

Measuring What Matters in Internal Comms

Global insights from 5,000+ comms leaders on
exec buy-in, engagement, and the ROI puzzle.

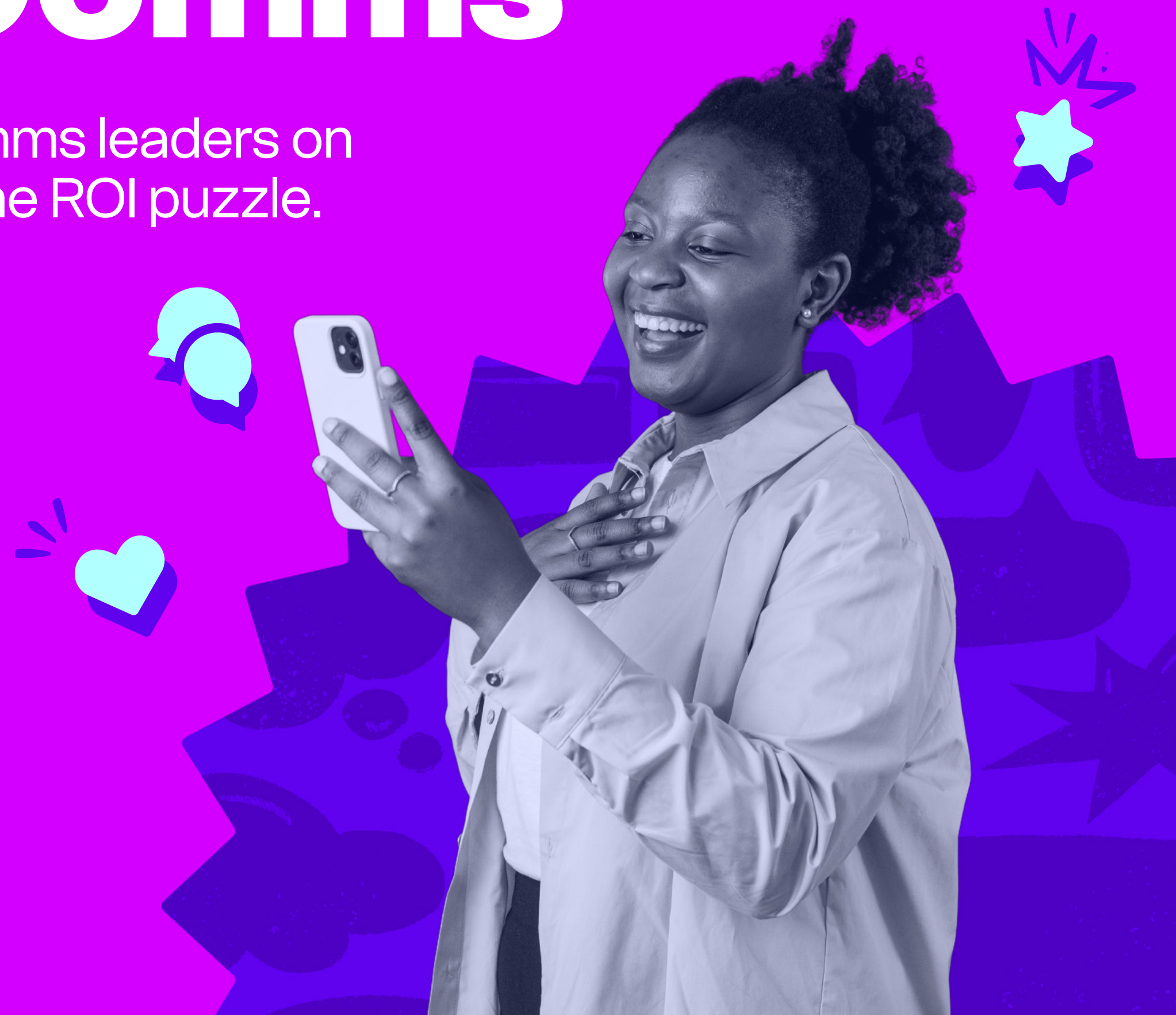


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Introduction: The ROI of Internal Comms

The role of internal communications has evolved dramatically in recent years, from a support function to a strategic driver of culture, engagement, and alignment. But with this elevated status comes a critical question: how do comms leaders prove their value in measurable terms?

Because right now, that's a huge challenge. Our latest research shows that:

92%

of internal communications teams **struggle to demonstrate the ROI** of internal comms to leadership.



Today's IC teams have a seat at the table:



**They're
valued:**

78%

of internal comms
leaders say IC is seen as
strategic by C-suite.



**They're
funded:**

84%

of IC teams have sufficient
budget to meet internal
communications goals.



**They're
prioritized:**

77%

of IC leaders say their
leadership team prioritizes
internal comms.

**And yet, almost all IC teams struggle to prove
the value of their work to leadership.**

To understand this challenge, we surveyed over 5,200 internal communications professionals from key industries like manufacturing, healthcare, transport, technology, and more.* Our research revealed that while IC teams aren't lacking in support or budget, poorly chosen metrics and tools are holding them back, making it difficult or even impossible to measure ROI.

We discovered that:

1 Metrics are missing the mark

46% say metrics not resonating is the biggest barrier to reporting impact to leadership, making it the top issue.

2 Poor tech is a major barrier

34% of IC leaders identify inadequate tools or data as the biggest challenge in measuring internal communications.

3 There's a gap between expectations and reality

Only 36% of IC leaders rate engagement with comms as very high.

