

My Little Book of

HR Communications

The Definitive Guide for HRDs and Leaders



Welcome

Mind the Communications Gap!

04

Communication Lifecycle

06

Culture and Internal Comms

08

Wellbeing Messaging

12

Communicating Employee Benefits Effectively

14

Intercultural Communication

18

Intergenerational Communication

22

Communicating with Neurodiverse Employees

26

AI, Chatbots and Digital Comms

30

Crisis Comms, Feedback & Metrics

32

Creating a Communications-First Culture

36

Foreword by David Cartlidge CEO, My Group

Effective communication is the thread that ties every aspect of the employee experience together. From onboarding to exit interviews, it shapes trust, builds culture, and can either energise or confuse your workforce. In a hybrid and digital-first world, HR communications have become mission-critical – sink or swim.

In the State of the Global Workplace Report 2025, leaders revealed a complex state of sporadic comms, and while leaders are expected to be empathetic, skilled communicators who can foster trust and alignment within teams, declining employee engagement is being reported, with poor communication cited as a key reason for lack of trust in leadership.

We recently ran our own study interviewing over 3000 people across various industries, from shop floor workers to C-suite, asking how important it is for them to receive communication and it was clear that the majority want clear, face-to-face comms or tools that facilitate transparent communication to enable a sense of security and belonging. This person-to-person contact has become a defining must-have for many organisations, and as the Return to Office mandates are rolled out across organisations globally, the need for clear, transparent communication has intensified. For remote employees, the need for culture-specific comms to support them in their roles, along with recognition has intensified.

The advent of AI has also sidelined traditional comms. As the workforce demographics swing away from the Boomers to see Millennials and Gen Z making up the majority, so do the ways in which people prefer to be communicated with. This is a big part of the communications piece and something that we expect to see surface a lot in the coming months.

Intercultural communications is also an area that has come into sharper focus. Multinational businesses with organisations made up of international employees, have a duty of care to ensure they are clear in their communications and understand what is important to their people (it might not be what you think it is.)

As an employee-owned business, we understand the importance of clear, transparent communication, ensuring every voice counts. In fact, we would say that this is our 'strong suit'. We hope that the fourth book in our series helps you as an HR professional to consider your own communications, explore the ways to improve, or celebrate the elements you know are working for your people. If we can be clear communicators and encourage our employees to reciprocate, we will bring people closer together, and improve the culture for everyone.

David Cartlidge, Group CEO, My Group

Mind the Communications Gap!



