
RockstarComms presents

Rock Your Comms



98 Killer Tips and
Secrets from
Internal Comms
Professionals

All Proceeds to Make-A-Wish UK

By Ian Harris and
Khmer Greffin

RockstarComms

Introduction

From December 2011 until February 2012, we emailed hundreds of internal communication professionals around the world – asking them one simple question:

“What's the single, most important thing that you've learned in internal communication?”

Some people never replied. Some replied, to politely decline. A few replied, asking us to never contact them again.

But we kept trying, and our inbox soon begin to fill with pearls of wisdom from communicators at some of the world's most respected companies.

Here they are, in no particular order. Rock Your Comms can be randomly dipped into – an instant source of inspiration whenever you need it.

Ian Harris

Director, RockstarComms

<http://www.RockstarComms.com>

Supporting Make-a-Wish UK

Just so you know, all the money raised from sales of this book are being donated to [Make-a-Wish Foundation UK](#). It's a really nice charity that grants wishes to children with life-threatening illnesses.

I want to be transparent about how much of your money actually reaches Make-a-Wish.

Obviously my time (and my staff's time) is donated, but there are a couple of costs I have no control over:

- If you bought this book on Amazon, 70% of your money will make it to Make a Wish. (Amazon takes 30% of Kindle revenue.)
- If you bought this book as a PDF download, Make-a-Wish will get something like 90 or 95% of your cash, because we have to pay Paypal's processing fees.

And that's it - there are no other dirty fingers in the charity pie, I promise. Thanks again for supporting this nice cause, and I really hope you find Rock Your Comms inspiring.

**Rock
Your
Comms**

Tip 1: “Show that you’re interested”

Step away from the useless management speak, buzzwords and jargon, and get out there and meet the people you're communicating with. If you're invited to team meetings and events – go! People really appreciate it when you show an interest in what they are doing, and will be more likely to share news, views and engage with IC in the long term.

Getting out and about also helps build important relationships, and is a great way to encourage feedback. You also never know who you might meet!

Kate Pritchard

Stakeholder Relations Manager, University of Birmingham

Tip 2: “Don’t over-use the C-Word”

My top tip for internal communicators is avoid over-using the ‘c word’ – communication. I learned a few years ago that leaders will actively listen to you if you talk their language.

You need to add value and ideas to business conversations. I don’t mean solely from a communications perspective – they expect that of you already. Demonstrate the breadth of your knowledge and influence, and persuade them of your commercial understanding.

If you can do this you’ll be asked for your opinion, and you’ll have a seat at the table when decisions are being made. You won’t be left to simply communicate their views to employees.

Rachel Miller

Senior Internal Communications Professional

www.rachmiller.com, @AllthingsIC

Tip 3: “Know Your Goals”

The biggest mistake that you can make as a communicator is to lose sight of the connection between communications and the goals of your business or organization.

Your ideas might be cutting-edge, but if they don't help your organization move forward in some way, they're not relevant and neither are you.

Keep in close contact with the executive team. Understand the entire business, and not just the part of it that concerns you from day to day. Make sure that everything you do adds real value.

Rachel Berry

Communications Consultant, nuance intelligence
www.nuanceintelligence.com

Tip 4: “Own the Communications”

Own the communications in your business. You have to be the expert and advise those around you on how to engage people and get the messages across. Own the communications and the channels in your toolkit, and control what goes out and when. It will have the most benefit on the business, show you add value as a strategic partner and ensure you can make a difference.

Jenni Wheller

Internal Communications Manager

Tip 5: “Understand Your Audience”

One thing that stands out is the real need to understand your audience. It's so easy to put your employees into neat little boxes that suit you. But you'll never get the right outcome that way.

It's all about insight, insight and insight, and then testing, testing and testing. You need to understand who your people are and how they like to be communicated to. Organisations have been using customer research and insight for years to design

products and communications. Adopting this same approach for our employees can make a dramatic difference both in the way we communicate and in the outcomes we achieve.

Gillian McGill

Head of Internal Communications, Aviva
United Kingdom

Tip 6: “Create Stories”

You have to know how to tell a story, and in particular get to the root of why something is happening.

We deal with all sorts of situations – helping leaders get employees behind a new direction for the business, the internal launch of new products and services, and organisational changes that have difficult implications for the affected employees.

It's not good enough to simply peddle the corporate jargon that the project or marketing team has fed you. No matter the context, you have got to be able to help the business tell a story that makes sense to the people it's intended for. If you keep

drilling down, asking ‘why’ until you can’t go any further, you’ll be in good shape.

Alistair Shaw

Internal Communications Manager, British Petroleum (Castrol, Auto Europe & Africa)
Bristol, United Kingdom

Tip 7: “Share Passionate People’s Stories”

Internal communication isn’t just a matter of telling people what to do and not to do. You have to appeal to people’s hearts as well as their heads, to make them feel that they want to follow your leaders.

It’s about finding the people who are passionate about what they do, and telling their stories across your organisation. If you don’t do that, people will still come to work every day – but they’ll never go above and beyond for you.

It’s about working with your leaders to develop and explain their vision in a compelling way that everyone can relate to. Ultimately, it’s about making everyone in your organisation feel excited

about the future and connected to each other – as part of one whole.

Mark Detre

Internal Communications Manager, Vodafone
London, United Kingdom

Tip 8: “Expect Changes”

The single most important thing I've learned in over 20 years in this game, is that nothing is set in stone. Expect changes up to the wire.

My tip for dealing with senior managers is be nice, but stand firm and trust your gut instincts.

Patricia Jones

Internal Communications Manager, Lloyds
Banking Group

Tip 9: “Balance Message with Channel”

It's very easy to get too hung-up on either the message, or the channels you use to communicate the message. There's no value in having an earth-shattering, important and compelling message if

your channels do not get it to the audience in a way that engages them.