**Workvivo commissioned an independent research agency, TrendCandy, to survey 5,257 internal communications professionals across a range of industries and global locations. The margin of error for this study is +/-2% at the 95% confidence level.*

So how can IC leaders transform elusive employee engagement metrics into clear, measurable outcomes that prove their impact and resonate with stakeholders?

Read on to learn how internal communications leaders are handling top challenges like executive perception, measurement, engagement, and technology, and get actionable tips to elevate your IC strategy for proven impact.



Our survey included...

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100% throughout.



Location

29%

Asia Pacific

25%

South America

21%

North America

20%

Europe or Middle East

6%

UK and Ireland



Industry

19%

Manufacturing

17%

Healthcare

8%

Transport

8%

Technology

7%

Financial Services

7%

Government / public sector

6%

Food and beverage

6%

Retail

5%

Hospitality

4%

Energy / utilities

3%

Aviation

3%

Logistics

2%

Education

2%

Pharmaceuticals

1%

Sports

1%

Other



Company size

42%

500 to 1,000 employees

33%

1,001 to 5,000

18%

5,001 to 10,000

8%

More than 10,000



Internal comms team size

3%

One person

21%

2 to 3 people

46%

4 to 6 people

29%

More than 6 people

1%

Not sure

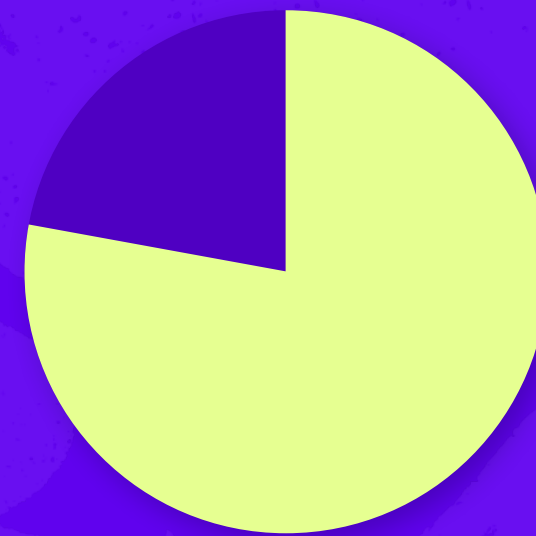




Executive Perception

Exec support is high, but IC teams need to bridge the gap between lip service and real commitment.

Let's start with the good news: leadership is bought in. C-suite leaders see the strategic importance of internal comms, and demonstrate their commitment by giving teams early visibility on key decisions and dedicating sufficient budget to reach their goals.



78%

say IC is likely seen as strategic by C-suite.

55%

of IC leaders are frequently given early visibility on strategic decisions.



84%

of IC teams say they have sufficient budget to meet internal communications goals.



Likewise, the majority (75%) of IC leaders say execs value internal comms as much as external comms, suggesting they're viewed as equal priorities.

Execs understand the role of internal comms in achieving key strategic goals. In particular, they're using it to drive employee engagement with the organization, support change, and reinforce culture and values, making IC an essential cornerstone for any organization.

What do execs care about most when it comes to internal comms?

51%

Driving employee engagement

47%

Supporting change

46%

Reinforcing culture/values

45%

Reaching every employee

30%

Improving employee retention

** Respondents could select more than one answer.*

But while execs prioritize internal communications on the surface, there are still challenges. Lack of time is cited as the biggest barrier to exec engagement, according to almost a third (31%) of IC teams, while only 40% believe company leaders truly understand the value IC brings.



31%

of IC teams cite lack of time as a barrier to exec engagement — the top blocker.



40%

feel company leaders understand the value of IC "very well".





It's clear from our research this isn't due to a lack of interest; that is, it's not that execs don't want to engage. Instead, it reveals the importance of follow-through to transform lip service into meaningful commitment.

How can IC team capitalize on these positive perceptions and transform them into meaningful buy-in? With so many competing demands on execs' attention, IC teams need to cut through the noise. To connect with time-strapped leaders and foster a deeper recognition of what IC can do, it's more important than ever to translate IC initiatives into demonstratable business impact.

To do this, teams need to link their IC strategies and KPIs to overarching business goals, and provide real-time insights to leadership with data-driven reporting. But, as we'll soon see, this is easier said than done – and inadequate tools and data can put exec goodwill at risk.



Measurement Issues

Teams can feel the results, but measurement is the Achilles' heel of internal comms.

Our research suggests that internal comms is trusted and resourced to a high level, which is an enviable position to be in. IC leaders believe that their work boosts employee engagement and morale, increases productivity, aligns teams with goals, and enhances change management.

But even with so many felt benefits, when it comes to measurement, IC leaders are almost unanimous: a whopping 92% struggle to actually *prove* impact.



92%

of IC teams struggle to prove the ROI of internal communications to leadership.

When you're trying to demonstrate ROI and secure additional resources for new initiatives – like increased budget and headcount – it's essential to have concrete evidence.

How do IC professionals feel internal comms **strengthens** their business?

50%

Boosts employee engagement and morale.

37%

Reduces misinformation and rumors.

48%

Increases productivity and clarity.

34%

Builds employee trust.

45%

Aligns teams with goals.

