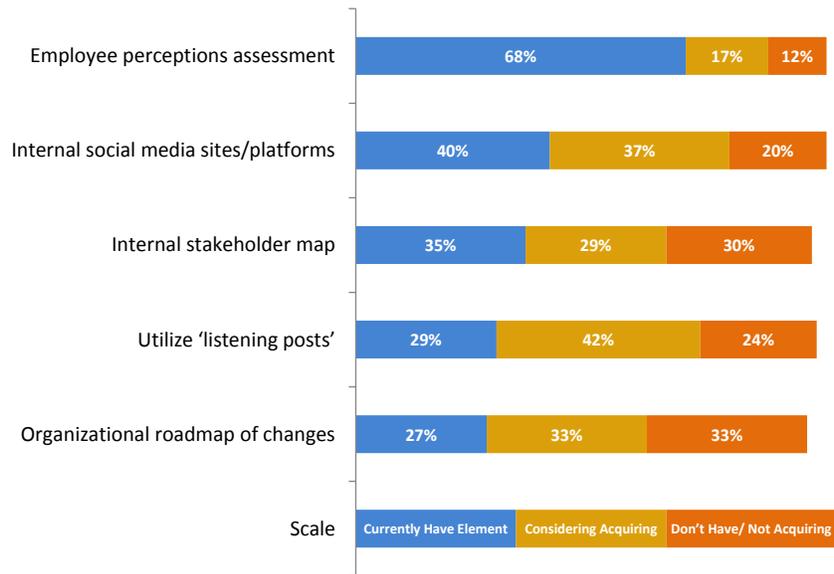
With the exception of assessments to gauge employee perceptions, use of these tools and resources are also rare. Four-in-10 have internal social media sites. Only about a third of respondents have a stakeholder map or listening posts. Fewer have a roadmap outlining organizational changes. There also seems to be limited intentions to acquire these tools and resources. While 4-in-10 are looking toward introducing listening posts or social media outlets, one-third or less think that a roadmap or a stakeholder map will be in their future.

Tools and Resources

(% finding each belief to be of high importance (top two box))



Tools and Resources



Best-in-Class Organizational Structure

Where internal communication sits within an organization’s structure, and the extent to which it is networked in to key corporate communications officers as well as corporate decisions-makers, are critical issues, according to best-in-class communicators. It’s the structure that ensures that the function and internal communicators have a “voice,” as well as the ability to disseminate important information throughout the company. We learned the three important structural factors include:

1. Team leaders participate in total organization strategy sessions;
2. Having an internal communications team leader report to the leader of corporate communications; and
3. Internal communications has oversight of all key internal communications in the total organization.

Our survey of internal communication respondents helped validate these beliefs, as the vast majority (more than 8-in-10) agrees that these are important or very important. However, outside of internal communication reporting to the leader of corporate communications, these structural components are not common practice. Only half have oversight of all key internal communications departments, and 4-in-10 participate in total organization strategy sessions.

Organizational Structure

(% finding each belief to be of high importance (top two box))



86%

Internal communications team leaders participate in total organization strategy sessions, including strategic corporate decisions for the organization.



