



Getting started as new Head of Communications

Understand the business and its history

Show from the outset that you are interested in discovering where internal communication has the biggest effect on return on investment. Encourage senior managers to help you understand the organisation and tell you its history. You can get some quick wins by getting people on your side by asking for their views on how communication might improve or help stated business goals.

Introduce yourself to the organisation

In the first few weeks it's important that as many people in the organisation as possible understand who you are. It's good practice to attend other department meetings to introduce yourself, explain your approach and experience and gather views. Even better, hold a 'get to know your team' session and use it to float some ideas and invite thoughts on what works best.

Identify the players

Every business has movers and shakers and it's worth discovering quickly who they are, what they do and who they influence. Your key colleagues are likely to be in HR, Marketing, Investor Relations and, of course, Corporate Communications. Once you know them, you can begin building relationships, get their support for your work and build bridges between different parts of the organisation.

Get the external view

You're going to be talking endlessly to people internally, but there are some useful external viewpoints you could solicit. Incumbent creative agencies and recruitment consultancies, including head-hunters, will be eager to get to know you and maintain their position. Ask them for a summary of their work with the organisation and their current views on key stakeholder needs and perceptions.

Understand the current strategy

Although you'll be keen to stamp your own authority, ask your team to present the existing communication strategy. Add current research and measurement information to the mix along with an internal communications 'audit'. Taking time to involve others in this process will help you refine the direction you think you're going to take.

Frame the role of internal communications in the organisation

It's important to understand the evolution of internal communications in the organisation. Where does it come from, where does it sit, who does it, how far does it reach inside the organisation, how do people rate it, officially and unofficially? When you know who has an IC role outside your team, you can frame your role in relation to them.

Benchmark your organisation

Conduct some benchmarking of organisations who do what you do and find out how they structure internal communications. Form internal and external networks of peer level people. Attend industry events and feed back insights to the team.

Lead and learn by example

People need to see that internal communications is not dictated from on high behind closed doors. Get out and about among the workforce and understand how people work and communicate. Volunteer to work in a shop for a weekend, do a nightshift or shadow a colleague in a call centre.

Keep making the news

Keep internal communications in the news in your organisation for the right reasons. Be proactive – approach other departments for their news and views and agree what you can share with the business. Make sure internal communications are seen as an important part of the business strategy.