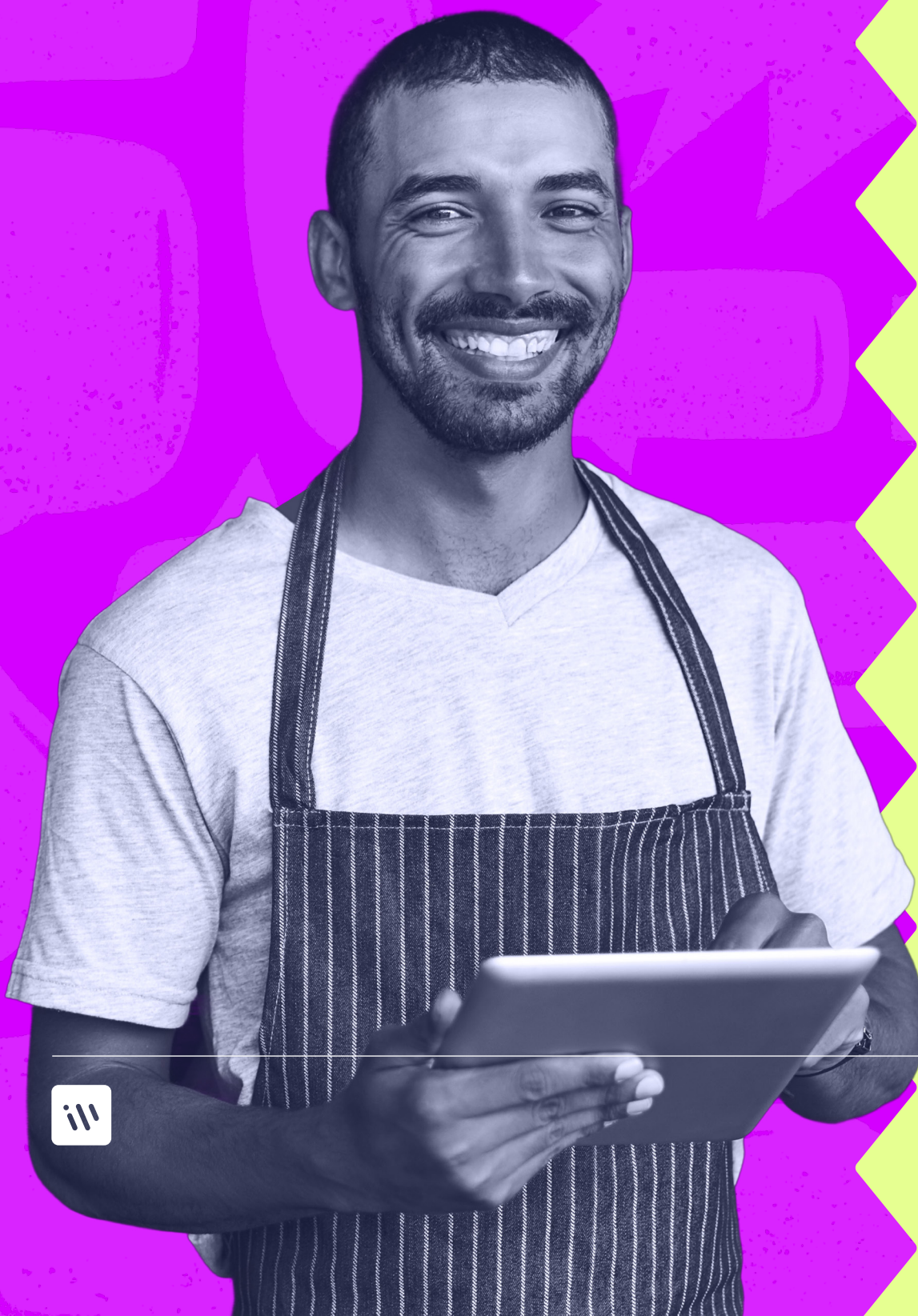
33%

Strengthens company culture.

44%

Enhances change management.

** Respondents could select more than one answer.*



This is an industry-wide problem: IC leaders say that difficulty measuring impact is the top challenge for internal communications over the coming year. But what makes it so hard?

44%

of IC professionals say that difficulty measuring impact is the top challenge for internal communications over the coming year.

For starters, there appears to be a gap between what teams are measuring and what matters to leaders. While the majority of IC teams have defined KPIs, almost half say their metrics don't resonate with leadership, making this disconnect the biggest barrier to reporting impact.



83%

say IC teams have defined internal comms KPIs.

81%

say their budget is tied to their KPIs.



46%

say metrics not resonating with leadership is the biggest barrier to reporting IC impact.

This could lead to further problems down the line. Four out of the five IC professionals say their budget is tied to KPIs, meaning that issues achieving or communicating the value of, their metrics could have consequences for resources going forward.

Secondly, engagement with internal comms (such as content consumption or participation) is notoriously challenging to accurately measure. Currently, IC teams use the following metrics to measure the success of their internal communications efforts – but many of the top methods are also the most difficult for teams to consistently meet. What's more, if teams are using multiple disconnected tools, it becomes significantly harder to connect the dots between your data to understand overall impact.



Which metrics do IC leaders use to measure success?

41%

Pulse survey participation

39%

Line manager feedback

37%

Open and click-through rates on newsletters

37%

Content reach

37%

Intranet traffic



Which metrics are the most difficult to consistently meet?

40%

Pulse survey participation

39%

Line manager feedback

36%

Open and click-through rates on newsletters

36%

Content reach

35%

Intranet traffic

When it comes to metrics, pulse survey participation comes out on top, but although it's the preferred method, it's also the most difficult metric to meet. This suggests that while teams recognize the value of pulse surveys to gather direct employee feedback, they may struggle to create and distribute surveys that capture employees' attention.

Other common metrics – like intranet traffic, content reach, and newsletter open rates – focus on quantifying interactions (like clicking a link or accessing a document) rather than measuring true engagement with the actual message, making it difficult for IC teams to understand employee preferences and improve their strategy accordingly. Similarly, only one in four (24%) IC teams are using next-gen capabilities like sentiment analysis to understand how employees actually *feel*.