84%

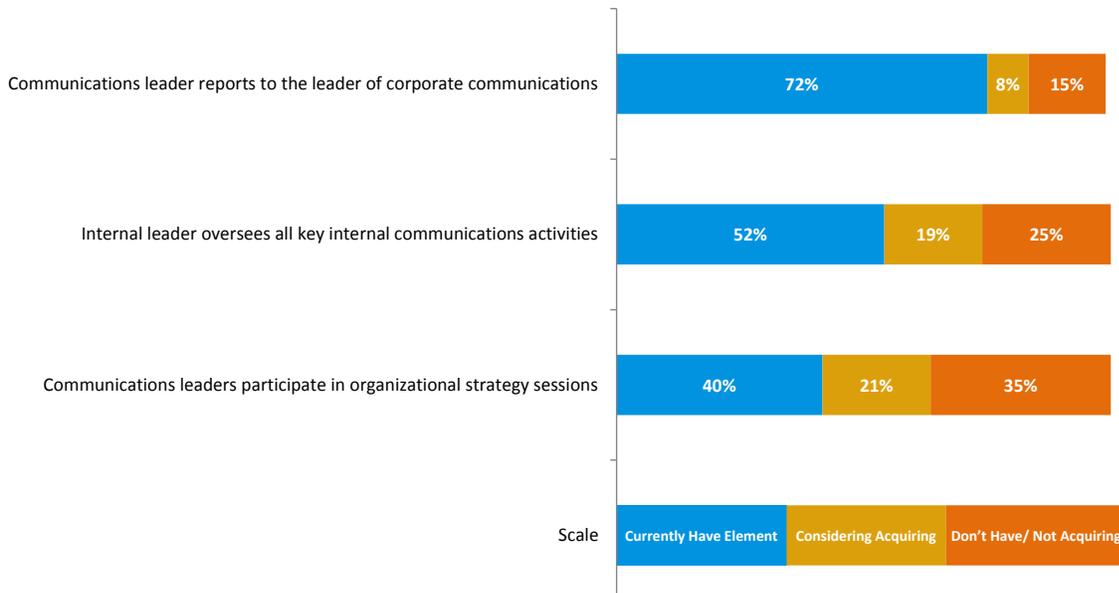
Having an internal communications team leader report to the leader of corporate communications [or similar role] for the company overall.



82%

Your internal communications team leader having oversight of all key internal communications and internal communication employees in the total organization.

Organizational Structure



Best-in-Class Practices: What Others Believe and Do Today

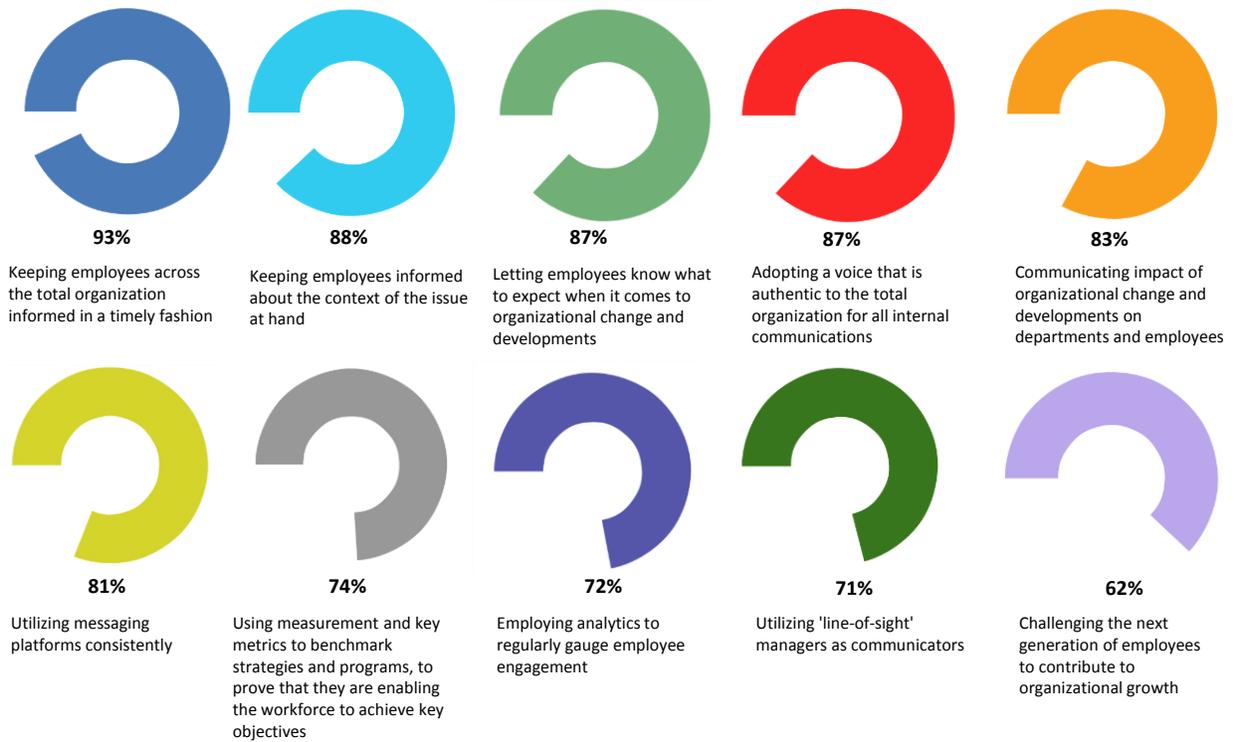
Effectiveness in internal communication hinges on both basic as well as more innovative practices, according to our best-in-class communicators. There's widespread agreement among our quantitative sample that basic practices of keeping employees informed in a timely fashion, providing context around the issue at hand, level-setting on organizational change and developments, having an authentic voice, utilizing messaging platforms and measurement are important.