And there's no point investing time and money on communications channels like blogs, magazines and events if your content is inaccurate, irrelevant or just plain boring.

In my rare moments of inner calm I tend to think about the balance of message and channels like the Yin and Yang of powerful internal communications. Upset the balance, and you might as well give up.

Drew McMillan

Director, Internal Communications
Ladbrokes plc

Tip 10: “Learn Your Audience”

It sounds obvious but one of the ways I have been successful when working with senior people is to do my homework and find out a detailed analysis of their workforce.

Spend some time with HR and CIO learning about the audience profile. What are their ages, career

levels, and typical roles? Where they are located, and what comms devices do they have access to? (iPad, smart phone, email, voicemail.)

What are their habits? This helps add some gravitas to pitching ideas or advising on the best tools to use when approaching a communications problem.

Natasha Gowans

Internal Communications Manager, Accenture
(London, United Kingdom)

Tip 11: “Be Genuine”

Always be genuine with employees. If it’s worth telling, say it like a human being. If it’s great, smile. If it sucks, tell them. If you screwed up, admit it.

Jennifer Rock

Director, Dialogue & Intranet, Best Buy

Tip 12: “Promote Yourself”

Brilliant internal comms doesn't mean doing everything by stealth. Make sure the right people know everything you are doing or they will begin to think they don't need the function, since it's all “just happening anyway”.

Jo Gunton

Head of internal communication, Compass Group

Tip 13: “Put Yourself in Their Shoes”

It sounds like a cliché, but the thing I come back to every time is to stand in the audience's shoes.

Will they understand the terminology you've used? How will they interpret the tone? Are you answering the questions they'll have, or just passing on a confusing message?

Excellent internal comms puts the audience at the centre of everything.

Alexandra Smith

Head of Communications, Target Ovarian Cancer

Tip 14: “Try Infographics”

Words are good, but pictures are better. Sometimes you just have to communicate facts and figures to an audience that’s more comfortable with words and emotions.

Taking an hour or so to distil the key points into an engaging infographic can deliver a huge payoff in the long run.

If they’re well designed, they can make the highly complex easier to understand and can convey the driest of information to an internal audience in a way that has a real impact and is quick to understand.

Lizzie Cuddy

Digital Employee Engagement Manager –
Mitchells & Butlers

Tip 15: “Trust Your Judgement”

Trust your judgement. If it doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t. Judgement is the one thing that singles out a great communicator from a mediocre

one. If you consistently get your judgement calls right, you'll win the trust of the people you're communicating with. And ultimately, winning peoples' trust is the single most important thing you can achieve.

Nick Green

Director - Internal Communications, BskyB

Tip 16: “Get To Know Your Audience”

Don't think you know your audience - actually get to know them! Sit down with a good cross section of your audience on an annual basis and find out what they want to hear about, who in the company they want to hear from and what channels they like to communicate through. Then use this intelligence to your advantage!

Nick Godber

Internal Communications Programme Manager –
John Lewis

Tip 17: “Nurture Your Network”

You absolutely need a network of influencers throughout the organisation. You want a real mix of people who are active in their local teams, supportive of the comms function and vocal enough to critique what you do to help make sure it's going to hit the right note for audiences.

This might not be so crucial in smaller organisations, but there's no way I could do my job as effectively without them.

Lily Allport, Internal Communications Manager – Aviva
(Norwich, United Kingdom)

Tip 18: “Measurement and Feedback”

Know your audience! Measurement and feedback is key.

Hannah Brocklesby
Internal Communications Manager, Aviva UK

Tip 19: “Support Financial Results”

Linking communication plans and strategies to financial results is a sure-fire way to get maximum leadership buy in. Leaders understand solid financial data and if you can demonstrate how your efforts have impacted this area, you've got it made!

Luke Dodd

Features Editor – Melcrum

Tip 20: “Don't Schmooze Senior Management”

Schmoozing senior management doesn't make you a better internal communications professional.

It can actually lessen the impact of your work because you're concentrating on the messages being delivered rather than how those messages might be received.

Talking to people 'at the coal face' helps you to stay connected to your real customers. While working for a senior technologist at Thomson Reuters, I visited four corporate data centres on the U.S. east coast. Discussions with people in those

locations really shifted my view of our internal comms approach.

Ever after I would visualize those people while strategizing and before going live on any activity. It helped me test that what we were doing was going to resonate.

Melinda de Boer

Head of Internal Communications, Enterprise Solutions – Thomson Reuters

Tip 22: “You Need a Seat at the Table”

Firstly, communication needs be three-way: employees need to hear from their managers, managers need to hear from their employees, and employees need to hear from each other.

Secondly, internal communication specialists must hold a seat at the management table. You can offer managers expert advice, guidance and support on content and internal communication channels.

Rebecca Wilson

Internal Communications Manager
Thomson Reuters

Tip 23: “Help Execs To Connect With Employees”

The single most important thing is to know what your employees are thinking and what THEY want to know. It's not enough to communicate just what the executives want to communicate.

You will do your executives and your employees (and yourself) a favour if you seek out and bring the employees' perspectives, mindset and concerns to the company and its executives.

Work with the execs to enable them to connect with employees about things they want to know about. It's like the aperture of a camera – the picture/message will only be retained when the aperture is open.

Jill Feldon LaNouette

Vice President / Internal Communications –
Cardinal Health

Tip 24: “Simplicity”

When communicating, always aim to keep it simple – but remember not to patronise.

Jessica Tempest

Internal Communications Manager – Home Retail Group

Tip 25: “Clear, Concise, and Relevant”

The golden mantra is to be clear, concise and relevant in your communications, and manage your stakeholder's expectation adeptly.

Jo Gaglani

Internal Communications Manager – Vodafone

Tip 26: “Keep it Simple”

Always keep it simple. Messages communicated in simple words backed with appropriate visuals tend to work the best.