IC teams use a range of methods to demonstrate the strategic value of internal comms to leadership, from emotive storytelling to data-driven dashboards.



Which methods do teams use to demonstrate the **strategic value** of internal communications to leadership?

47%

Storytelling through employee testimonials

42%

Aligning with strategic goals

42%

Visual dashboards with usage metrics

36%

ROI projections on tool investments

43%

Highlighting crisis communication outcomes

It's clear that using a mix of quantitative and qualitative measurement and reporting is important to get the full picture and persuasively share it with leadership. But the inability to measure and report on success – amplified by inadequate data from disconnected tools and channels – remains the IC profession's biggest roadblock.





Engagement Challenges

Engagement is difficult to quantify, but hybrid organizations are leading the way.

As we've already seen, driving employee engagement is the number-one priority for execs when it comes to internal comms. But while most teams believe IC improves employee engagement, the numbers don't always match up.

74% of IC leaders believe that internal comms increases employee engagement.

Increasing employee engagement through internal comms depends on people actually reading and absorbing the content in the first place. And this is where IC teams are encountering a challenge.

36% of IC leaders rate employee engagement with their internal comms as "very high".

If just over a third of IC leaders rate engagement with their internal comms as “very high”, how can they achieve the ultimate goal of driving improved employee engagement more broadly? Does this reinforce how difficult it is to prove causation between IC and employee engagement?

IC leaders report that the topics that generate the most comms engagement are culture or DEI content, leadership messages, and company news and updates, highlighting IC’s importance in fostering connection and belonging between employees and their organization.



Which topics get the most engagement from employees?

24%

Culture or
DEI content

14%

Product or business
performance updates

19%

Leadership
messages

14%

People and
team stories

17%

Company news
and updates

According to our research, hybrid workforces are leading the pack in terms of engagement with comms. Organizations with a significant number of deskless or frontline workers (i.e. hybrid workforces) rate employee engagement with internal comms as much higher than desk-based orgs, with 38% of hybrid orgs ranking it as “very high” compared to only 22% of desk-based ones.

Similarly, hybrid organizations are more than twice as likely as desk-based orgs to report that internal comms has increased employee engagement.

This creates something of a chicken-and-egg situation. Are hybrid organizations more likely to invest in internal comms because they recognize its crucial role in engaging frontline workers, or do they see stronger results *because* of their increased investment in IC? Either way, the data speaks for itself: IC teams in hybrid organizations are more likely to report higher levels of engagement, be seen as strategic by leadership, and receive higher budgets.

% of IC teams who believe internal communications is “definitely” responsible for increased employee engagement in their organization.

Hybrid: **34%**

Desk-based: **14%**

% of IC teams who rate overall engagement with internal comms as “very high”.

Hybrid: **38%**

Desk-based: **22%**

% of IC teams who feel their internal communications function is “definitely” seen as strategic by their C-suite.

Hybrid: **39%**

Desk-based: **20%**

% of IC teams who feel company leaders understand the value of internal comms “very well”.

Hybrid: **43%**

Desk-based: **26%**

% of IC teams who have sufficient budget to meet their internal communications goals.

Hybrid: **88%**

Desk-based: **59%**

% of IC teams who say leadership “definitely” prioritizes and devotes time to internal comms.

Hybrid: **38%**

Desk-based: **23%**



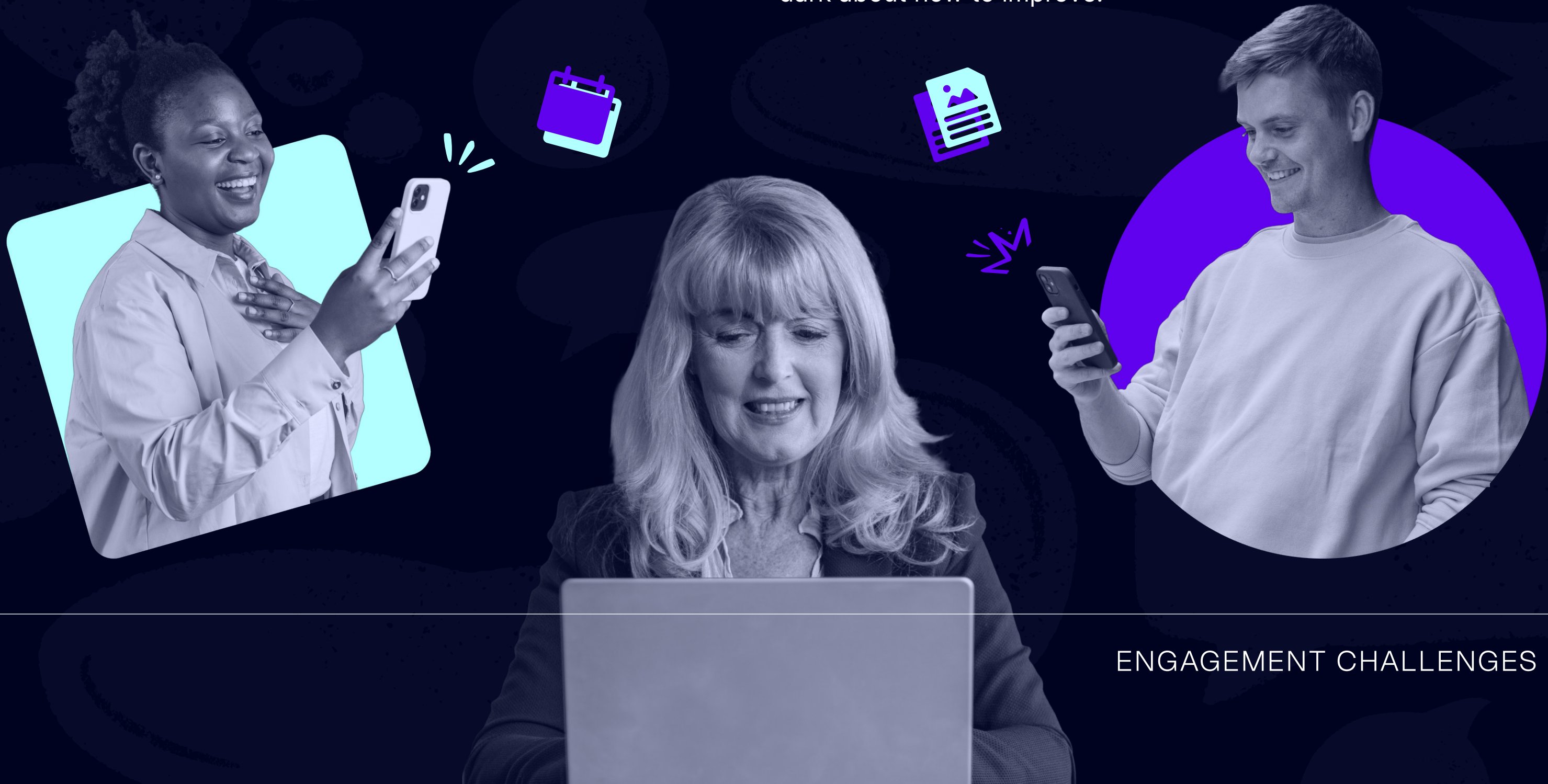
What can we learn from these hybrid workforces about winning and keeping employees' attention?