Why communication matters more than ever for HR

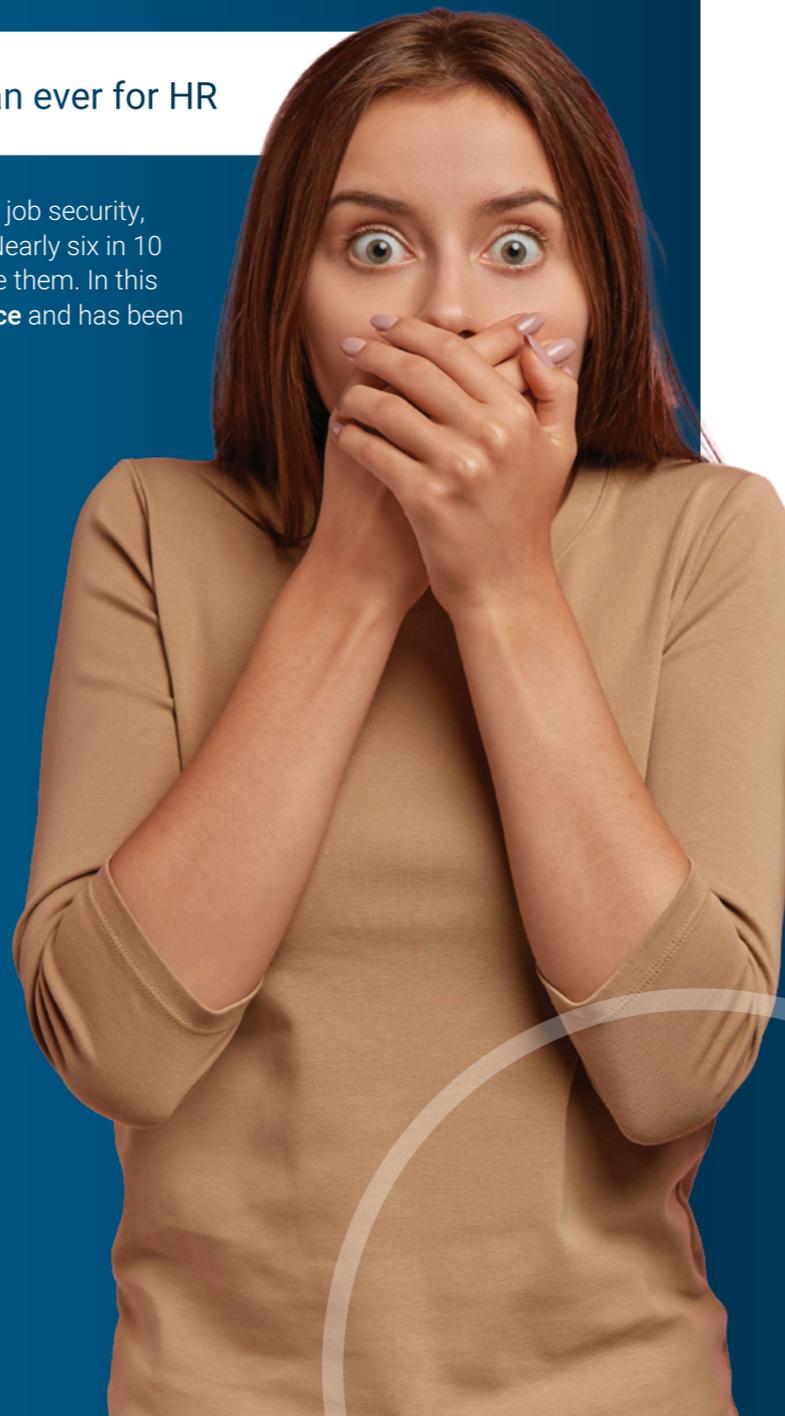
Globally, trust is in crisis. Employees are grappling with fears around job security, automation, discrimination, misinformation, and leadership failure. Nearly six in 10 now worry that business and government no longer serve people like them. In this environment, **communication is not a soft skill; it's a stabilising force** and has been absent for some time.

Clear, honest, and inclusive dialogue builds trust, reduces anxiety, and connects people to purpose. In the UK, trust in institutions is among the lowest in the world, and the gap between what low- and high-income employees believe is growing. With AI transforming the way we work and misinformation eroding belief in traditional news, **HR and internal communications leaders must step up**. That means replacing confusion with clarity and grievance with belonging. The organisations that thrive will be those that communicate with courage, consistency, and compassion.

According to the *CIPD Good Work Index 2024*, only **38% of UK employees** feel their voice is heard at work, and just **51%** say they are well-informed about what is happening in their organisation. These aren't just numbers, instead they point to a communication gap that's actively affecting engagement, trust, and culture.

Effective communication has always been at the heart of great HR practice – but it has become non-negotiable. As organisations navigate hybrid models, workforce wellbeing, digital transformation, and rising employee expectations, the role of HR communication has shifted from informative to strategic.

When you consider that 47% of workers now operate in hybrid or remote environments [ONS, 2024], traditional methods of communication are no longer sufficient. Internal messages that once relied on face-to-face cues now depend on clarity, consistency, and digital fluency. Let's not mince words. Miscommunication isn't just a risk, it is a performance cost.



More significantly, poor communication has tangible consequences. A 2023 report by the Institute of Internal Communication (IoIC) found that organisations with strong internal communication strategies are **3.5 times more likely to outperform their peers** in terms of employee engagement and retention. Yet, fewer than half of HR leaders say they have a defined communications plan in place [Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors, 2023].

Communication now influences everything from wellbeing to compliance. In *BITC's Mental Health at Work Report (2023)*, employees cited 'not feeling informed or listened to' as one of the top five causes of stress at work. And in the context of psychological safety, clear and consistent HR messaging is key to building inclusive, transparent workplaces. Because when communication fails, culture suffers. And when it works? People thrive.