Employees are mostly hard-pressed for time and internal communication is not exactly top priority for most, hence it is critical to communicate quickly and in an interesting manner. Simplicity

always succeeds.

Sherry Fernandez
Interim Internal Communications Manager –
Universal Studios/Pictures

Tip 27: “Tell stories”

Story telling has timeless appeal.

What do we remember the most from our childhood days? Simple stories that we heard from our parents or teachers. We continue to remember at least a few of those stories, thanks to their simplicity, relevance and perennial charm.

Minu Mathew

Blogger at www.allfortheearth.blogspot.com

Tip 28: “Don't Limit Yourself to Distributing Information”

How leaders perceive your value is limited only by how you value the work that you bring to the company.

If your main focus and activity is around distributing information, leaders will believe your

capability is limited to information distribution.

Focus instead on helping solve real issues and address company priorities, and leaders will believe that you, and internal communications, can help drive business results.

Carolyn Rose

Director, Global Internal Communications
Rockwell Automation

Tip 29: “Know Your Organisation”

The single most important thing I’ve learnt as an internal communicator is that knowledge of the organization you work for is vital if you want to be in a position to do more.

That means knowing how all the functions work, and how each one adds to the whole. Knowing this, you’re better able to target specific audiences and are in a better position to understand their communication needs.

Christina Revelas

Internal Communications Manager, Pfizer

Tip 30: “Consider Your Audience”

The single most important thing I have learned is to put myself in the mind of the audience.

To engage with our employees, we must be really up-front and straightforward in our language, whatever our communication channel.

Be clear about what we are asking them or sharing with them, why we are telling them this, and what we expect them to do as a result.

Anne Atherton (nee Kessel)

Senior Internal Communications Manager, BT
Global Services

Tip 31: “Link Strategy to Day-to-Day Work”

It’s difficult to connect the overall strategy and financial targets to employees’ day-to-day work. But this connection is absolutely critical.

If a company does this, employees will be more motivated and efficient. I’m convinced that this combination has a great impact on profitability. To

be successful, I think it's also important to keep language and messages simple, short and very clear.

In G4S Sweden we have connected the overall strategy, financial targets and our values to something we call “The Flight”. It's a package of pictures and “Flight language” that describes where we are and where we are heading and how we are going to do it – everything described as a journey we are doing together.

Anni Svensson

Director of Information & Communication, G4S
Stockholm

Tip 32: “How Does this Impact Me?”

Most employees just want to know: “How does this impact me?”

I believe the best approach is to use a story, and add employees and departments as characters to help them understand how they fit into the big picture.

Visuals are a big part of this. Over-complicating

with wordy presentations or lengthy documents will cause you to lose your audience. Captivate them with the best messages through a compelling story, and they will understand where the organization is and where you want to be.

Jessica McFarlane

Communications Specialist, In the Clear Communications

Tip 33: “Most People Are Not Comms Pros”

My #1 tip is that whilst management hired you to improve internal communications, most companies are actually resistant to change or new thinking.

Management may think they already know how to communicate ("We've got wikis and video!"), so why did they hire you? It's because they are not internal comms professionals.

Our job is to have an all-seeing eye over the company's business, connect the dots between activities and earn trust to be a safe pair of hands.

Sara Phipps

Communications Manager, DHL

Tip 34: “Respect the Grapevine”

It's important to get out there and listen to people. Find out what they think and respond rather than telling them what to think.

In my experience, the ‘grapevine’ — those informal, on-going and uncontrolled chats between staff — is the most powerful internal communication channel in an organization.

All too often, it is seen in isolation — or even as a threat — to ‘corporate’ communication channels. But internal communicators need to be connected to the ‘grapevine’ and work within it to create a more authentic and trustworthy dialogue.

When it comes to people's communication preferences, it's true that ‘no one size fits all’. But I can confidently say that every member of staff engages with their company's ‘grapevine’ in some way — and responds to what they learn from it.

Hania (Seddon) Oddie

Senior Consultant at Grayling Momentum

Tip 35: “Ask Questions Constantly”

In internal communications you have to ask questions all the time.

For your communications to be effective you have to ask three essential questions right from the outset: "What is the real business need?", "What outcomes do we want?" and "How will we measure success?"

The answers will guide you in your communication, and will give you a frame for all the other questions you need to ask. Remember, don't just accept what appears to be obvious — question it. And above all be persistent in your approach.

Alison Ralph

Manager, Internal Communications,
EUROCONTROL

Tip 36: “Don't Over-Intellectualise”

Internal communications is often over-intellectualised — the best solutions are the most simple and straightforward. Also, remember that

social media is not the panacea for all that ails businesses.

Anton Nebbe

Communications Manager, Kier Servicesx

Tip 37: “Demonstrate The Value of IC”

Building strong internal relationships with the senior leadership team and employees is essential.

You need to demonstrate how internal communications can have a positive impact on the organisation and how it contributes to a healthy organisational culture.

Sometimes internal communications isn't seen as a top priority. But you need to demonstrate positive outcomes by checking in with employees and asking them what they think.

Andrea Davies

Internal Communications and Change Specialist,
NEC Australia Pty Ltd

Tip 38: “Define the Benefits”

The single most important thing that I’ve learned in internal communication is to make the personal value of your communication evident to each individual member of your target audience.

People will respond best when they understand the direct importance to them as an individual. For most workers, just keeping in-the-know or up-to-date on what’s happening internally is not enough incentive for them to take time away from their daily tasks.

Once you define the benefits for your different target groups, and they actually see and understand these benefits, then acknowledging / digesting / participating in internal communication will become a welcome part of their routine.

Elena Lourou

Internal Communications Manager, Velti

Tip 39: “Control the Culture”

The single most important thing I've learned is that it can't be the sole responsibility of an internal

communications function to develop a culture of good communication.