While basic, these practices are not universal. In fact, only about three-quarters feel their company keeps employees informed in a timely fashion, or informed of the context of the issue at hand. Fewer communicate the impact of organizational change on departments or employees or speak in an authentic voice. A smaller portion (3-in-10) is measuring employee engagement or program outcomes.

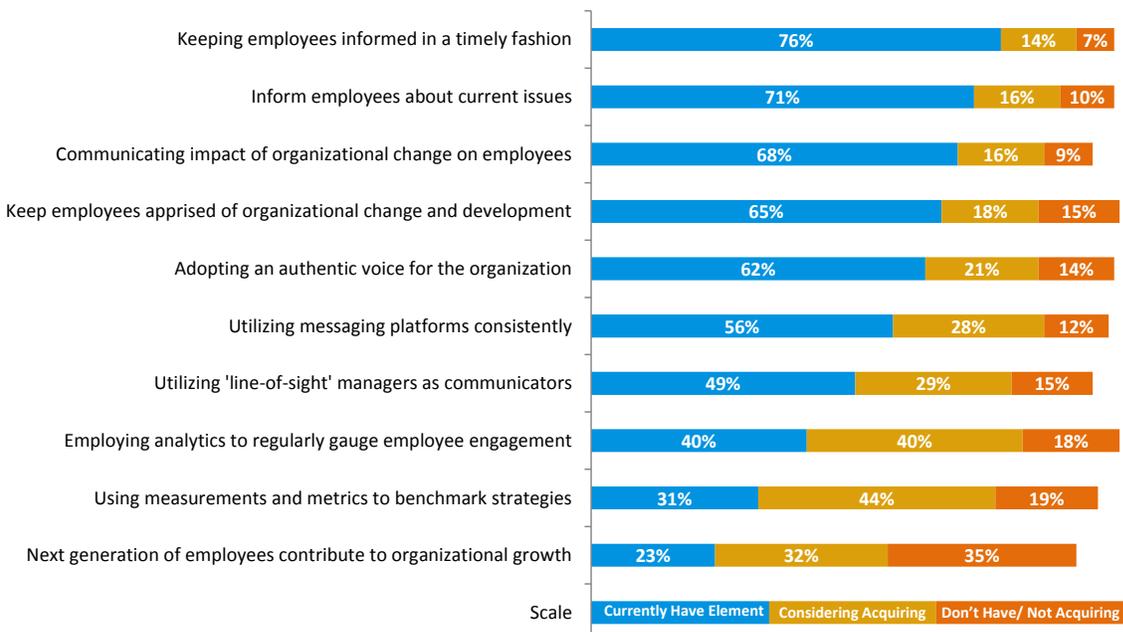
More strategic or forward thinking practices, such as utilizing line-of-sight managers as communicators and challenging younger employees to contribute to organizational growth, are not yet widely seen as important. It follows then that few are actually putting these into practice. About half are utilizing line-of-sight managers and only about 2-in-10 are challenging the rising generation of employees. There is limited intention to adopting these practices in the near future, suggesting that communications leaders do not yet understand the value for their organization, or, how the practices can be implemented.

Practices

(% finding each belief to be of high importance (top two box))



Practices



How Do We Build Effectiveness?