My Little Book of Employee Communications explores how HR teams can move beyond top-down emails and policy PDFs to build communication strategies that are dynamic, human-led, and fit for the modern workforce. We explore what works (and what doesn't), spotlight real-world examples, and give you the tools to influence, engage and lead, through the words you choose and the way you deliver them. The time for delivering clear, transparent and authentic communications has never been more pertinent.

DID YOU KNOW?

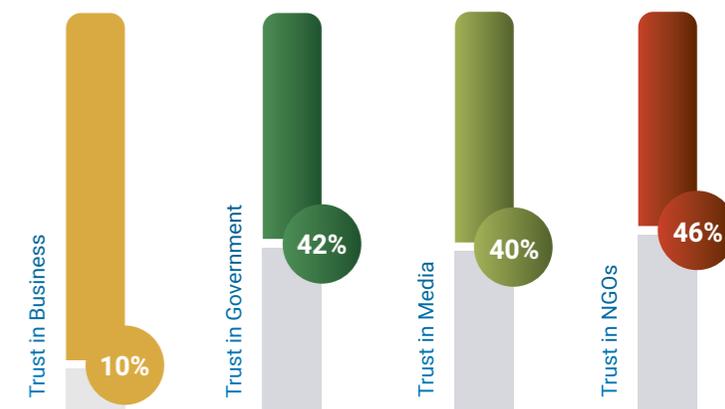


10% of employees feel lonely at work either frequently (2%) or often (8%); another 23% sometimes feel lonely | [staffbase.com](#)

Only 20% believe their employer does a very good job at fostering meaningful workplace connections | [staffbase.com](#)

Conflict affects 1 in 4 employees – this damages trust, undermines culture and causes a higher turnover | [Edelman Trust Report, 2025](#)

The Edelman Trust Report, 2025 reports that the **UK has one of the lowest trust levels in the world** with just 39% of people saying that they trust institutions (business, government, media, NGOs), placing us firmly in the 'Distrust Zone' for all four institutions. While the UK struggles, some countries stand out for much higher public trust in government: Switzerland leads the OECD trust rankings with 82.4%, Luxembourg (80.8%), Finland (75.9%), Ireland (62.9%), and Norway (61.2%) follow closely. In contrast, the United States has just 30.9% expressing trust in its government.



Who's Captain Comms?



No single department should have total ownership – but several should co-own and steward communication strategically

Gatekeeping doesn't mean controlling every word, but ensuring clarity, consistency, and culture alignment. Effective communication involves shared responsibility across these roles. So, who should be doing what when it comes to comms?

1

Leadership/C-Suite

We often hear about 'top-down' communication and the importance of this is critical. This is where the tone, vision, and values are set. These are the people responsible for strategic communication – where the business is going and why. They explain the backbone of the organisation, and can tie the language used to the purpose, goals and mission of the business. It's the top level, and needs careful consideration before the baton is passed on to the next stage of the comms journey.

2

Human Resources

This is where you might expect employee comms to sit. HR owns people-focused communication. Think wellbeing, culture and values, policies, DEI, and internal messaging. It's the whole nine yards. Essentially, HR is the "translator" between leadership intent and employee understanding. Not only should it ensure communications are inclusive and compliant, but it needs to support employee engagement and trust.



3

Internal Comms

Large companies might well have an internal or corporate comms team and these are the experts in how to say things – that is to say, the tone, clarity and channel choice. Will a monthly bulletin work? Is Slack the way to go? Video comms might be better... you get the idea. This person or team will coordinate messaging across departments to avoid confusion, overload, or contradiction. They often own the comms calendar too.

5

Employees (increasingly)

In modern organisations, two-way communication matters. Employees are brand ambassadors and should be empowered to voice, question, and contribute. Silence is complicity, and solutions to improve business or relationships require communication. This might be an area of weakness for many people as organisations evolve the way they speak to their people and new comms technology might impact how people feel.

4

Line Managers

Vital in cascade communication, managers translate messages into team-relevant actions or changes. Ideally, they should be trained by HR or Comms on how to communicate consistently, but this isn't always the case, and can be a sticking point for many organisations.

More on this in Chapter 3



Signs your culture isn't connecting

- People don't understand or act on the values
- Teams feel siloed or disconnected
- Recognition is inconsistent or absent
- Change announcements cause confusion or resistance
- Turnover is rising, especially among younger staff

Internal Communications

An Inside Job



Culture isn't what you say it is; it's what people feel day-to-day

Culture isn't written in a handbook, it lives in the daily moments, conversations, and experiences people have at work. That's why internal communications are so powerful: they don't just cascade information, they shape how people feel about their organisation. Whether it's a Slack message, an all-hands update, or a story on the intranet, every interaction is an opportunity to reinforce values and build belonging.