Organisations often think that it's our job to single-handedly 'fix' poor communication. But we can't do it alone!

I've seen first-hand that you need the involvement and commitment of all employees (particularly senior leadership), to truly foster a culture of effective, open, honest and timely communication. Otherwise, our activities can simply become a one-way dump of information that adds little value and doesn't address the real underlying issues.

It's absolutely essential to educate the business on where we can add real value — by providing the tools, coaching, feedback mechanisms and monitoring to support the rest of the business to work together as a team to address their communications issues and make positive, long-term changes.

Helen Harvey

Global Communications and Engagement
Manager, PZ Cussons

Tip 40: “Paint the Big Picture”

I’ve learned that it’s incredibly important for employees to understand how they fit into the “big picture” of the business. Take the extra step, whenever possible, of tailoring communications to employees so they can write themselves into the story.

When an employee knows exactly how his or her role within the company impacts the bottom line or the mission – the reason the company exists – that employee is more engaged in the business and more excited to come to work every day.

It’s one of the secrets to employee engagement.

Natalie Albers

Manager, Employee Communications

Best Buy

Tip 41: “Be Human”

Hidden in the awful jargon of the phrase 'hi-tech, hi-touch' is a simple but powerful truth about internal communication. However slick the channels are, however hot the latest media platform

might be, it's the human element that matters most.

That doesn't mean extolling the virtues of 'face-to-face' is the answer to all internal comms questions.

It means that we have to undertake a thoughtful examination of what it is to be human in the modern work environment.

My ideal internal comms team would include journalists, technologists, poets, designers and at least one anthropologist!

Ezri Carlebach

Deputy Director, Communication and External Affairs, University of the Arts London

Tip 42: “Support the Strategy”

The most important thing to remember when planning internal communication activity is: “Does this support the strategic aims of the company I work for?”

If it doesn't, then it will be a waste of your time and any activity and results will not be recognised or valued by your executive team.

Chloe Watson

Communications Manager, Channel 3 Consulting

Tip 43: “No Management-Speak”

Match your comms style to your audience and keep your messages simple, management-speak free and as short as the subject allows.

Mary Langford

Internal Communications Specialist, BBC

Tip 44: “What Do You Want Them to Do?”

Know who you're communicating with and what you want them to know, feel and do as a result of your successful communication. When you start to

consciously articulate what success looks like — and where you stand in relationship to that goal today — you quickly realize there's rarely such a thing as a “one size fits all employees” approach when you're doing internal communications.

Deborah Hinton

Partner, Hinton : Communication matters

Tip 45: “Be a Business Advisor First”

Be a business advisor first and an internal communicator second - this will gain you the respect you deserve from senior management.

Hannah James

Communications Manager, Westpac

Tip 46: “Think Beyond Your Title”

Don't let the title limit your view! Often the most important part of internal communication is external communication.

As internal communicators we need to have a level of expertise in external communication, social media, corporate communication trends, and be

able to articulate these within a business context.

Employees receive much of their news about their organisation from external sources, as well their social and professional networks. External communication channels should now form part of our internal communication channel management strategies.

Time to burst out of that IC bubble!

Kim Borrowdale

Brand and communication consultant

Tip 47: “Turn Friends into Advocates”

Communicating to a diverse workforce in terms of demographics and skills? The best way to get buy-in is to get to know them, and then turn friends into advocates. Most importantly, ask them what you can do to make their job easier.

Sarah Whyke

Communications Manager (Internal), Freemans
Grattan Holdings

Tip 48: “Never Stop Listening”

You are never too experienced or too wise to stop listening. The secret behind internal communications that really does make a difference and add value to your organization is to be ‘in the know’.

If you truly aim to influence people’s hearts and minds, you need to listen to what they have to say and have the courage to act accordingly.

Liesl Weber

Internal Communications Specialist, Amcor
Flexibles Europe & Americas

Tip 49: “Help Others Communicate Well”

Ultimate success in internal communication comes when we enable others to communicate well.

By building communication capability in leaders and employees, they will self-serve and sustain effective dialogue and information flow.

It’s like teaching someone to use a net and catch fish rather than giving them fish.

Paul Matthews

Manager, Communication Strategy/Internal Communication, Sydney Water

Tip 50: “Communicate Through Managers”

Different people want to get their information in different ways, but by far the most popular source is the employee’s manager.

They are the best person to filter the multiple streams of information to distil something that actually matters to the employee

Rita Hulands Marketing Manager – Commercial, Hewlett-Packard Co

Tip 51: “Use Your Heart”

The single most important thing I’ve learned in internal communications is to use your heart. If you need to communicate something – learn about it so that you can communicate it with passion.

If you need to galvanise your staff, speak to them in their language, don’t be afraid to be emotional. If you want to be a great internal communicator you must connect with your staff – do that first and they will connect with you.

If you’re not interested in the people you are communicating with, if you don’t care about them – they’ll know and they’ll disconnect from you. They’ll stop listening.

Use your heart to make connections, to find the passion and to communicate messages you believe in to people you give a damn about.

Wendy Jordan

Internal Communications Specialist

Tip 52: “Grow With Your Audience”

Firstly, always have a single clear purpose. If you have this and never lose sight of it then your communication will always stand out from the crowd.

Don't just know your audience, but grow with them – it is so important to build a real connection with them, to continually listen and learn from them, as well as helping them to understand what effective communication looks like and how to achieve it.

Finally, it's important to always have fun and enjoy what you do – this will come across in your messages and make them truly compelling.

Melitta Campbell

Internal Communications Consultant

Tip 53: “Ask the Audience”

One of the obvious but often forgotten principles with internal communication is to ‘ask the audience’ on what they want to hear, how they want to receive it, how often, and who from.

Is the communication activity achieving its objectives? Are you involving your audience during the design of any major communication activity to ensure it is ‘fit for purpose’?