How do we meet the growing demand for helping our leaders make sure everyone “gets” the business objectives while driving awareness, understanding, alignment, engagement and action? How do we address the growing generational differences driving engagement among employees? How do we cut through the clutter to discover what really matters to employees? And how do we track and measure internal communication to show we’re making a real difference?

These most thought-provoking questions that drove our two-part research initiative are shared pain-points and struggles that best-in-class communicators feel, and that our larger field of internal communicators experience, too. Our research shows that the answers are not simple, don’t just materialize by asking the question, and will most likely be specific to an organization’s dynamics. It also shows that there are broader, governing principles that can be employed to move the industry closer to alignment between internal communication and achieving business objectives, being in the decision-making coalition, addressing generational differences, cutting through the clutter and showing impact.

Internal communicators need to not only know why something feels important, but to give voice to it. Internal communicators recognize the importance behind many best-in-class factors, yet performance lags when we sharpen our focus on opportunities and needs that include the following:

- Communications leaders participating in organizational strategy sessions, and being seen as business people;
- Articulating the value of change for the future, roadmapping, and benchmarking strategies for change;
- Gauging employee engagement levels;
- Utilizing listening posts; and
- Accepting the premise that strong internal communications provides a positive return, without having to prove it at every juncture.

If you look at the above list and say, “I agree, but we don’t have/do/offer...” it’s time to move from just agreeing to *articulating the value* to the organization.

If you look at the list and ask, “Are these really important?” it’s time to look to best-in-class models to evaluate how these elements influence or drive performance when applied. When barriers to what a practitioner knows to be important are present, it’s imperative to pose essential questions: “Why should a company adopt this practice,

behavior, and mindset or employ this tool or resource?” “What’s in it for my organization?” Our best-in-class communicators caution us, however, that the return on our investment in employee communication should not be questioned at every juncture. In truth – sometimes the real return is that a problem, a conflict or even a crisis is averted without ever knowing it could have happened.

Further, we should also ask, “What is it I *don’t* know?” The perceptual map shows that some best-in-class communication factors are not regarded as important, and not many are employing them. These include:

- Social media platforms
- Internal stakeholder maps
- Engaging employees in organizational growth
- Shared viewpoints up and down the chain of command

Yet, many leaders who have survived and flourished through crisis, market changes and/or the test of time have done so because they do these things.

If you look at this list and wonder, “Should I do that?” it’s time to look beyond the challenges of adoption or the lack of knowledge about the item, or even any perceived trivialness of it, and examine its virtues.

Above all, our best-in-class research tells us we must do more as a profession to *share*. If it’s a factor of importance, if you are doing it, and if it is having a good yield for your company (even if it can’t be indisputably proven) – share it. Because in sharing, we discover what we don’t know today and create good examples that can inspire the growth of best practices that contribute to efficacy.

We close by thanking the communications leaders who helped us create “*Best-in-Class Practices in Employee Communication: Through the Lens of 10 Global Leaders*” and the larger body of practitioners who contributed to the companion study, “*What Does Good Look Like?*” With your help and many contributions, we know more today that will prepare us – and that CEO we mentioned in the beginning – to continue the journey with greater confidence.

APPENDIX 1:

Full Research Methodology

Study Overview:

The guiding research objective of the Best-in-Class research program was to identify best practices for employee communication in an environment that is increasingly globalized, digitized, and empowered. With identification, the research could inform a comprehensive picture of the state of organizational (internal) communications today with specific pathways regarding development, direction and distinction.

As core outcomes, this research should help organizations:

1. Better understand the important components for building a stronger internal communications program
2. Take notice of lesser known but highly impactful elements that contribute to internal communications success
3. Identify where and how to advance the mindset, tools, and practices of the company, moving toward a more effective internal communications.

It also gives the internal communications industry the opportunity to:

1. Better understand the mindset and practice dynamics across internal communications
2. Sharpen focus and amplify the importance of these lesser known but highly impactful elements that contribute to communications success.

