

Proactive Internal Communication Drives Firm Success

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In the A/E/C industry, your employees are your most important asset. These are the folks providing the firm's services and interacting with your clients. In turn, your employees' perceptions and experiences with your firm are transferred to the clients with whom they work. If your employees are rallied around a cohesive business strategy and a shared sense of purpose, the brand will radiate meaning from the most authentic source: the people who work there.

That's why internal communication requires as much thought and effort as your business and marketing strategies. Communicating consistently with employees:

- Ensures they know who you are, what you do and what you stand for, thus creating an understanding of business goals and the overall organization.
- Builds a sense of community and trust, engaging employees and making them invested in the firm's success.
- Develops a cohesive culture and empowers employees to proactively drive business goals.
- Creates a cohesive internal and external brand that transfers to client interactions, improving client experiences.

An internal communication plan is a step in the right direction to proactively address internal communications. This plan serves as a clear guide. It focuses communication efforts, ensuring employees feel informed about goals and strategic initiatives. Your internal communication plan should clearly and specifically define what internal communication strategies are important to focus on, how, when, who implements them and how you'll measure impact.

When building an internal communication plan, consider:

- 1. How are you currently communicating with employees?**
Assess your current internal communication efforts. Is any internal communication happening at all? If so, what has been done in the past? What has been effective and what hasn't? Conduct a survey or hold focus groups with key employees to gain a better understanding of the gaps.
- 2. What are your goals? What are you trying to accomplish?**
Your communication plan is not just delivering information — it's about the firm you support. Are you introducing a new service line? Do you have a new technology that will benefit clients? When you put business goals front and center, it helps align your activities and shows how employee communication will make a difference to help the firm succeed.
- 3. What information do your employees need to know to help drive these goals?**
What key messages are essential for employees to know to effectively communicate about the new service line or technology? Address the who, what, why, when and how of the topic. Create key messages and concepts that summarize the information in a cohesive and succinct way.
- 4. How do employees prefer to get their information?**
Do you have an intranet that employees access daily? Is email the channel of choice? Distribute information where and how employees will consume it. If they aren't reading it, it's not helping achieve your business goals.
- 5. How will you measure progress and demonstrate success?**
Determine how you will identify that your communication objectives have been achieved. What metrics will you use for measurement? Use ongoing metrics — such as email clicks and opens and intranet statistics — to show how communication is performing. Check your progress on a regular basis, such as monthly and/or quarterly. By measuring communication efforts consistently, you can determine what is working, what isn't and adjust accordingly.

Internal communication is a continuous process that must be reevaluated consistently. You must work every day to communicate effectively with employees. At the end of the day, the effort is well worth it, creating strong employee relationships that help drive your business goals and ensure your firm achieves success.

About the Author: Christine White, CPSM, has 12 years of strategic communications, content marketing and branding experience, with 8 of those years in the A/E/C industry. As the Communications Manager at R&M Consultants, she leads the firm's strategic communication efforts. This includes communications planning, content marketing strategy and development, social media management, media relations and internal communications, as well as proposal management and execution. Christine holds a B.A. in Journalism and Public Communications from the University of Alaska Anchorage and is a Certified Professional Services Marketer (CPSM) through the Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS).



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