

YOUR FIRST
100 DAYS
IN A NEW INTERNAL
COMMS ROLE

When you're promoted to a bigger role,
you need a big plan to go with it.
In this short guide, leading internal communication
agency Gatehouse walks you through
your first 100 days.

Special Thanks

We'd like to thank everybody who contributed to this short guide. In particular, we'd like to extend special thanks to two Gatehouse clients, Kate Jones, Head of Internal Communications, UK at Atkins and Sasha Watson, Director, Internal Communications at ARM who shared their experiences, reflections and learnings from recent job moves.

So you've just been appointed to a new role as internal comms lead – a plum job in a big name corporate and a step up from your previous mid-level position.

It's day one and expectations are high – not least from the CEO, who fought the rest of the board to elevate the role and salary to a level to attract the very best.

No pressure then!

Looking forward to new challenges and a plush corner office suite, your attention turns to your start up to do list.

Here's our ten killer tips to get you off on the right track.

1) GET STARTED BEFORE YOU GET STARTED!

First, don't neglect the last 100 days in your current role.

Reputations are hard to build and quick to destroy – so remember that how you leave is every bit as important as how you arrive.

Your preparation should begin the moment you've accepted the new role. Be sure to set up a series of Google Alerts to stay up to

speed on what's happening in the organisation and its marketplace.

Do this for the competition too. Try to immerse yourself in your new company's world before you get through the door – think about the political, economic, social and technological environment it's

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operating in and consider what's likely to be on the CEO's agenda.

Pen a carefully crafted LinkedIn introduction and consider seeking out the key people you'll need to connect with once you're in situ. (You should know this from your recruitment discussions.)

You don't want to come across as a stalker, but put in place the building blocks of a good relationship now and you'll be able to hit the ground running on day one.

2) UNDERSTAND THE BUSINESS

Your starting point should be the business's vision, mission and strategy. As a strategic internal communicator your role exists for one reason – to help the organisation

achieve its goals. So you need to intimately understand those goals and the broader business strategy.

- Where is the business heading over the next five years and beyond?
- How does it plan to get there?
- What are the likely impacts of this strategy on employees?
- What new products or services are in the pipeline?
- Does it plan to grow organically or are acquisitions likely?

These are the sort of big picture questions you'll need to answer during the early months – and by seeking the answers to those questions you'll help position yourself as a strategically focused communicator from the start.

3) CLARIFY YOUR REMIT

During the first few weeks it makes sense to clarify your role and remit. Job descriptions and recruitment ads don't always capture the essence of a role – particularly what it'll be like on a day-to-day basis, so you need to establish that quickly.

Spend time exploring this with your line manager and senior stakeholders – what do they think the focus of the role should be and what are their expectations of you? What do they think success looks like?

4) IDENTIFY THE PLAYERS

You'll be able to assess fairly quickly who will readily support you and who will take time to win over. There are a number of key relationships for any senior

internal communicator – from the CEO and top team, to change programme leads and functional heads in HR, IT, facilities and elsewhere.

Take a structured approach by identifying and mapping these early – then put in place a 100 day contact plan to ensure you spend sufficient time with each of them.

- Develop a simple interview structure that you can adapt for different people.
- Ask them about their past experiences of internal comms – what went well and what went badly – but always resist the temptation to criticise your predecessor.
- Ask them what success looks like to them.

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Listening is probably the single most important skill you can demonstrate.

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Keep the initial conversation fairly short and focused. And whatever you do don't forget to include the CEO's PA in your list of VIPs!

5) SIT UP AND LISTEN

You shouldn't do anything until

you have a good understanding of the organisation and the audience – so this should be near the top of your 100 day list.

No IC pro worth their salt will spend their first few months at their desk, so get out there any meet people. Talk to frontline people – do call listening in the call centre, go see the folk on the factory floor, be visible in the canteen, set up some informal discussion groups. You'll drink gallons of coffee, but it will be worth it.

Gather useful intelligence and anecdotes along the way. Get your hands on as much data as possible – engagement survey results to assess how people are feeling, channel metrics, examples of past campaigns, induction materials, raw demographic and HR data showing how many people are based where,

average age, breakdown by level and so on.