Dispersed, hybrid, and digitally noisy workplaces are creating a hunger for clarity, meaning, and connection. But PwC's 2024 research shows a worrying disconnect – larger organisations score significantly lower in cultural health than SMEs, and burnout is rising where communication and values don't align. Conversely, workers are **twice as likely to trust leadership** when internal communication is rated 'excellent'.

According to Gallup, only 20% of UK employees report feeling truly engaged at work which is a clear indicator that culture isn't being activated, even in large organisations. Meanwhile, Stribe's research highlights that 34% of UK workers don't view their workplace as a community, while 65% want a stronger sense of belonging. Effective internal communication fills that gap, creating spaces for people to feel seen, heard, and appreciated; turning ambivalent employees into active participants in culture.

For HR leaders, that makes internal communication a strategic lever to boost trust, embed purpose, and unite people around a shared sense of 'why'. So, how can HR use internal comms to reinforce values, nurture belonging, and sustain a connected culture in dispersed workplaces?

Gallup The State of the Global Workplace, 2023, Stribe HQ, 2025



What WORKS and what DOESN'T?

While the internal communications team will (hopefully) know the right way to communicate across the workplace demographics, there will be standard comms in place which provide regular, values-driven storytelling. Two-way communication channels (feedback loops and polls for example), can act as a barometer for company sentiment.

Line manager comms training is paramount. We know that managers are often the cog in team relationships and when you know your managers are clued up on how to communicate with their own teams, things will be clearer, easier and the messaging will do the job it's meant to. That extends to the language that is used as well. Clear, jargon-free updates during change will help people cut through any emotion and noise to see the reality of the situation.

Celebrating small wins tied to company values is a good way to embed a sense of belonging. Bringing people together with a common goal, whether that is a collectively chosen charity, supporting colleagues' fundraising efforts, emphasising long service, or simply extending invites to all employees to attend company events shows willingness to open up the culture and bring people together under a shared ambition: success and longevity of the business.



QUICK FACTS

- 91%** of micro businesses in the UK report strong cultural health – compared to just 77% in organisations with 10,000+ employees | **PwC, 2024**
- 44%** of internal comms professionals say 'change fatigue' is now one of the biggest barriers to culture and engagement | **IoIC, 2024**
- Only 20%** of UK employees say they feel truly engaged at work | **Gallup, 2024**



How can tech help?

With the rise of AI and automated messaging platforms, there's a risk that internal communication becomes depersonalised. Tools like chatbots, templates, or AI generated content can save time – but only when paired with human authenticity. Employees still crave real voices, especially during change or uncertainty. Tech should scale empathy, not replace it. That said, **only 36% of UK organisations** have a clear strategy for using AI in internal comms, so now is the ideal time to implement a digital communications strategy. | **State of the Sector, IoIC, 2024**



Signs your internal culture needs work



- Turnover is rising, especially among younger staff
- Leaders and teams communicate inconsistently
- Feedback feels ignored or performative
- Hybrid teams feel forgotten
- People say 'they' instead of 'we' when referring to the business

What to do (and what not to)

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| ✓ Use real names and faces in updates | ✗ Over-jargon or use vague HR speak |
| ✓ Link news back to your values and strategy | ✗ Rely only on email (or worse, just posters!) |
| ✓ Keep language human, clear, and consistent | ✗ Send communications during evenings/weekends |
| ✓ Share good news widely – small wins matter | ✗ Assume everyone's seen it |

Internal communication requires a nuanced and crafted approach; what works on the shop floor of a logistics firm may miss the mark in a remote tech startup. Tailoring tone, frequency, and channel to your workforce realities is the hallmark of a connected culture.