Qualitative Research Phase:

KRC Research conducted 10 in-depth interviews of internal communications professionals at world-class companies on behalf of the Institute for Public Relations Commission on Organizational Communications. Interviews were conducted between September 2012 and January 2013. The goal of the research was to better understand internal communications methods and practices employed by these world-class companies.

Representatives from organizations participating in the in-depth interview portion of the research were hand-selected by the committee based on their observed efficacy in communicating internally for a world-class company.

A core outcome of this phase, the interviews illuminate the main components of successful internal communications models, how those components become impactful, and how they came to be adopted. As such, these can be a model for other organizations looking to advance their own internal communications strategy.

Survey Phase:

The quantitative global survey of leaders of employee communications for multinational companies followed the qualitative discovery phase. This survey was built on in-depth interview learnings to quantifying key principles or priorities, and measure utilization of specific approaches, strategies, tools, or techniques.

The survey was conducted in Fall 2013 (October 2013 thru December 2013) online among internal communications professionals who were responsible for influencing decisions within their organization or worked in a consulting capacity with organizational communications teams. The survey was approximately 15 minutes in length and included both open-ended and closed-ended questions.

For optimal coverage of internal communications professionals, study utilized lists provided by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Individuals were randomly selected from the list and sent a personalized invitation to complete the survey. Reminders were also sent as a way to boost response rates. In total, 7392 individuals received an invitation to participate from PRSA. The sample was distributed in three waves, with non-responders in each wave receiving up to two reminders. Open rate on waves was between 20% and 25%. From the invitations and reminders sent, 107 individuals from PRSA completed the full survey. Nearly all survey respondents completed the survey once they initiated it. Very few terminated before answering all questions.

To supplement the core sample members of Engage for Success (UK), ImpresaPerta (Italy), Institute for Public Relations, and the Internal Communicators Section of the Conference Board were also invited to participate in the study. An additional 49 completed interviews came in from these channels.

In all, 156 internal communicators participated in the research. A full explanation of the coverage, demographics and psychographics of the survey is included in the Appendix of this document.

The final phase in the research program, the survey quantifies behaviors of the industry, tell us:

1. What organizations feel is important
2. What organizations are doing
3. How organizations perceive their success
4. Where organizations think they are headed

At the core of the survey are two attribute batteries. One battery measures the importance of various best-in-class internal communications factors. The other measures the degree to which internal communicators are doing or have those things, thinking about adopting, or are doing/thinking about adopting them.

The research team utilized a seven (7) point Likert scale to measure importance of various factors surrounding internal communications. Participants rated importance on this seven point scale, where 1 represented “not at all important” and 7 represented “very important,” and the midpoint being 4. The research team evaluated full results across the seven point scale, analyzing the collections of responses below, at, and above the midpoint, as well as in the very top of the scale. In this paper, we focus on the “top two box³” score so that we may offer perspective on what internal communicators view as truly important, vs. where importance is not fully recognized. The full survey results provide responses to all seven positions on the Likert scale.

A key outcome of this phase, it helps us:

1. Understand prevailing mindset, behaviors, tools and practices across the industry, providing a sense of where the industry is now, and where it is headed.
2. Observe the mindsets, behaviors, tools and practices that help an organization feel more effective at internal communications

And, in tandem with the qualitative phase, it charts out a course for organizations looking to build greater efficacy.

APPENDIX 2:

Internal Communicator Demographics and Psychographics

TOTAL

How long have you been working on an internal communications team within your total organization?

BASE=TOTAL SAMPLE	156
NET: LESS THAN 5 YEARS	65%
NET: 6+ YEARS	35%
NET: LESS THAN ONE YEAR	17%
ONE TO FIVE YEARS	48%
SIX TO TEN YEARS	22%

³ The percentage rating the attribute at a 6 or 7 where 7 is “very important”.

ELEVEN TO FIFTEEN YEARS	8%
SIXTEEN TO TWENTY YEARS	3%
TWENTY ONE YEARS OR MORE	2%

How long have you been working on an internal communications team in any company?