The most crucial takeaway is that engagement with comms isn't one-size-fits-all. Due to the nature of their roles, frontline workers have different communication needs. They're often dispersed across locations, may work alone for some or all of their day, and spend less time on devices than their desk-based colleagues.

All of this requires IC teams to take a more strategic, intentional approach. They can't rely on shared office spaces to build and promote company culture; instead, they need to bring culture and comms to the frontline and meet workers where they are using mobile-friendly comms.

For both desk-based and hybrid organizations, content quality is the number-one thing IC leaders want to improve in their internal comms function this year. When done correctly, this should also have a positive effect on engagement with comms – but it's not enough to rely on guesswork. Instead, teams need real-time information about which topics and formats capture (and keep) employees' attention, so they can work strategically.

As with all things relating to measuring engagement with content, accurate data is essential to proving impact and causation. Without it, it's impossible to know what's working and why, leaving internal comms leaders in the dark about how to improve.



5

Tools and Channels

Investing in the wrong tools and channels can cost IC teams dearly.

Over a third (34%) of internal comms teams struggle with poor tools and data. Fragmented tech ecosystems and data integration also present major challenges, locking valuable insights behind siloed tools.



34% of IC leaders identify inadequate tools or data as the biggest challenge in measuring internal communications.

1 in 5 cite poor data integration as a challenge.

Fragmented tech ecosystems is a top 3 challenge in IC for the coming year.



Some 29% of respondents aren't sure they have the tools they need to capture internal comms data and metrics, while 28% of respondents aren't certain they have adequate access to real-time employee insights. This means that almost one in three IC leaders are missing out on valuable data that could be used to report on and optimize their comms.

29%

of IC leaders aren't certain they have the tools they need to capture internal comms data and metrics.

28%

aren't confident they have adequate access to real-time employee insights.



What tools and channels are teams currently using?

Our research shows that, despite the potential of next-gen technology, many IC teams are stuck in old-school ways of doing things. For almost two-thirds (64%), email and newsletters are the most-used channel – even though 89% say that video is more engaging than text – while 22% still rely on printed posters or newsletters to get their message across.



What types of tools do IC teams use to create and distribute internal communications?

63%

Email or newsletter tools

40%

Video tools

49%

Employee app/ comms platform

22%

Printed posters or newsletters

47%

Intranet or SharePoint

2%

None of the above

** Respondents could select more than one answer.*



89%

of IC leaders report that using video storytelling (such as personal videos from leadership) results in higher engagement with the content than text-based communication.

BUT ONLY

40%

of teams are using video.

This represents a huge missed opportunity. While teams recognize how powerful video can be in driving engagement with comms, it goes markedly underutilized.

Over half of all hybrid organizations (51%) use an employee app or communications platform, making them significantly more likely than desk-based orgs to do so. Hybrid teams also report significantly higher confidence in their ability to capture internal comms data and metrics. Combined with the higher engagement rates achieved by hybrid organizations seen above, it's clear that these IC teams have unlocked an advantage.



% of IC teams who use an employee app or communications platform:

Hybrid: 51%

Desk-based: 40%

% of IC teams who are confident they have the tools needed to capture internal comms data and metrics:

Hybrid: 73%

Desk-based: 55%

As it is, many teams are spreading themselves thin trying to manage multiple disconnected tools and channels, which limits effectiveness and skews reporting. Consolidating data and extracting insights from fragmented tech slows IC teams down, while managing several isolated platforms adds a cost and time overhead. In some cases, like printed materials, measuring impact isn't even possible, with no way for IC teams to gauge whether that content is even being seen or read, let alone report on it to leadership.

We've already seen that this isn't a budget issue. Teams have sufficient financial resources, but growing expectations, mounting burnout, and non-stop demands likely make it hard for teams to move from "reactive" to "proactive", keeping them stuck in cycles of *meh* tools – and *meh* results.

