

Employee Communications Preferences Survey

2018





WELCOME

Welcome to the inaugural ContactMonkey Employee Communications Preferences Survey.

The goal of the survey was to identify and understand what employees want when it comes to internal communications.

We surveyed 135 people from a diverse group of companies, from start-ups to global enterprises. We believe that the **real power of technology is in bringing people together**, so we wanted to see:

- What are big corporations doing to bring teams together?
- What are high-growth start-ups doing to engage their employees as they scale?

We wanted to understand **how employees perceive channels used to communicate internally**.

We hope the results help you to consider how you structure your internal comms, no matter the size of your organization.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The majority of respondents prefer email as their primary information source (74%) however 46% say they rarely - or never - read internal communications.



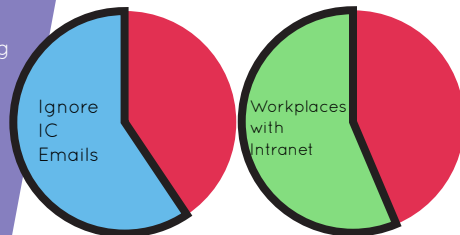
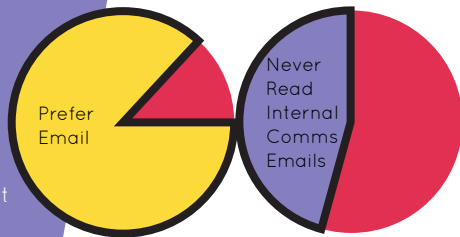
A major reason for this lack of engagement is lack of relevance; among those prone to ignoring internal emails, 46% feel they are not relevant to their roles.



Despite nearly half of respondents claiming to ignore internal emails, 64% feel they receive the perfect number of email communications.



60% of respondents have an internal intranet, however only **5%** use it as a resource.

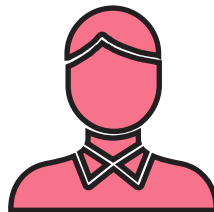
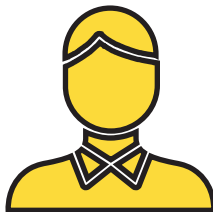
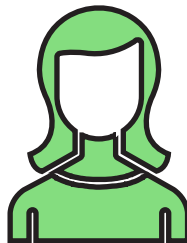


RESPONDENT PROFILE

135 professionals were surveyed.

Our survey covered many geographies and functional roles, and included a variety of industries including Tech, Banking, Non-profit, Retail, Financial Services, Advertising, and Education. This included eight respondents in internal communications and employee engagement roles.

12 informational interviews were also conducted with professionals at companies of all sizes and across a variety of industries.

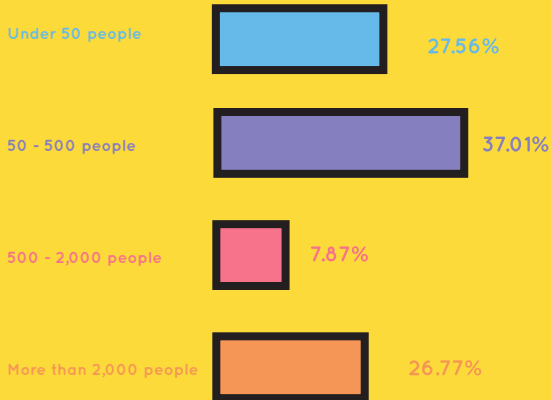


COMPANY SIZE

- 34% of respondents work at organizations with more than 500 employees.

How does this compare to the workforce?

According to the US Bureau of Statistics, 46% of private sector employment is in firms with more than 500 employees.



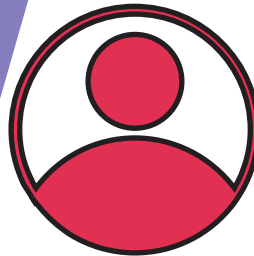
DEMOGRAPHICS

“Firms with a higher percentage of younger employees are more likely to adopt new technologies” - Jenny Meyer, The Adoption of New Technologies and the Age Structure of the Workforce.