All too often, communications activities or media are churned out because communication managers feel it’s what leaders expect to see. But truly, are all of these activities delivering a good return on their investment?

Regular measurement is critical. Business unit league tables help identify areas that are doing great things and can often be used to influence others to align to best practice.

Jack Winters

Head of Internal & Change Communication –
Operations, BAA (Heathrow Airport)

54: “Don’t Ask for Feedback via Email”

My tip for dealing with senior executives? Never ask for emailed feedback on something you've written. Chances are, they'll just insert a load of horrible corporate gobbledygook into your

perfectly readable prose.

Instead, negotiate changes on the phone (or better still, face to face). That way you're the trusted adviser who helps them get their message across in the best possible words, not the underling whose work always needs editing.

Clare Lynch

Managing director, Doris and Bertie Ltd
www.dorisandbertie.com

55: “Listen To Your People”

Invest as much time as possible listening to your people. Really understand what they do, what pressures they are under, and how they feel about communication.

We spend a lot of time with leaders and sometimes our line of sight to the rest of the organisation becomes a bit blurred.

There is little point in creating campaigns, shaping messages and investing in channels if no one is reading or listening. Our employee audiences are changing all time so never make assumptions and

be prepared to be surprised!

Helena Cutts

Director of Internal Communications (Global and EMEA), Ernst & Young LLP

56: “Know What You Want”

If you don't understand what you are trying to achieve then you will never succeed.

People often come to me with an idea of what they want to say and even how they want to say it. But they have no idea of what impact they want to have or what they want people to do, think or feel as a result of that piece of comms.

So how will they ever pick the right words or the right channels? Start with the audience – it's the only way!

Justine Stevenson FIIC

Change Communications Specialist, Group Finance Communications, Deutsche Bank AG

Tip 57: “Let Staff Know First”

Always ensure workers know it before it goes out!

We have had cases where workers discover news on their company in newspapers, on TV or radio. Then a worker wondered: "Why have an internal comms team if I have to find out stuff on my company outside?"

Ghislain Chounbang

Manager, Corporate Communications, AES-SONEL

Tip 58: “What Do They Need to Hear?”

From early on we are told to focus on ‘what’s in it for them’.

Sounds like a simple concept, but on a regular basis I am having the difficult conversation with clients about the difference between what they want to say and what people need to hear.

Tread lightly and be gentle, because people can take offence at having their communications critiqued. Help them realise that people only really

want the ‘must have’ information and anything more will prevent their message getting across.

And don’t forget, there is such a thing as too much information.

Kristy Leversha

Internal Communications Adviser, Department of Transport, Victoria, Australia

Tip 59: “Drop The Jargon!”

Communicate strategically, honestly and, most importantly, drop the jargon!

Firstly, when crafting a strategy or announcement, consider if the information you’re sharing is relevant to your organisation or its people’s success. If it’s not, do you really need to share it

And if it is, consider how it will affect your employees and how will it be received?

Secondly, no matter what you’re sharing, make sure that you keep the communication as honest as possible - it’s not always feasible to disclose everything, especially when dealing with sensitive

subjects, but no one likes being lead up the garden path. So if you can't disclose everything, simply state it.

And finally, keep your communications simple – drop the jargon, drop the acronyms and drop the “stuffy” tone.

If you're hiring the right people, they're busy doing their jobs adding to your organisation's success. The less time they have to spend deciphering messages the better.

Bal Kaur Lola

Experienced Internal and Digital Communications Professional.

Tip 60: “Listen, Listen, Listen”

The one thing I've learned over my tenure as an internal communicator is to listen, listen, and listen.

Listening is an art form, a key tool for any communicator. Do your people fear change? Yes, of course they do. But why? Ask them why, listen to what they have to say and respond accordingly.

Follow this simple rule and you have the basis for any relevant communications strategy.

Eileen Daly

Director, Internal Communications and Editor-in-Chief, Sodexo

Tip 61: “Don't Be a Postbox”

As you will probably manage your organisation's internal communications channels, make sure you don't run the risk of being viewed as the internal postbox. Sending out every message that comes your way ultimately devalues the channel and your position.

Offer advice on the best way to get a message across and always take a strategic approach to what is communicated – and what isn't.

Anne Moore

Internal Communications Specialist,
Northamptonshire County Council

Tip 62: “Be Conversational”

The best advice I could give is: forget the corporate

speak and make it conversational. Like the BBC's Old Grey Whistle test was all about testing a new record out on the 'old greys' – the doormen in grey suits in the music studio — I have long believed in the Old Grey Granny test.

If you can communicate in a way that your granny or a disinterested friend down the pub would understand, then you would have reached every single member of staff with your communication.

And while it can be painful at times, keep it honest – treat people like adults. Most people can take bad and good news as long as it is open and honest. We all deal with good and bad news in our everyday lives so why should work be any different.

Paul Riddell

Head of Strategic Communications, AXA Wealth

Tip 63: “Consider Them First”

Always put yourself in your audiences' shoes. Before you communicate anything, ask yourself – how will they react? How will it affect them? Is this a sensitive subject?

Communications should be tailored to fit the intended audience's needs. It should tell them the when, who, how, why, where and leave no questions unanswered.

Successful internal communication should be an open and transparent two-way process, ensuring the audience has all the tools and knowledge to do their job.

Diane Walsh

Internal Communications Specialist, Swinton
Oldham, United Kingdom

Tip 64: “Honesty”

Honesty is the best policy.

Your employees can read between the lines, find holes in your benefits case, know when you're over-egging and spot flimsy rationale at a hundred paces.

If something is changing because it saves your company money, then say so. Just make sure you fully explain why you need to save money.

They might not agree with it or like it but they can handle the truth.

Jenny Parry Grant

Internal Communications Manager, Mitchells & Butlers

Tip 65: “Get Feedback on Channels”

Be sure to constantly ask your public their opinion about the channels you use to communicate.

