

**SnapComms**



# A Template for Creating Your Own **Internal Communications Strategy**



# INTRODUCTION

## Congratulations!

You've just taken an important step in getting your internal communications (IC) planning on track.

For more than ten years, we've been working with many of the world's largest internal communicators to get employee attention.

From communicating change, to nurturing culture; from improving awareness to driving behavioral shifts; you could say we've been there, done that, and got the T-shirt!

We've harnessed that experience and compiled this strategy template to help guide organizations of all shapes, sizes and sectors to boost the impact of their internal communications.

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# BEFORE YOU START

Creating an internal communications strategy is not a complicated task. But it does require putting time aside to focus on getting the basics in place.

We recommend breaking it into three stages:

- 1) Where are you now? - A review of how well employees feel communicated and engaged with;
- 2) Where do you want to be? - How your IC actions will support key business drivers, such as vision, corporate plan, employee engagement, corporate communications and people strategies;
- 3) How to get there? - Setting objectives and tactics for success

Our advice is keep things simple to start with. An output document of no more than a couple of pages is more likely to get read and referenced by others, than an overly complex piece of work that never sees the light of day.

**This document outlines a three-step process for creating a custom-built IC strategy for your organization.**

## TIP:

Use the same headings and subheadings in your document (see page 11, Templates). This will help you stay on track and ensure you consider all elements for creating a robust IC strategy.

## Before you start, complete the following:

### • Undertake Internal Research

It's important to gauge how your internal communications efforts have been performing, and the level of staff engagement.

These findings will reveal where your efforts need to be concentrated, and enable you to benchmark for future progress.

Launch some basic internal research, with the help of your Human Resources teams. There are many ways to capture this information, such as employee pulse surveys, monitoring online chat rooms, listening out for anecdotes, and simply going out and speaking to staff across all levels.

Ask how well they understand the organization's purpose; their recall on some of the recent IC messages; how they'd prefer to be communicated with; and their ideas for improvement.

### • Create a Working Party

It's a good idea to form a small working group to help bounce ideas around and garner support. Ideally this team should not exceed 8 – 10 members.

The group should represent different areas, demographics and seniority from the organization.

### • Define Outcome-Focused Objectives

Be specific about what you want to achieve. For example, 'Improve employee engagement' is OK but quite broad. Consider adding what the success indicators are for each objective. Suggestions include:

- increase staff retention rate by XX %;
- improve participation for training programs/company events by XX %;
- improve survey completion rates;
- increase staff referrals for new hires.

# STEP 1: WHERE YOU ARE NOW



This section focuses on what's currently working and not working, and how you can spot the difference.

## Current Situation Analysis

- Review all communications published in the last 12 months. The tone and style of your comms may differ considerably from your colleagues'. Check for consistency and delivery issues e.g. lack of targeting, slow or missed messaging, distributed workforce, too much or too little information, not all staff having access to a device.
- List what the main objectives or issues are that need addressing. When do these need to happen, what are the influencing factors, and how do these fit with your company's mission, values and key performance indicators (KPIs)? This will entail canvassing the communication requirements from each departmental head.
- Complete an exercise which describes the composition of your organization. This should include number of staff, location, departments, demographics, access to computing devices, and any other factors that form part of your organizational structure.
- Remember to include forecasts and trends – for example, will staff be increasingly working from home? Will you be recruiting more part-time or contract staff? Are there plans for expansion into new territories?

## Review of Existing Channels

If you want to achieve different (better) results, that means exploring new ways and doing things differently.

In response to the universal problem of information overload within the workplace, a range of innovative communication tools have become available. But before you jump in and buy the latest shiny new object, think like a marketer and understand your target market i.e. your staff.