67%

of IC leaders have experienced burnout in the past year due to their work on internal comms.



What are the primary causes of burnout for IC professionals?

36%

Lack of resources

36%

Growing expectations

17%

Shrinking teams

12%

Excessive workload

What's more, the wrong tech only deepens this misalignment and puts further strain on your resources as you struggle to get relevant insights, demonstrate impact, and manage disparate tools, potentially contributing to further burnout. Instead, teams should proactively assess their tech stack to see what is – and – isn't helping them reach their goals.

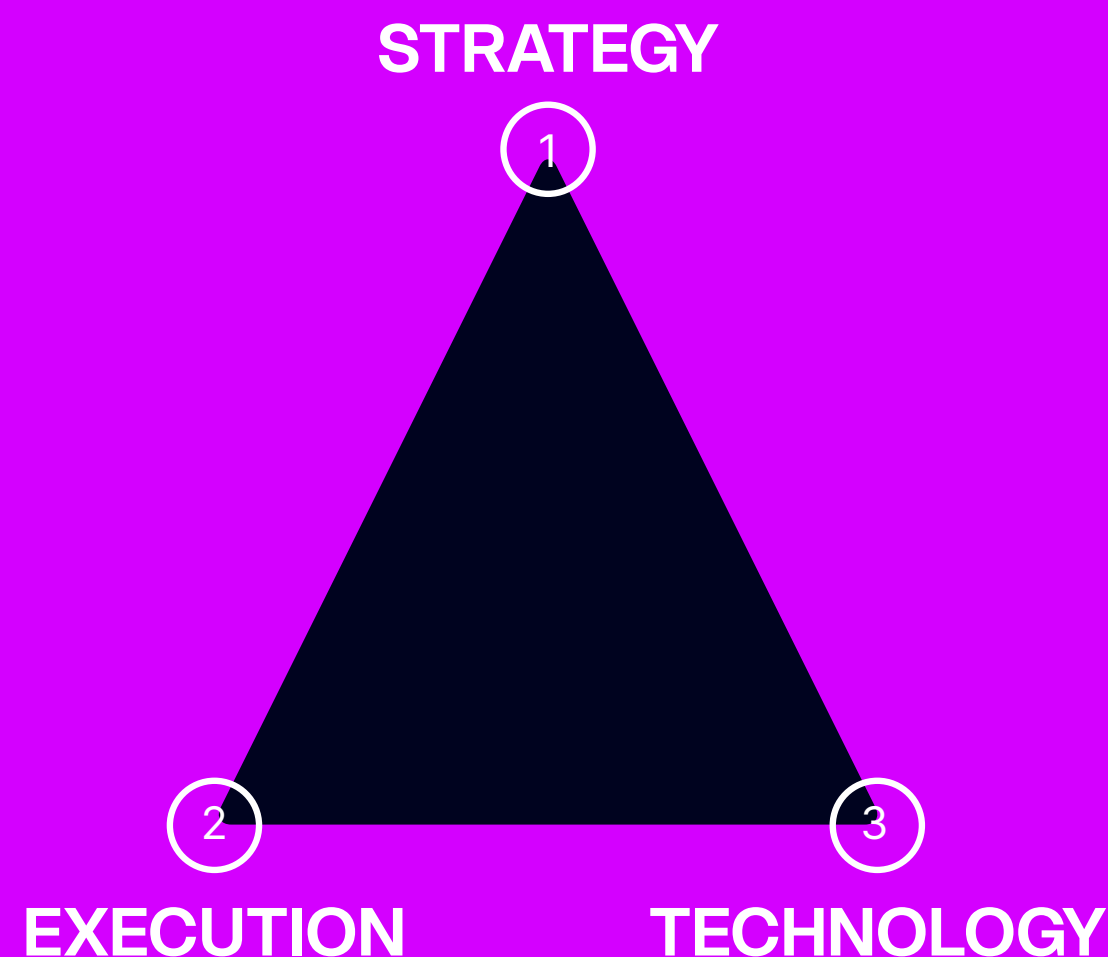




A Strategic Action Plan

What IC teams need to do next to prove impact and demonstrate ROI.

To drive meaningful, measurable internal comms results that delight leadership and employees, you need the winning trifecta:



1 STRATEGY

Strategy that outlines measurable KPIs tied to business goals, supported by in-depth analytics and insights for crystal-clear reporting.

2 EXECUTION

Execution that reaches these KPIs using a combination of rich media formats, omnichannel communications, and mobile-first experiences that meet workers' needs and preferences.