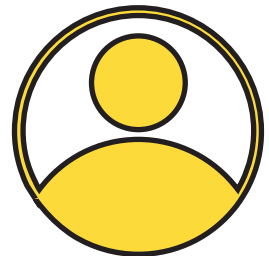
According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, this cohort makes up the majority of the workforce in the world's largest economies, replacing the baby boomer generation.

It is particularly relevant to note that this is the cohort who are currently moving into management and C-level roles across all organization sizes. They will be allies in modernizing and updating internal communication channels.

94%



GenX



Millennials

FLOW OF INTERNAL INFORMATION

The most popular sources for receiving internal information was found to be:

- Email (46%)
- Co-workers (25%)
- Team leaders (20%)

Why could this potentially cause concern amongst HR and Internal Communications professionals?

When news comes from a peer, there is an opportunity for misinformation to circulate potentially leading to anxiety or distress for employees, lower productivity rates and happiness.



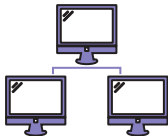
EMAIL
46%



CO-WORKERS
25%



TEAM LEADERS
20%



INTRANET
5%



SOCIAL
3%



MEDIA/NEWS
1%

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE & CHANGE MANAGEMENT:



At the first whispers of conversation around an executive change, this People Operations specialist at a high-growth tech firm put a plan in place to control the flow of information while upholding the company's commitment to transparency. **Employees were worried about the impact hiring a new President would have on the culture of the company and how it would affect their day to day.** Here's how they controlled the flow of information:

First, **people managers were given permission to confirm a change was coming** and that the company was looking to hire a President, who would be joining the executive team. This information was shared during a monthly managers meeting. They were asked not to go too much into depth, but to reassure employees that the changes were in the best interests of the company and that the rumors were true, a President had been hired.



Then, the **CEO sent out an all staff communication**, announcing and introducing the new executive, followed by an **email directly from the new President**. Armed with the knowledge that not everyone reads email and video is a higher engagement platform, an **introductory video was added to the company intranet**, reiterating key points, such as an open door policy and an introduction for employees to engage them directly. "A few logistical changes (reporting structure, etc.) were shared in the video as well to curtail any concerns."



Finally, a two-hour company wide meeting was held where the new President talked about their plans for the company, reiterating any changes before opening up the floor to a very long Q&A session in a very casual manner. It was a presentation layout, but the new President was walking around, setting a tone more similar to a casual fireside chat to keep it informal and comfortable.

The outcome? **Employees felt comfortable approaching the new President directly as a result of the due to change communications strategy implemented.**

FROM OUR PANEL: CONVERSATIONS WITH IC PROFESSIONALS

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE & COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS:

How do you maintain an effective stream of communication and engagement in a company with 2,000+ employees that are globally dispersed?

At this leading CRM firm, this Employee Engagement Head was tasked with the responsibility to ensure that every single employee feels valued and involved in company-wide decision making and events. **But with so much going on, how do you attract employee attention? With the help from in-house ambassadors.**

Their program involves selecting volunteers (i.e. ambassadors) who are ambitious and seasoned employees, mostly with over 10+ years experience with the firm. They represent company offices in smaller cities and are very enthusiastic about the company values and mission.

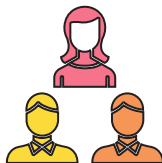
These ambassadors act on behalf of the corporate Employee Engagement team and are encouraged to driving internal communications locally with a special focus on in-person activities such as local events, town-halls, and face-to-face meetings with employees in their branch.

For example, when the company's 10 year anniversary was coming up, the ambassadors were tasked with arranging the cake and the local branches' birthday holiday celebration.