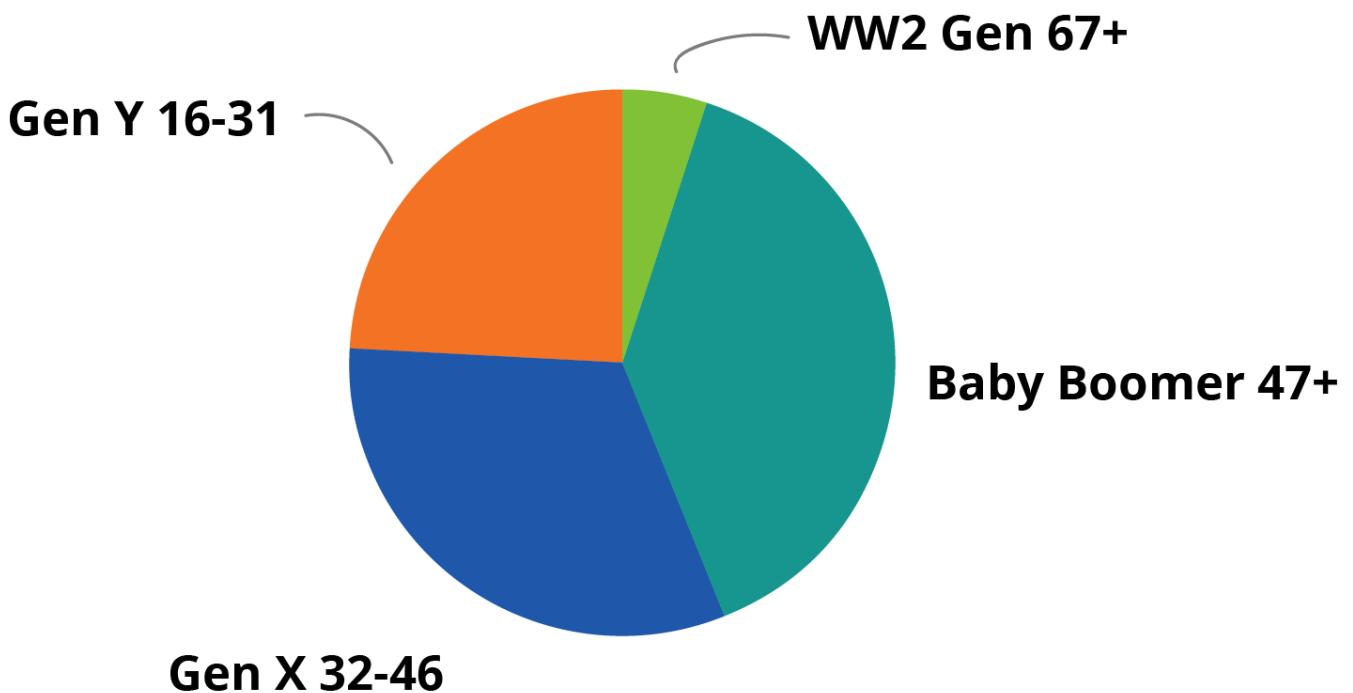
First of all, understand which existing communication channels are the most effective; are they measurable; what impact are they having; who's reading them; are readership rates different depending upon location; job function; or demographics? Do you need a mix of formats to suit different content to get message cut-through (see section 2 – Channel Choice).

## Audience Segmentation

Most large companies today have employees spanning four or five generations. Each of these cohorts will have preferences for communication formats. Some will remember a time when email did not exist. Others are digital natives, fully at ease sharing information with their private and professional networks.

Find out what the communication needs are of your employees by running a short survey. Ask how they prefer to be communicated with, and when are the most likely times of day they'll read your content. For example, a short video update from the CEO that can be viewed at a time that suits the worker, may be preferable to a 'town-hall' meeting which potentially interrupts their day.

# US Labor Force by Age



Source: BLS Annual Data

## STEP 2: WHERE YOU WANT TO BE



This section focuses on what your main messages are, and how your actions will help you get there.

### Communication Priorities

By now, you will know what the primary business objectives are and how these are prioritized.