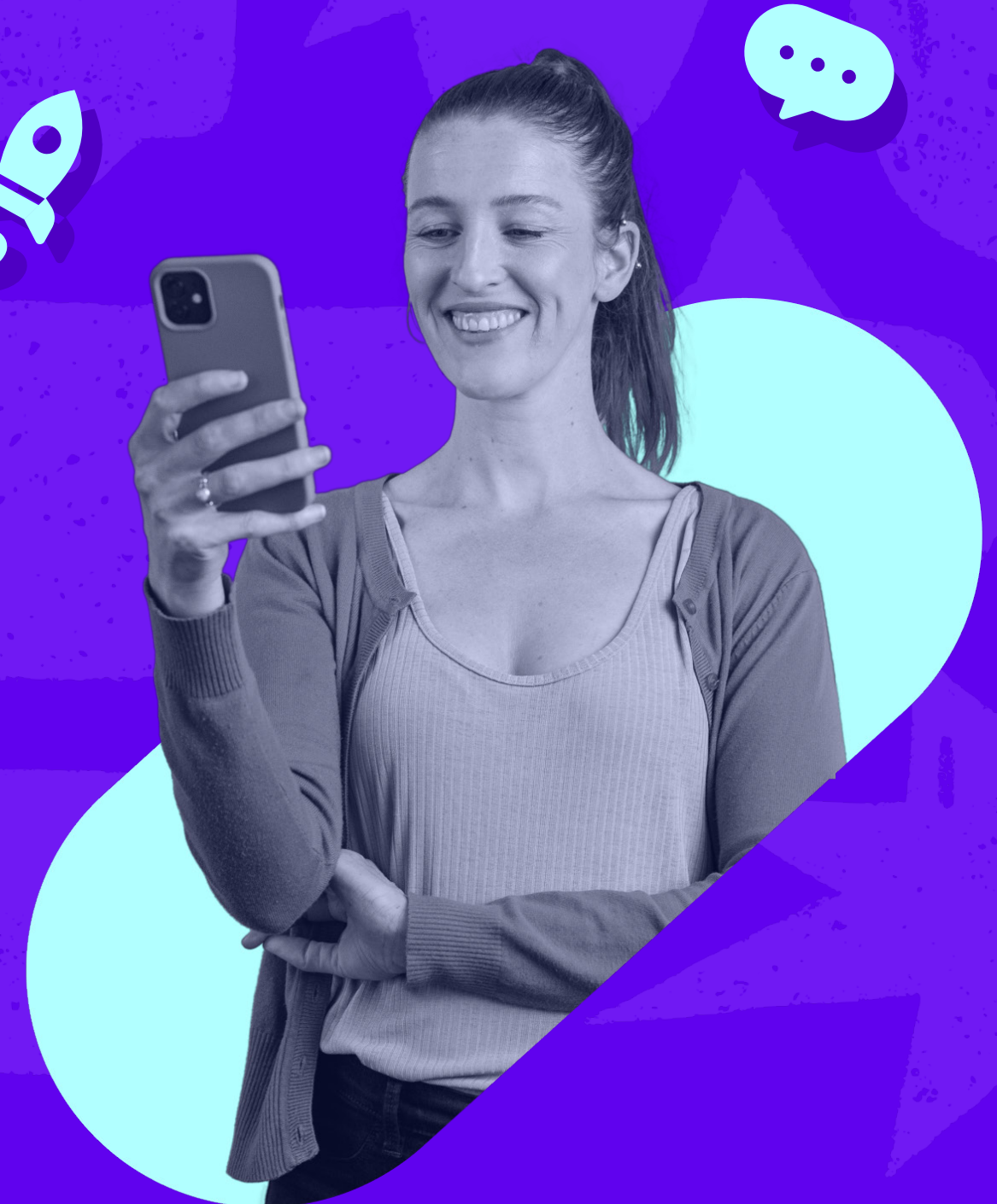
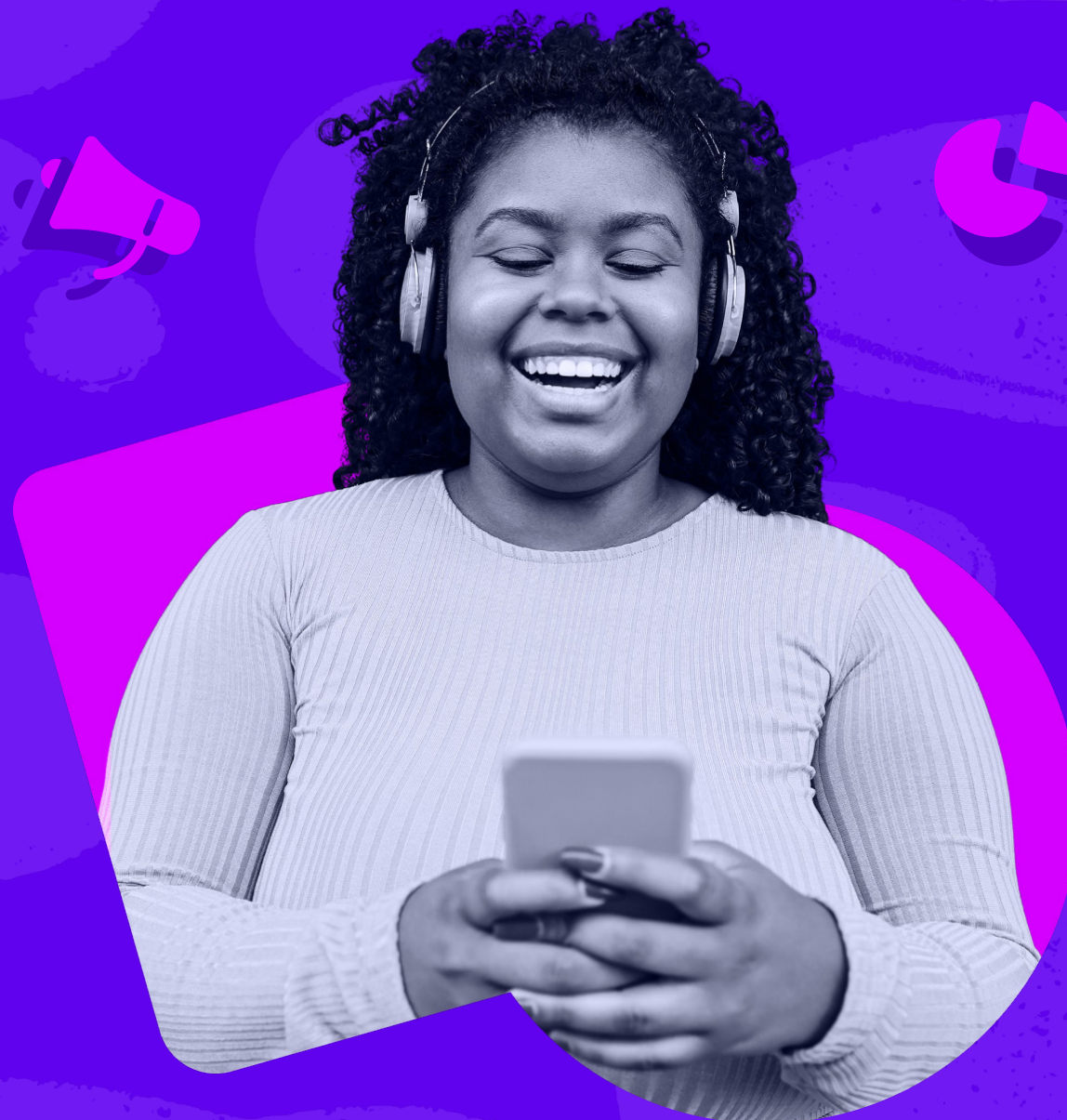
3 TECHNOLOGY