Apply a survey, request people to participate, show results to the company and, most important,

Take actions according to the responses, showing that you respect people's opinion.

We have the benefit to know our public, differently of mass media. Use this on your behalf.

Luiz Trindade

Marketing and Communication Manager, RSI
Informática
(São Paulo Area, Brazil)

Tip 66: “Be the Bridge”

The most important thing I’ve learned in internal communication is to be the bridge between leadership and employees through good audience segmentation, business acumen and driving a single message across the hierarchy.

Caroline Thomas Lingham

Regional Director - Internal Communications, Asia Pacific - Schneider Electric

Tip 67: “Manage Expectations”

Whether you are working in-house or with an agency, beyond all else, manage the expectations of your business partner or client. Of course you can shoot for the sky, but the reality is not always so rosy. Be practical.

There are so many opinions, learned or otherwise, that surround the practice of internal communication, that without a clearly shared expectation of outcomes, frustration on both sides becomes inevitable.

Phillip Anderson

Director - Global Internal Communication,
LG Electronics

Tip 68: “Write With Your Audience in Mind”

Always write with the audience in mind. Our job is to give our audiences reasons to believe, and have fun telling stories. Too often we construct messages based on what we want to say, instead of what the audience wants or needs to hear.

Thirona Maharaj

Group internal communications manager, Standard Bank Group
(Johannesburg Area, South Africa)

Tip 69: “Leaders Bring People With Them”

The leader must be fully committed to prioritising communication within the company. Those leaders who communicate naturally and genuinely are able to bring people with them, right down the line.

Focus must be put on each individual’s personal communication: how authentic they are to others and to themselves, how much responsibility they take for their words and actions, how well they

listen to others, and how well they are able to use observation and fact instead of judgement and blame when in conflict.

My belief is that internal communication should start with training on fundamental personal communication skills. Only once these skills are in place can the true potential of a communication strategy, policies, channels and infrastructure be realised.

Penelope Newton-Hurley

Communication specialist and trainer,
CommPassion Ltd

Tip 70: “Challenge Requests”

I’ve worked in Internal Communications for over 12 years and in five different organisations and it’s common for people across a business to believe they can ‘do’ communication.

This results in requests which begin with “we need an email/poster/intranet story”.

As internal communications professionals it is often difficult to challenge such requests,

especially from senior business leaders, so it can be easier to give in — perhaps against one’s better judgement.

When faced by this type of situation I always respond with the same question: “What outcome are you looking to achieve through your communications”. This may sound obvious, and yet it is so easy to forget and just deliver what has been asked for.

This question invariably leads to dialogue, and the more you can ask (what do you want people to do, feel, see as a result? Why should they care? Why is this important? Why, why, why?) the better the conversation will be and the more effective the eventual communication will be.

Richard Donovan

Head of Internal Communications – Citi

Tip 71: “Market Internal Comms”

The most important thing I’ve learned in internal communication is how to explain to senior staff what IC can contribute in terms of organisational

success.

So many senior managers are poor communicators and communicate ineffectively. They talk about employee engagement but don't really understand the benefits.

It's so important to help them understand that people being happy at work is merely a means to a greater end which includes lower staff turnover, and increased productivity.

Fiona Cohn

Internal communications Specialist, PDSA

Tip 72: “Be Yourself. Or Be Warren Buffett”

My number one tip is to be yourself. I know that sounds trite, but people put on a mask when they have to talk to a large audience.

I remember Russell Brand remarking that it's very hard to be yourself in public. It's difficult to 'act natural' when you're in the spotlight.

Internal communicators know that feeling, for sure. Doesn't it feel daunting to communicate to

thousands of people at once?

Some people cope by adopting a needlessly formal tone. They gravitate towards abstract business language, to put a comforting distance between their communication and their actual personality.

Others make the opposite mistake - assuming a chummy, patronising tone in an effort to 'dumb down' for the masses.

In the end, it's much smarter to be yourself.

But if being yourself is just too difficult, try being Warren Buffet instead. Spend some time reading the letters that he famously writes to Berkshire Hathaway stockholders each year.

See if you can try to mimic his cheery, professional tone. Buffett says that his secret is to write as though he's gently explaining something to his two sisters, Doris and Bertie.

Copy Buffett and I don't see how you can fail.

Ian Harris

Director, Rockstar Comms

Tip 73: “Mentor Your Sponsor”

The single most important thing that I have learned in internal communication is to choose your boss well, because your work can only be as good as your sponsor is willing to make it.

Everyone is a communicator and the practice of communication is like a chameleon — it adapts to suit its environment.

Communicators sit 'backstage' — organizing, advising, facilitating and planning communications on behalf of their sponsors. They don't make the business decisions that create the content, and they aren't seen to be the communicators 'front of stage' either. Their sphere of influence and the scope of their activities is almost entirely dependent on how their sponsor wants to play it.

Lindsay Uittenbogaard

Global Communication Manager (Shell Account),
T-Systems

Tip 74: “7 Tips”

1. Don't use two words when one will do.
2. Put yourself in your audience's shoes - avoid jargon in your everyday terminology
3. Don't let other factors cloud your ultimate goal
4. Think multimedia, not just media
5. It's 2012 - think about how technology can improve your relationship with your audience
6. Spell-check is your best friend. Always.
7. Effective communication begins with listening.

Neil Perry

Communications Co-ordinator at Pearson

Tip 75: “Be Consistent, Clear, and Concise”

I've learned that internal communication isn't only just about fancy newsletters or gimmicks.

Our role as internal communicators is making sure the messages, whether they are face-to-face, via email or using various social media mechanisms,

are consistent, clear and concise (the 3 Cs) and most importantly understood by the people who matter – the workforce.

Surprisingly many people (generally non-communicators) don't realise this simple concept.