Creating Wellbeing Messaging with Impact



Think authentic, inclusive and timely when it comes to talking about mental health and wellbeing to avoid tokenism



*In the UK today, *one in four employees report that their job negatively affects their mental health, with a quarter saying it impacts them physically – despite improvements in job quality overall. Meanwhile, 44% of workers feel regularly stressed, with burnout emerging as a key concern. Yet only 30% feel able to speak openly about stress with their managers. For HR and comms professionals, these figures demand more than annual wellness emails, they require proactive, inclusive, and empathetic messaging that is woven into the fabric of how your organisation cares for people. **What are the proactive elements that can be a part of an organisation's wellbeing comms?***

***Workplace Insight, WH Employment, HealthHero 2025**

1 Know the issues

UK employers often emphasise mental health support (72%) and physical wellbeing (45%), but there's a mismatch. A Willis Towers Watson report found that 59% of staff identify financial wellbeing as their top stressor, while only 24% of employers address it. Messaging that acknowledges this gap and responds with holistic resources – will build credibility.

2 Beat the stigma

45% of employees feel uncomfortable discussing mental health with their manager, wellbeing comms must invite dialogue, not lecture. Anonymous pulse surveys, digital suggestion boxes, and mental health champions are all good ways to open conversations gently and without fear of reprisal. [MHFA Portal]

3 Wellbeing comms shouldn't be a one hit wonder

It's not a 'halo campaign', it's not that must-do that lingers on HR's list, or the token wellness day every so often, it's a culture thing (yes that word again!) Wellbeing check-ins in team rituals; brief mindfulness prompts in morning stand-ups; optional 'wellbeing minutes' in meetings, or quarterly mental-health webinars led by directors. Consistency signals sincerity.

DID YOU KNOW?



Organisations that cultivate open mental-health communication see a 20% increase in employee retention | MHFA Portal

To create impactful wellbeing messaging, steer clear of standard blurb, platitudes or fluff. Instead, creating a systematic, inclusive strategy that acknowledges true stressors (not just mental health), uses real stories, invites honest feedback, and shows consistent leadership backing will be far more effective. Done well, it transforms comms from tokenistic campaigns into everyday acts of genuine care.



“ Communication shouldn't be one-size-fits-all

To be authentic and inclusive, employees need a choice in how they engage. In our experience, health and wellbeing engagement works best when employees can communicate in ways that feel natural and comfortable to them. We consistently see the highest engagement when services are offered through familiar, everyday chat apps like WhatsApp – removing access barriers and making honest dialogue easier, safer, and more meaningful. ”

Emma Hickey, Director, Global Partnership and APac Growth, Abi Global Health

Communicating Employee Benefits

Benefit comms
to boost
engagement



Turn perks into powerful, personalised stories your people actually understand – and use

Your employee benefits programme might be award-winning but if employees don't understand it, can't access it, or don't see how it fits their life, much of its value is lost. Research from Group Risk Development (GRiD) found that a significant number of UK employees don't know how to access their employee benefits. In fact, according to its study, nearly half (42%) of UK employees are either unaware of or don't understand all of the employee benefits available to them. This includes 25% who are aware of the benefits but don't understand them, 11% who are aware of some benefits but not others, and 6% who are completely unaware.

The survey also found that only 57% of employers believe their employees know what benefits they have and how to access them. There is clearly a chasm between what employers offer and what employees actually know and utilise.

Communicating benefits clearly, creatively, and consistently is key to making sure your investment delivers both engagement and ROI. How can HR better tailor benefits messaging to different audiences, cut the jargon, and turn something overlooked into something irresistible? **Here's seven ways to give your benefits messaging impact and meaning:**

1 Don't broadcast – segment

Early-career hires want very different things than mid-life managers or working parents. Segment your messages by life stage, role, or even values – and speak directly to their needs.



2 Cut the jargon

We know HR loves an acronym, and Finance is terrible at giving the layman's version, but most people struggle to understand pension contribution caps and flexible benefits allowances. **Use plain language, explain those acronyms, and don't assume financial fluency.** Visual guides or side-by-side comparisons can really help bring clarity. Creating a handy guide (even an infographic!) can help people better understand the information you need them to take in (remember those neurodiverse colleagues!)

3 Benefits consultants

With many employee benefits platforms relying on primarily digital communication, there is an opportunity for organisations to explore companies that offer **face-to-face consultants** that can take this a step further and help solidify understanding and engagement with what is available to them. If you can schedule one-to-one chats with employees it can boost engagement and help them iron out any worries and ask questions.