The outcome? **The employees enjoy a culture where they are valued, respected and included in the company's mission.**

Ambassadors

10+ years of experience

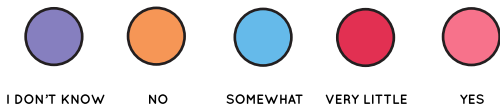


A WORD ON TRUST & THE C-LEVEL

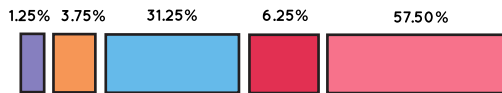
Have you ever received an email directly from the CEO or other C-level addressing changes in your organization?

Our respondents were overwhelmingly positive about communications from top management, with 87% at least “some-what” trusting of communications received from the CEO or C-level compared to receiving updates about their company from direct managers or colleagues.

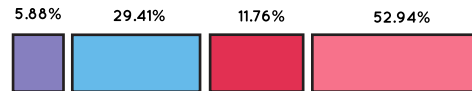
While employees at organizations with less than 500 employees were more likely to respond with a resounding “Yes”.



MILLENNIALS



GEN X



INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL PREFERENCES

With all the conversations about employee engagement and internal communications, we wanted to understand the preferred channels for communicating.

Email seems to be the preferred method for receiving internal communications, while face-to-face is the second most popular method for disseminating information.

- An in-person presentation or face-to-face session, when done well, promotes your company culture. When done poorly though, these experiences detract from the daily workflow for many professionals.
- Email is much less intrusive as it can be consumed when and where is convenient for the employee. It also acts as a reference document for employees to refer back to for key details which can be lost during a face-to-face session.

How employees prefer to receive communications (multi-select):



EMAIL
74.2%



FACE TO FACE
43.5%



IN-PERSON
27.4%



INSTANT MSG
25.8%



INTRANET
18.5%



MOBILE APPS
7.3%



SOCIAL MEDIA
7.3%



WEBINARS
6.5%

INTRANETS ARE COMMON, BUT STILL ADAPTING TO THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

What is the proposed value of an intranet? Intranets are often used for **storing internal information and processes**. With some of the new software providers on the market, there is an opportunity to be up and running quickly and to **scale as the organization scales**. They act as a gateway to internal tools and are supposed to **facilitate teamwork, build employee engagement and drive productivity**. They are also used to **bring remote teams together** around a common information point.

However, this channel has a long way to go before fulfilling this goal. Only 26% of respondents with a corporate intranet actually included it as a source of information around things that are happening at their organization.

How Big is your Company?	Does your Company have an intranet?	%
Under 50 people	No	65.71%
	What's an intranet?	17.14%
	Yes	17.14%
50-500 people	No	23.40%
	What's an intranet?	6.38%
	Yes	70.21%
500-2000 people	No	10.00%
	What's an intranet?	90.00%
	Yes	
More than 2000 people	No	8.82%
	What's an intranet?	11.76%
	Yes	79.41%

3 THINGS TO CONSIDER IN 2018 FOR YOUR INTRANET

1. Define Your Success Metrics:

If you are maintaining an intranet, how are you measuring success? This year, **consider the role of your intranet**. Take the time to decide **what role it needs to play in your organization**.

Identify what success looks like for the goals you've identified and create an action plan to achieve them.



Considerations when developing goals and identifying what success looks like:

Is it to drive cross-team collaboration?
Is it to showcase your employee efforts?
Is it simply a repository for information?

Measure inter-departmental engagement on events posts.
Track engagement with posts highlighting customer stories.
Track downloads and/or engagement with tools in a directory.

3 THINGS TO CONSIDER IN 2018 FOR YOUR INTRANET

2. The Need To Go Mobile:

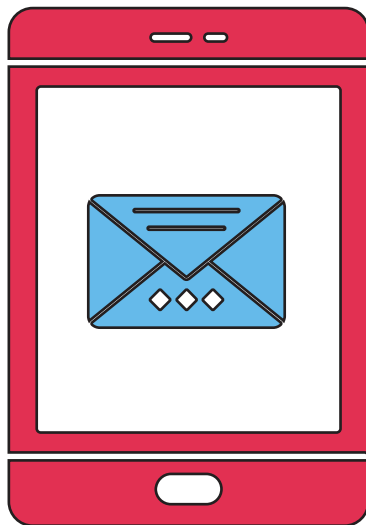
In today's modern setup, not all employees are glued to their desktop all day. Remote team members are more likely to struggle when it comes to employee engagement.