Advita Patel

Internal Communications Officer, Manchester

Tip 76: “Who Are You Trying to Reach?”

The most important thing I've learned is to know your audience.

While most internal communications is employee-focused, it's vital to understand which employees you're trying to reach.

Do they have computer access? What are their day-to-day challenges? Which communication vehicles are most appealing to them?

Knowing your audience inside and out will help you create the most meaningful communication program and messaging.

Allison Jackson

Director, Global Internal Communications, Hertz

Tip 77: “People Value Honesty”

True honesty in internal communications is a hard thing to come by.

Public companies cater to shareholders and Wall Street, often at the expense of employees when it comes to communication. They will craft their internal communications with enough positive spin (sugar coating) so that it sounds good externally even when it's not completely true internally.

Employees are adults and can see through this, and will complain that things are not as rosy as they are portrayed. This will negatively affect employee morale and engagement and can lead to valued employees seeking work elsewhere.

Private companies tend to do a better job, as they don't have shareholders to worry about when communicating internally, but politics and ownership can sometimes get in the way.

Cooper Toulmin

Internal Communications Manager, The Monitor Group

Tip 78: “Hearts and Minds”

Communications of any sort are about ‘people’ and relationships! Yes, that’s obvious, I know — but why do so few people in business really think ‘hearts and minds’ when communicating?

When the success of your communications relies upon what the audience ‘do, think or feel’ as a result, why do so many business managers appear not to realise how much what they ‘say and do’ matters to those around them?

Once you’ve really grasped the ‘people’ concept and begin to know your audience, you know that how each person processes, interprets and reacts to information is unique.

Caroline Bramley

Communications Consultant, Trainer and Executive Coach , Insync Communications Ltd

Tip 79: “Listen”

Taking time to understand and listen to your audience allows you to be able to create strategic campaigns that engage and inspire.

Darran Marc Hudson

Internal Communications Specialist

Tip 80: “Senior Managers Will Get It Wrong”

Here’s an illustration of how senior managers believe communications is easy, but still get it so wrong!

Director X believes, as most senior managers do, that he is a wonderful orator and writer. He isn’t, but who is going to tell him?

He is angry that a minion will not publish and circulate a verbose message he has written that contains sentences averaging 140 words, poor spelling and smatterings of incorrect punctuation.

He is not impressed with the Plain English alternative written for him.

Director X: "I want it in the style of The Times not The Sun."

Minion (via several intermediaries): "No self-respecting journalist anywhere would produce copy as poorly written as yours. Shane Watson would be aghast."

Director X: "Who is he?"

Minion (via several intermediaries): "She is a Sunday Times columnist"

Michele Allen

Communications Manager specializing Internal Communications, Royal Bank of Scotland

Tip 81: "Don't Forget Your Focus"

Too often, we tend to forget what is the main focus of IC: people. We use many tools to get the message across but we should keep in mind that Internal communication should be less about technology and more about humanity.

Most of the time, IC is the missing link between

the management and the employees. For the internal public of a company, it shouldn't only be about managing tools and spreading a message. IC should also be a trustworthy relay to get across a message to the top leaders.

It is somehow difficult to build a solid relationship with both the top and the base of the pyramid but it is essential in the long run to maintain a stable social climate.

Vanessa Marcie

Partner/Senior Consultant, Scencia International

Tip 82: “Don't Build Castles in the Air”

Internal communication is only successful when it is aligned with the business objectives of the organization, it is not enough to drive only engagement or culture etc.

The purpose and the need of internal communication cannot be generic and has to be defined uniquely for each organization, which then have to be followed up by interventions which have to be effective at the grass root level.

Your internal communication plan cannot be a castle in the air.

Saumick Pal

Deputy General Manager, Reliance Power Ltd,
Mumbai

Tip 83: “Don't Talk Internal Communication”

The single, most important thing that I've learned in internal communication is not to talk internal communication.

It is all too easy, filled with enthusiasm for your subject to talk to managers about the techniques that you have learned or studies that you have read but in my experience unless you are talking to peers - it can be a real turn off.

Focus instead on how you can help deliver business objectives, make sure you deliver on them and demonstrate how internal communication makes a real contribution to success.

Joyce Dalglish

Communications Manager, Scottish Government

Tip 84: “Stay on the Front Line”

Keep your ear close to the ground — go and speak to the people on the front line at every opportunity.

You can guess which channel works, you can think you've created a really engaging campaign, but you don't really know until you've spoken to someone who tells it like it is.

A key role of internal communicators has to be to tell senior managers something they don't already know — often how an issue will be received by the workforce. This means understanding your workforce, what they're interested in, and how a message has reached them after being filtered by managers (which is always illuminating).

The beauty of internal communications is that the answers are often just a few short steps away from your desk — never has walking about and speaking to people been so productive.

Michael Smith

Internal Communications Manager, Anchor Trust

Tip 85: “What's Key to your Audience?”

The most important thing I've learned is understand your audience. What's important to them? Why? What do you want them to know, think and feel? Have you segmented? Do you know how important information should flow?

Essentially, there is no 'one size fits all' if you do things properly. Think about your audience, what's key to them, why, how they consume information and that should be a guide for any comms.

Sasha Watson

Internal Communications Project Manager, AXA

Tip 86: “Get to the Heart of Others”

The single most important thing I have learned about internal communications is that people will never stop wanting to learn more about others — who they are, where they came from and where they're going.

If you can't ignite and spread the passion for communicating with and between others you are

truly missing out on one of the most magical and satisfying roles you will ever have to play on the stage of life.

Knowing how to get to the heart of others and the organisation, then bringing that knowledge to the forefront of people's minds will always hold you in good stead and give you the opportunity to radically change the working lives of your peers.

To be the leader of that process is a huge responsibility, but one that is so rich in rewards.