5 Make it personal

Real employee stories are one of the most powerful ways to demonstrate benefits in action. Consider video interviews or testimonials: "Here's how I saved £1,000 using My Staff Shop." **Real-life relevance builds trust and reliability.** Creating some benefits ambassadors can really help as well. Those passionate about their perks will encourage others to use them.

6 Timing matters: Use life moments

Open enrolment isn't the only time people care about benefits. Think about life triggers like starting a family, moving house, financial stress – and **target comms around those key moments.** An always-on strategy outperforms a once-a-year blast!

7 The power of the webinar

Webinars are a great way to get people involved in what they have access to – **it provides a safe, supported environment to ask questions**, demo what's on offer and discover how to make the most out of any discounts and savings, EAP or wellbeing platform that they might have access to.

4 Beyond the brochure

Static PDFs are so 2020. Think explainer videos, Instagram stories, interactive portals, and chatbot walkthroughs. **Choose channels that align with how your people already consume content** (information you most definitely should know!) and don't be afraid to mix formats. Creativity is king here – think outside the box to maximise engagement.

Even the most generous employee benefits can fall flat if they're hidden in jargon, buried in emails, or explained once a year and forgotten. With nearly half of employees unsure about what's available to them – or how to access it – there's a clear communication gap that HR must bridge. By segmenting messages, using plain language, mixing up formats, and offering face-to-face or interactive support, organisations can bring benefits to life in a way that feels relevant, accessible, and personal. The result? Higher engagement, better wellbeing outcomes, and a stronger return on your reward investment.

Global Benefits: Tell us what you want

Every country mandates a different baseline of benefits; such as health insurance and paid leave, but what truly makes employees feel valued often goes beyond the legal minimum. Tailoring benefits around local culture and expectations is crucial for satisfaction and retention. Benefits that reflect local values, from parental equality in Sweden to supportive part-time policy in the Netherlands, suggest employers understand and respect their people's lives.

Top Global Desires

When asked what matters most, employees frequently cite: health insurance; financial wellbeing (including retirement planning); lifestyle flexibility (remote work, child support) and wellbeing options including mental health support.



How can tech help?

- a Segment emails with tools like **HubSpot** or **Mailchimp**
- b Use platforms like **My Staff Shop** for personalised benefits dashboards
- c Integrate video explainers with tools like **Vyond** or **Loom**
- d Offer chatbot support through platforms like **Leena AI** or **Moveworks**
- e Schedule nudges around key moments (e.g., **payday, new job anniversaries**) via your HRIS

Intercultural Communication



Global teams need culturally intelligent communication – from tone to timing

It's a global workplace, there is no question, but cultural intelligence isn't optional – it's essential and there are many ways even seasoned HR pros can get it wrong, causing more harm than good, and damaging employee relations in the process. Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede's research highlights that the UK scores very high on **Individualism (89)** and moderately low on **Uncertainty Avoidance (35)**. In layman's terms, that means that UK teams prefer direct messaging and autonomy. But when employees span cultures with high context communication norms – such

as Japan or Mexico, aspects like tone, formality, and non-verbal cues like touch (haptics) and gestures, become critical. For example, in some countries, shaking your head doesn't mean 'no' but is affirmative. Maintaining eye contact in the US is often seen as a sign of confidence, therefore lack of eye contact can make someone seem mistrustful. Conversely, in Japan, it can be threatening and disrespectful. Harvard's 'Culture Map' also underscores that subtle differences in feedback styles and expectations can lead to unintended friction.

Teams who adapt their messaging style across cultures report **30% fewer misunderstandings** and stronger engagement in global surveys. [Harvard HBR]



1

Time Orientation & Scheduling

Low-context cultures (like the UK) appreciate clarity; high-context cultures rely on shared nuance

2

Direct vs. Indirect Messaging

Long-term vs. short-term orientation affects how deadlines and pacing are perceived. The UK is moderately short-term, so deadlines need precise framing

3

Hierarchy & Feedback Styles

In high power distance cultures like Mexico, Morocco, and Romania, employees may be less likely to speak up, challenge decisions, or question managers openly – so feedback and comms need to be structured to make space for all voices without putting people in an uncomfortable position



How can tech help?

a

AI-driven translation/localisation

Tools ensure tone and formality adapt to cultural norms, this supports the organisational culture and promotes a sense of community

b

Meeting schedulers

Time zone awareness and regional etiquette prompts can help when organising people from diverse cultures

c

Digital feedback platforms

These support anonymous input in cultures where hierarchy inhibits upward communication and can help get to the truth of the matter uncovering concerns within multicultural teams



DID YOU KNOW?