Broad examples are listed here, but as mentioned earlier, try and add specific detail to help deliver the right outcome:

- Communicating 'the vision';
- Improving employee engagement;
- Driving change (for topics such as compliance, cyber security and new policies);
- Nurturing culture;
- Inciting specific action (i.e. sales promotion; agree to new policy);
- Launching a new product; promoting a special event;
- Promoting collaboration and innovation.

It is often easier to increase awareness and understanding than it is to change behaviors and attitudes.

An extended campaign, comprising a range of communication assets that get drip fed and repeated over time can be highly influential.

Other topics, such as a deadline-driven sales incentive will require interruptive, short-burst tactics. Adding a competitive element (gamification) and a sense of urgency (countdown clock) can be very effective at prompting immediate action.

## TIP:

Topics targeting behavioral-change will require a sustained, repeated program of activity. Think multi-touch, multi-format tools to reinforce the desired behaviour. (A one-off email sent to all staff explaining the risks of cyber-attacks won't do much to alter poor online habits and drive permanent change).

### Choosing the Right Channels

These days there's a compelling need for organizations to think beyond traditional formats such as email and intranet to put a message out.

There are many message delivery channels now available. It's your job to research which employee communication platforms are available, and if they'll be a good fit for your workforce.

Consider the following when choosing your communication channels and tools:

- Audience: how do staff prefer to receive information? Younger employees may consume messages differently to older employees.
- Credibility and accessibility: can staff easily access/see the message? Are they able to play audio / video files (or will that be too intrusive)? Will staff be receiving your message on a desktop, mobile or printed poster?
- Fit for purpose: does the communication tool align with the purpose (e.g. inform, allay fears, influence attitudes, change behavior, incite immediate action)?
- Urgent and non-urgent: are there times when you need to get an urgent message out e.g. emergency or other crises? Do you have multiple non-urgent messages that could be combined into one e.g. newsletter?
- Practical and within budget: considering your schedule and resources, what can you afford?
- Security/reliability: who can access the channel, and can you restrict admin rights?



# STEP 3: HOW TO GET THERE



This section is about creating the best tactics to deliver your strategy.

With the help of your Working Party, make a list of all the communication tasks scheduled for the year.

## Build Your Comms Plan

For each communication task, create a tailored Comms Plan. A simple spreadsheet will work fine (see example below).

This will act as a useful, reusable checklist for each new comms program.

PURPOSE	AUDIENCE	CHANNELS	TACTIC OR ASSET	DURATION / FREQUENCY	DESIRED OUTCOME	COST / RE-SOURCE
Example: <i>New Widget Product Launch</i>	Sales CSRs Mar- keting	Email Intra- net Newsletter Post- launch survey	Video Alert Screensaver Newsletter editorial Survey	2 weeks: 1 – 14 March	95% pass rate of post launch Prod- uct survey	100 hours @ \$80 p/h

For campaigns that need to make a big impact, call upon your full arsenal of comms tools and channels to ensure message cut-through.

Sometimes it's easy to overlook some of the best internal communication tools. A useful online directory, [www.CommsTools.com](http://www.CommsTools.com), is a great reference site that lists more than a hundred communication suggestions – old and new, free and paid-for.



## Staff surroundings

Consider the working environments of your employees. This should influence how best to communicate with them based on their setting.

### EXAMPLE SETTING 1: CALL CENTER STAFF

A CSR is likely to spend 95% of their working day on the telephone. They typically work exclusively within one application.

They're unlikely to have the opportunity to read a lengthy email while talking to customers. But a discreet message that scrolls across the footer of their screen simultaneously could be ideal. Staff can skim read the information without exiting their current program.



### EXAMPLE SETTING 2: REMOTE WORKER

Mobile workers (such as sales people, healthcare and service workers) spend much of their day meeting with clients and travelling between appointments.

They typically check messages from their car, using a smartphone or tablet.