Leanne Reading

Internal Communications Manager, Amnesty International Australia

Tip 87: “Don't Listen to Leaders About TV”

When discussing making an internal communication video, remember the leadership team will probably watch very little or no television.

This means they will not be nearly as sophisticated in the understanding of the medium as the audience and can make very bad decisions about the

production values. Peer review helps avoid expensive and ineffective films being made.

Louise Fawkner-Corbett

Internal Communications Project Manager,
Telefonica Digital

Tip 88: “Don't Succumb to the Corporate Mentality”

Be yourself - don't succumb to the corporate mentality, you are there to unravel that for the rest of the business!

You have to be close to the common people as well as the management team. Listen, listen, listen, listen. listen. Then do something about it. When putting those messages together, grab people's attention with 'what's in it for them'. Get to the point and stick to the point.

In my experience communication is something that is bandied about as being vitally important but which many don't actually understand or embrace!

Jacqueline Trousdale

Internal Communications Specialist

Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Tip 89: “Have a Plan Before You Act”

I've learnt that no matter how rushed you are or how urgent the issue, you should always come up with an outline strategy before you communicate.

It's crucial to be clear what the purpose of the communication is, how you want employees to think, feel and behave and what the possible tactics are to achieve these aims.

Communications that aren't based on clear strategy but rather shoot from the hip tend to be ineffective or can backfire.

Will Brewster

Account Director, Flagship Consulting

Tip 90: “Context and Clarity”

I've always found that if you stick to the following

key principles, you won't go far wrong.

Firstly, understand the context of what you are trying to communicate, and to whom. Secondly, always ensure that your message has clarity.

Thirdly, make sure it is both credible and consistent. Finally, as with all good communications, make it compelling. Every message will be different and will require to be tailored to the particular audience and situation, but underpinning it with these five principles will mean you start off every time with a better chance of success.

Stuart McMillan

Director at Craiglea Consulting

Tip 91: “Don't Ask to Be Indulged”

Every good communicator should ask themselves one question: “Am I asking my reader to indulge me?”

Remember, your message is in competition with

everything your readers encounter on a daily basis; every message, every radio advertisement they heard in their car on the way to work, every pop-up or banner ad they saw on the web that day, every television ad they saw the night before, every billboard message that grabbed their attention, every email from their boss, colleagues, friends and mothers-in-law.

Your message will be judged and ultimately consumed through this prism. That's a lot of competition. Can your message cut through the clutter? Will it resonate with your readers?

You need to make your message count. Your credibility is on the line every time. Keep your focus on what you want to get across to your reader and do it quickly. So don't ask your readership to indulge you.

Be respectful of their time and attention and they will reward you with receptiveness.

Julian Rogers

Internal Communications Specialist,

Tip 92: “Open and Honest”

I have learned various things in my career in internal communications. We all know that communication should be open and honest, but every so often we must stop and ask ourselves: “What does open and honest communication look like within my company?”

This will stir up a great debate within your team and could actually unearth some basic things that you are not currently doing. For me this biggest learning here is that words, phrases and mottos are the easy part. Making them live and breathe within your organization are the hard part and will distinguish you and your team from the crowd.

When was the last time you challenged yourself or your team to identify the most fundamental rule of communication?

Gordon Dowall-Potter

Internal Communications Lead, Levi Strauss & Co.
[Brussels Area, Belgium](#)

Tip 93: “Be Curious”

A famous bank use a slogan: ‘A little local knowledge goes a long way’ and for good reason! The most important that I have learnt as an Internal Communicator is to be curious — get to know as many people in your organisation as you can.

I talk to everyone; in the kitchen; in the lift; at lunch; outside meeting rooms; wherever! I learn names of children, occupations of husbands, favourite hobbies and even holiday destinations!

There is so much value in knowing little snippets of information about individuals and teams. I have lost count of the number of times these seemingly innocent chats have got my foot in the door when I have a business-critical message to convey.

Vanessa Walker

Internal Communications Specialist, London
Borough of Bexley

Tip 94: “Listen and Share”

Listen! That's my top tip. In my experience the most effective internal communication starts by those tasked with communicating being prepared to listen to what is being said, so they can craft the messages in a way that acknowledges where people are coming from. The word 'communication' is from the Latin verb 'communicare', i.e. to share. It's not one way!

Pamela Mounter

Internal Communication specialist

Tip 95: “Hang Out With Staff”

Many of the best insights come from listening to staff, so spend lots of time hanging out in communal areas overhearing conversations.

Steve Smith

Head of Internal & External Communications,
Cable & Wireless Communications

Tip 96: “Get Staff Involved”

Get staff involved in the internal communications

process. The more people that contribute and participate, the more effective it will be.

This is all about engaging with your internal audience regularly and at all levels, asking for their feedback and ideas then using this to shape the direction, approach and future plans.

Staff will be more likely to listen and engage with internal comms if they have an active role to play.

Nick Ronald

Internal Communications Officer at Sense

Tip 97: “Aim for Belief”

I came across this a few years ago and it is one of the best pieces of advice I ever got. Don't concentrate on what communication does but on what it brings about. Awareness is good, understanding is better but belief is the main prize.

Denise Brophy

Internal Communications Manager, Bank of Scotland

Tip 98: “Translate Ideas”

I spent twenty years as a training manager before finally making the move into communications, and one thing that struck me early in is that they're both very much about listening.

Obviously you have to listen to your stakeholder to get an idea what he or she is actually trying to get across (which isn't always clear when you first talk!)

But where I think a lot of internal communicators fall down, is they don't listen to their audience. What do they react to and what leaves them cold? What are their expectations and their prejudices? For me, communication is about translating stakeholders' ideas into terms an audience can grasp and want to act on - and you can't translate unless you are really listening carefully.

Mike Fletcher

Communications Business Partner,
The Co-operative Group
Manchester, UK.