Tech that enables you to create, analyze, report on, and optimize your internal comms campaigns all from one platform, so you can deliver – and prove – real impact to leadership without overstretching and burning out your IC team.

Here are some actionable tips to help you get started:

Elevating IC: Proving ROI and driving strategy

Data alone isn't enough. To demonstrate value to leadership, internal comms teams need to connect insights from this report on content engagement trends, tech challenges, and measurement gaps to the business KPIs that matter most. When comms engagement data, sentiment analysis, and usage metrics are tied to strategic outcomes, the impact of internal comms becomes clear and measurable.



 The goal	 The insight	 The metric
Improved sentiment and engagement	Only 36% of IC leaders rate engagement with comms as “very high”.	Track pulse surveys, employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS), and sentiment trends to close this gap and show measurable progress.
Improved retention	30% cite retention as a key priority for execs.	Connect communication campaigns to attrition rates and exit feedback to demonstrate IC’s role in reducing churn.
Culture amplification	46% say execs see reinforcing culture as a top-three priority.	Validate how well messaging is resonating with participation data in culture-driven campaigns.
Trust in leadership	34% believe IC builds employee trust.	Use engagement with leadership updates, town halls, and Q&A sessions to provide a clear metric for building transparency and credibility.
Seamless change management	47% say execs rely on IC to support change initiatives.	Change-readiness surveys and adoption data quantify how comms smooths transitions.
Improved productivity and alignment	45% of IC leaders credit comms with increasing productivity and clarity.	Use platform analytics and project delivery metrics to make impact visible and actionable.



Follow best practices to avoid common measurement mistakes:



Measure often

Don't just rely on annual or quarterly employee engagement surveys. Run regular pulse surveys to capture fluctuations, identify timely opportunities, and proactively address dips in comms engagement before it's too late.



Combine quantitative and qualitative data

Numbers show you what's happening, but they don't tell you *why*. Combine quantitative data (like eNPS scores) with qualitative data from open-ended questions to get crucial context for employee behavior.



Assure anonymity

Employees won't speak their mind if they're worried about repercussions. Guarantee confidentiality to ensure everyone feels comfortable giving genuine, open feedback.



Create a feedback loop to measure and increase comms engagement:

To put your strategy into action and meet your KPIs, you need to diversify your content and tailor it to your audience. Use a range of rich media formats, from text to video, then analyze what catches employees' attention to double-down on what works best. Drill into data from different segments – like frontline vs. office-based workers – to understand which formats and topics resonate with different employee cohorts and create personalized feeds and tailored engagement strategies to drive even stronger results. Then, continuously measure and monitor engagement with comms to iterate on your success.





Use an all-in-one platform that turns insights into action

Streamline your tech stack (and your workload) with an employee experience platform (EXP) that lets you manage all internal comms from one place. Consolidate all employee comms, listening tools, and reporting into one unified tool to get a holistic understanding of performance across channels, locations, and employee segments. Also, use a range of reporting capabilities – from sentiment analysis to visual heat maps – to track and share key metrics at a glance. Then, quickly take action right from your EXP to resolve issues and boost comms engagement.

Forward-thinking, data-driven IC teams need a tool that can do it all: one that enables them to create, analyze, and optimize their comms from one platform, integrate with the other systems they use every day for more streamlined workflows and cohesive insights, and drive measurable results that they can easily share with leadership to demonstrate ROI.



Accelerate impact with AI-powered capabilities

Every IC team wishes they had a few extra hands on deck to manage the constant stream of requirements. Look for an EXP with built-in AI to help you work faster *and* smarter. From upgrading your content with an AI writing assistant that knows your brand's voice and culture, to instantly generating pulse surveys based on your research goals, to automating manual tasks so you can spend time on high-priority work, the right AI-powered tool frees up your team to focus on what really matters.





Demonstrate the True Value of Internal Comms

Everyone feels the benefits of internal comms, but our research reveals that translating those feelings into concrete data is still a significant struggle.

To maximize their impact, IC teams need to strategically align with leadership priorities, link metrics to key business outcomes, and adopt the right tech to help them measure, report on, and ultimately enhance their internal comms.

With an employee experience platform, IC teams can not only prove ROI: they can improve it. Elevate your IC strategy with a next-gen EXP to streamline your workflow, engage your workforce, and deliver quantifiable, tangible results that reveal the true value of internal comms.

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