Reading large documents or PDFs can be difficult on small-screen devices. But an SMS message sent straight to the employee's phone that links to a mobile-responsive web page is a better way to go.



## Evaluate and Evolve

This is an area that has become much easier to do, thanks to new technology. Using tracking and analytical tools, you can check which communication channels employees engage with the most, and which ones they avoid.

Build a quarterly evaluation of your communications strategy. This could include open and click-through rates; response and attendance levels; and employee engagement survey results.

Remember to include the bigger picture. For example, if your comms strategy is responsible for alerting staff about an IT outage, then your timely notifications are likely to have reduced the number of calls and tickets logged with the technical support team, saving time and improved productivity.

## Two-way Feedback

Be open-minded about capturing feedback. At each staff meeting, take a few moments to reflect on internal communications. An open forum like this can often be fertile ground for honest and helpful views. Ask Team Leads to do the same.

In addition, build communications-related questions into your [employee satisfaction survey](#).

Some questions to ask include:

- How well do you think we are communicating internally?
- Are we doing everything we can to keep our organizational vision in our communications?
- How well are we keeping each other informed of one another's work or progress on projects?
- Are we communicating in a timely fashion?
- Is there anything you've seen in your daily communication with your peers and leaders that could be improved on?

Continuously re-evaluating your communications strategy will ensure your communications remain aligned with your overall business goals.

## EFFICIENCY TIPS

Here are some quick tips to save production time when creating internal communication assets:

- Create templates for recurring messages, such as IT outages or reminders to complete a task.
- Create a calendarized communications plan to remind your team about upcoming communication topics. Remember to include external events that help build culture, such as Thanksgiving, St. Patrick's Day, Independence day. Wherever possible, plan ahead, and repurpose existing content.
- To avoid spamming staff and overloading their inbox, combine all non-urgent messages into an internal newsletter.
- Ensure every key communication asset is thoroughly proofed before it's published. This saves time (and face) by not having to send an apologetic follow-up.

Why not download a copy of our [Ultimate Checklist for Gaffe-Free Internal Communications?](#)



# BUILD YOUR OWN TEMPLATE

Use this strategy template to plan your communications for each quarter. Work your way through each of the headings and sub-headings to stay on track.

Once completed, share your brand new Internal Communications Strategy with your Working Party, IC colleagues and Senior Management.

Most importantly, put all your hard work into action!

<b>Situation</b> Where are you now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current situation analysis</li><li>• Review of communication channels</li><li>• Audience segmentation.</li></ul>
<b>Objectives and Communication Priorities</b> Where do you want to be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication priorities</li><li>• Channel choice</li></ul>
<b>Solutions and Tactics</b> How to get there?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build comms plan</li><li>• Consider staff surroundings</li><li>• Evaluate and evolve</li><li>• Feedback</li></ul>
<b>Revise Strategy and Repeat the Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluate and evolve for continual improvement</li></ul>

## ABOUT SNAPCOMMS

Our business SnapComms, based in Auckland, NZ, is a self-funded, privately owned business determined to help more organizations improve cut-through for employee communications.

An offshoot of a small development company, co-founders and owners Sarah Perry and Chris Leonard productized the offering and launched SnapComms in 2007.

Within three years, SnapComms grew organically from zero to hero in the competitive sector of employee communication software, where it is now a global market leader.

The company now serves more than 1.5 million paid enterprise users across 75 countries, and it continues to grow.

For more information, please visit [www.SnapComms.com](http://www.SnapComms.com), or connect via social channels on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

## DO YOUR EMPLOYEES DESERVE BETTER THAN JUST EMAIL?

Contact us if you'd like to learn how our intelligent internal communication software is a better option for getting employee attention today.

SnapComms is a global leader in internal communication software. If you'd like us to show you how our digital tools can transform employee communication within your organization, request a short demo today.

[REQUEST A SHORT DEMO](#)