Intranets need to keep pace with changing technology and employee habits,

When evaluating Intranets you must future proof for technological advancements.

Tips for staying ahead:

- Optimizing for touchscreen technology.
- Optimising for mobile display.
- Ensuring content can be accessed when offline.



3 THINGS TO CONSIDER IN 2018 FOR YOUR INTRANET

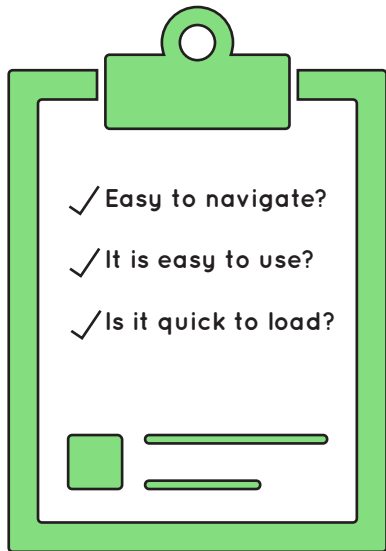
3. User Experience and Interface:

What is the main goal of your intranet?

Where are there currently gaps in information flow and communication?

Tips for optimising for user experience and interface:

- Pre-launch employee survey to identify gaps in communications (this will also help in defining the problem you want to solve and obtaining buy-in from key stakeholders).
- Building out a wireframe of desired user flow.
- Current design trends when it comes to enhancing engagement on screen.
- Technical requirements (load time, etc).



INSTANT MESSAGING PLATFORMS

The rise of slack has created a new age of instant communciations platforms and apps within the workplace. More than two-thirds of respondents currently use instant messaging platforms, such as Lync or Slack on a daily basis.

This is one of the few areas surveyed where larger organizations are ahead of the curve. Respondents at companies with less than 50 employees who are not currently using instant messaging tools can be categorised into two observations:

- Roughly half were organizations where the respondent was an owner and a Gen X'er, suggesting that there is some connection with demographics of decision makers around technology.
- In the other instances, respondents are employed in an environment where much of the interaction between teammates still takes place offline, such as face-to-face meetings.

How Big is your Company?	Does you Company use an instant messaging platform, such as Lync or Slack?	
Under 50 people	No	60.61%
	Yes	39.39%
50-500 people	No	26.09%
	Yes	73.91%
Over 500	No	21.43%
	What is an IMP? Yes	4.76% 73.81%

IF EMAILS ARE THE PREFERRED COMMS CHANNEL, WHY AREN'T THEY GETTING READ BY EMPLOYEES?

Under 500 employees:

**Do you actually read internal email
communications?**

Always: 61%, Rarely: 29% Never: 10%



"They are usually not related to the Canadian office as HR is in the US"
A Millennial in healthcare firm with 50-500 employees

"I often scan them/ just read the TL;DR"
Millennial in a SaaS company with 50-500 employees



*"Too many communications and emails. Most aren't important to me
and if important will be sent a few times and I can catch up
on the 2nd or 3rd go around"*
A Gen X'er in Retail with under 50 employees

IF EMAILS ARE THE PREFERRED COMMS CHANNEL, WHY AREN'T THEY GETTING READ BY EMPLOYEES?

Over 500 employees:

Do you actually read internal email communications?

Always: 51% Rarely: 49%



"No time. Not personalized."

A millennial in advertising at a company with more than 2,000 employees



"Irrelevant information"

A millennial in tech at a company with more than 2,000 employees



"Always some 'campaign' about work culture, employee life/work balance, diversity but often doesn't reflect reality of workplace. I essentially am tired of communication 'campaigns' that seem out of touch - therefore I skim or barely read"

A Gen X'er in government with more than 2,000 employees

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE COMMUNICATIONS YOU RECEIVE BY YOUR COMPANY?