BASE=TOTAL SAMPLE	156
NET: LESS THAN 5 YEARS	27%
NET: 6+ YEARS	73%
NET: LESS THAN ONE YEAR	7%
ONE TO FIVE YEARS	20%
SIX TO TEN YEARS	23%
ELEVEN TO FIFTEEN YEARS	23%
SIXTEEN TO TWENTY YEARS	12%
TWENTY ONE YEARS OR MORE	15%

Which of the following best describes your position within the internal communications team?

BASE=TOTAL SAMPLE	156
TOP INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS LEADER IN THE TOTAL ORGANIZATION	46%
ONE LEVEL REMOVED FROM THE TOP INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS LEADER IN THE TOTAL ORGANIZATION	34%
TWO LEVELS REMOVED FROM THE TOP INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS LEADER IN THE TOTAL ORGANIZATION	10%
THREE LEVELS REMOVED FROM THE TOP INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS LEADER IN THE TOTAL ORGANIZATION	2%
OTHER	8%

Do you currently work for a:

BASE=TOTAL SAMPLE	156
FOR-PROFIT COMPANY	67%
NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION, ASSOCIATION OR NGO	15%
GOVERNMENT/GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION	9%
ACADEMIC INSTITUTION/ ACADEMIA	7%
OTHER	2%

Do you work client-side, or for an agency?

BASE=TOTAL ASKED	128
CLIENT-SIDE	91%
AGENCY	5%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	4%

What is the principal industry of your organization?

BASE=CLIENT-SIDE Q.58	117
HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	15%
MANUFACTURING	15%
FINANCE AND INSURANCE	13%
PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND TECHNICAL SERVICES	12%
UTILITIES	8%
RETAIL TRADE	7%
MINING, QUARRYING, AND OIL AND GAS EXTRACTION	3%
TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING	3%
ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICES	3%
CONSTRUCTION	3%
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING AND HUNTING	2%
ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND RECREATION	2%
WHOLESALE TRADE	1%
REAL ESTATE AND RENTAL AND LEASING	1%
ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT AND WASTE MANAGEMENT AND REMEDIATION SERVICES	1%
PHARMACEUTICALS	4%
OTHER	7%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	1%

Approximately how many employees currently work at your company overall?

BASE=TOTAL SAMPLE	156
`0-50	4%
`50-100	1%
`100-500	8%
`500+	82%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	5%
MEAN (IN THOUSANDS)	15.6
MEDIAN (IN THOUSANDS)	4
MODE (IN THOUSANDS)	5
SD (IN THOUSANDS)	32.1
SE (IN THOUSANDS)	2.6

For how many years has your company been in business?

BASE=TOTAL SAMPLE	156
`0-50 YEARS	39%
`51+ YEARS	59%
LESS THAN 5 YEARS	3%
`6 TO 10 YEARS	5%
`11 TO 25 YEARS	12%
`26 TO 50 YEARS	19%
`51 TO 100 YEARS	32%
OVER 100 YEARS	27%
UNSURE	1%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	1%

What is your Age?

BASE=TOTAL SAMPLE	156
`25 - 34	14%
`35 - 44	21%
`45 - 54	30%
`55 - 64	12%
`65 AND ABOVE	1%
REFUSED	22%
AGE ALIGN	100%
<45	35%
`45+	43%
MEAN	45.5
MEDIAN	46
MODE	54
SD	10.3
SE	0.9

What is the highest level of education that you completed?

BASE=TOTAL SAMPLE	156
LESS THAN COLLEGE	3%
COLLEGE+	94%
MASTER'S OR PHD	46%
HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE	1%
SOME COLLEGE, BUT NO DEGREE	1%
ASSOCIATE DEGREE	1%
BACHELOR'S DEGREE	48%
MASTER'S DEGREE	44%
PHD/DOCTORATE	3%
OTHER	2%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	1%

Which of the following best describes your race or ethnicity

BASE=TOTAL SAMPLE	156
CAUCASIAN/WHITE	72%
AFRICAN-AMERICAN/BLACK	7%
LATINO/HISPANIC	6%
ASIAN	3%
ASIAN-INDIAN	1%
AMERICAN INDIAN	1%
OTHER	1%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	9%