As you conduct your road trip, tune into the organisation – what's the word on the street? What are the rumours across the business? What language and jargon is most commonly used?

Listening is probably the single most important skill you can demonstrate during your first 100 days.

6) DELIVER SOME QUICK WINS

You've got a reputation to build quickly, so it'll be vital to deliver some quick wins. Think about this during your first few weeks:

Where are the opportunities to roll up your sleeves, get stuck in and make a visible difference?

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Be sure to focus on what matters most – don't fall into the trap of responding to everything that lands on your desk.

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Balance the need to be a strategic thinker, with the concrete requirement to do things. Don't spend so much time doing the planning that you fail to deliver results. But be sure to focus on what matters most – don't fall into the trap of responding to everything that lands on your desk, or else you'll get lost in a swamp of tactics.

7) DON'T CHANGE EVERYTHING OVERNIGHT

As an experienced practitioner you'll already have clear views on what's good and what's not so good – what you'd kill and what you'd keep. But it's critical that you avoid making too much change too quickly. An 'out with the old' mentality can be a dangerous thing and organisations have long memories.

Take your time, pick the right battles and resist whole scale change during the first 100 days.

8) COMMISSION AN AUDIT

One of the single most insightful things you can do towards the end of your first 100 days is commission an agency like Gatehouse to undertake a comprehensive internal communications audit.

You shouldn't do it too early – you need to know what questions to ask and where to focus the research first.

But done well, an audit will give you a robust and scientifically sound assessment of the current state – showing what's working, what's not working and where the gaps and priorities are.

It will enable you to go beyond gut feel and provide actionable intelligence on which to build your strategy and plan. A good audit will comprise multiple research methods to build up a rich and valuable picture.

Our own approach starts with executive interviews (to understand the perceptions, wants and needs of the senior team) and moves on to a quantitative survey

(to give you hard data) and focus groups (to drill down, test and validate the survey findings).

Remember, the value here is to get an independent and objective assessment – so it pays to work with a good external agency on this, rather than trying to do it on the cheap.

9) REVIEW YOUR CAPABILITY

Alongside an audit, you might want to take steps to assess your team's capability and broader resources. Alongside the usual performance management records and your own take on the potential of each individual team member, think about the capability you might need in the team over the next 2-3 years to deliver against your aspirations.

- Do you need trusted advisors – business partner types to build relationships with senior stakeholders and ensure deep knowledge of specific business units or functions?
- Do you need content specialists? Project managers? Designers?

Unless you're very lucky, the chances are you'll need a combination of the above.

At the same time it pays to look at the wider organisation – are there

other skills and resources outside your area you can tap into? Is there an in-house design function? Sharepoint expertise in IT? An embryonic champion network you can build upon? Are there any existing agency relationships and do you have scope to bring in external support?

IC is often fairly lean, so you'll need to think creatively to identify and build the capability you'll need to deliver your plans. And finally, get a handle on what budget you might have at your disposal.

10) INVEST IN YOURSELF

While trying to prove yourself to others, don't lose sight of your own needs. Make time to relax and to think – and remember 'sleeping on it' is often the key to unlocking outstanding creativity.

Think about your own development too. If you've moved into a new sector or expanded your remit into unfamiliar territory, then you might well need some focused training or coaching support.



Your first 100 days are an amazing and scary time – a time of discovery, a time when you're in the spotlight, a time when reputations are built...



Would it be wise to have the founders of the leading IC agency in your corner, advising you during your first 100 days?



**IF YOU'RE FRESH INTO A SENIOR ROLE,
GATEHOUSE'S FIRST 100 DAYS SUPPORT PACKAGE
IS A SENSIBLE INVESTMENT.**

- We'll help you draw up a sensible 100 day master plan
- You'll meet with us face-to-face for confidential support and advice
- You can rely on a structured program of coaching and mentoring
 - Our experience helping organisations around the world is yours to leverage throughout your first 100 days

This package is aimed at senior IC leaders.

CONTACT US AT:
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