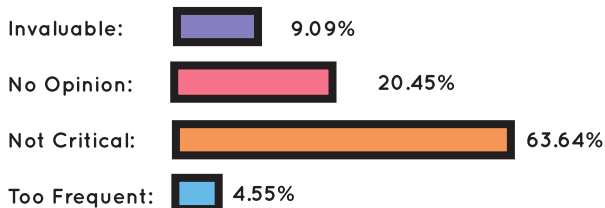
Information is not critical.

Does not relate to day to day activity.

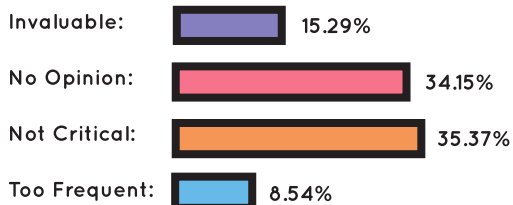
Results show that smaller companies are more likely to over-communicate non-essential information via email.

64% of respondents indicated the communications were not critical to their job vs. 35% who felt the same at larger organizations.

Under 500



Over 500



INTERNAL EMAIL FREQUENCY

- 79% would like to receive four or less internal emails each month.

To accomplish this, those responsible for internal communications need to plan an overall **email communications strategy and develop a content calendar.**

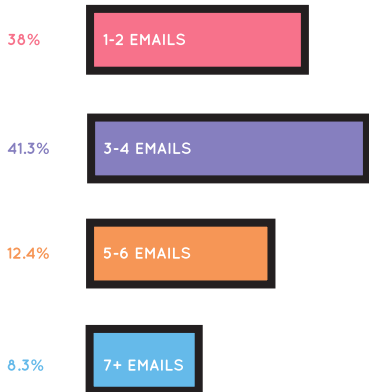
- Tips for optimizing email frequency:

Develop 12 month communications strategy.

Implement content and campaign calendar.

Define core structures for email template types (important policy updates versus company news).

In your opinion, how many internal emails should be sent every month?



TIPS FOR EMAIL ENGAGEMENT

Segmentation: Create lists based on employee demographics, for example, employee location, job function, and seniority at a minimum.



Companies of any size can benefit from leveraging distribution groups or Google Groups to ensure the information is relevant and your message is reaching the right audience (thus boosting your employee engagement with the content). Why are distribution lists necessary? Consider this: do your Canadian employees need to know about changes to your American policies? How will they feel if their American counterparts have perks and benefits different from what is offered locally? This can create, at best a willingness to ignore emails and, at worst, resentment in other markets.

Personalize communications: Boost employee engagement simply by individually addressing employees by their first name.



In a time when you can customize everything from your coffee to your running shoes, we expect brand touchpoints in our lives to be relevant. This applies to your biggest brand advocates (i.e employees) as well. Use merge fields to create a sense of individualization and increase engagement.

TIPS FOR EMAIL ENGAGEMENT

Use prompts to organize internal communications: Set clear priorities for employees.



Okay, you've segmented your lists and are personalizing emails. How else can you help to differentiate what is a "need to know" vs. "something must be completed? Use prompts or nudges in your internal emails the same way your employees do between each other. Do employees need to sign up for a new benefit plan? Add "Action Required" to the beginning of the subject line. Is your communication an update about an existing program? Use "Program Updates".

Give a summary: TL;DR might feel lazy, but it does ensure the key messages are read by employees.



Have you ever opened an email just to see a never-ending block of text? How did it make you feel? Employees already believe internal communications aren't critical to their day to day. Increase engagement by implementing "too long, didn't read" in long communications updates. These are particularly effective for product updates if you aren't leveraging segmentation.

For example, sales can deep dive into the changes to understand how they can use the information, while your support staff might just need to glance at the TL;DR.



ContactMonkey

Start tracking your internal emails today!