The **quart d'heure académique** is largely a cultural and academic tradition in Germany, Netherlands and Belgium that allows a 15-minute grace period around a set meeting time within academic institutions. Similarly, **le quart d'heure de politesse** is a tolerance or social acceptance of lateness, leaving accommodation, attending a dinner etc. fifteen minutes either side of the agreed time. This demonstrates perfectly how expectations around punctuality vary culturally, so knowing the cultural norms of your employees, clients and colleagues – especially in international settings – is key.

Are you in my time zone?

One unexpected element of intercultural comms in the workplace is the differing attitudes toward time, and this can cause all kinds of misunderstandings. For example, **polychronic cultures** – such as those in many Arab nations, Latin America, and parts of South and Southeast Asia – tend to view time flexibly. In these cultures, relationships and social obligations take precedence over strict schedules, and multitasking is common. In contrast, **monochronic cultures** – such as those in Northern Europe, the United States, Japan, Australia, and the UK – tend to see time as linear and segmented, with a strong emphasis on punctuality, deadlines, and sticking to schedules.

Lateness in monochronic settings may be perceived as **disrespectful** or **unprofessional**, while in polychronic cultures, arriving later may be seen as **normal** or even **expected** in certain contexts.

In global business settings, this can easily lead to frustration or unintended offence. That's why it's essential to set clear expectations around scheduling and meeting norms early on, ideally with mutual flexibility to foster respect and effective cross-border collaboration.



Making global communication count

Did you know that 59% of businesses now operate internationally? Remote work has upended geographical barriers, in fact, your next meeting might well include colleagues in different time zones, with different cultural norms – and possibly even different interpretations of the same message. From global offices to digital nomads, intercultural fluency is no longer niche; it's essential and miscommunication isn't just awkward, it can slow projects, damage trust, and cost business.

That's why leaders and line managers need cross-cultural communication training, not just HR or comms teams. It's everyone's responsibility to ensure messages land clearly and respectfully. Best practice includes setting shared expectations, avoiding slang and idioms, checking for understanding, and using tools that support localisation. Culture-savvy communication isn't about diluting messages – it's about making them resonate. If you want to lead across borders, cultural intelligence is your competitive edge.



Words matter – but in intercultural communication, it's often what you don't say that speaks the loudest. A thumbs-up can mean 'good job' in London but be downright offensive in some Arab nations, while steady eye contact signals confidence in the U.S. but disrespect in Japan.

For HR, getting this wrong can turn a perfectly good message into an awkward misunderstanding. The key is to learn the norms before you act – ask colleagues, observe interactions, or check cultural guides. A little research and awareness can save you from unintentionally offending someone and help you build trust across borders.



Verity Gough, Communications Manager, My Staff Shop



Intergenerational Communication

From Fax to Slack



The how, what and why for communication across the generational divide

Today's workplace might include five generations, from Traditionalists to Millennials with Alphas nipping at the heels of Gen Z but that means your internal comms strategy has to speak to both the paper-preferring and the emoji-literate.

Intergenerational comms isn't just about platform choice rather it's about trust, tone, and intent. Boomers may value hierarchy and formality, Gen X pragmatism, Millennials purpose, and Gen Z authenticity but what unites them is a desire to feel respected, included and informed.

When you consider that a 2024 UKG Work Trends Report found that 41% of HR leaders said intergenerational misunderstandings had caused 'noticeable conflict' in teams in the past year, it becomes clear that 'being clear' is more than just words.



Understanding generational communication references

Different generations grew up with different technologies, cultural influences, and work norms. These shape how they give feedback, process instructions, and interact at work. Your messaging style is often rooted in what you grew up with, whether that's memos, MSN, or memes.

A 2024 CIPD report found that 71% of Gen Z employees said they prefer communication to be 'conversational and collaborative' vs 59% of Baby Boomers who said they preferred 'clear instructions with limited discussion'. This means that HR needs to be able to straddle the generations when it comes to communication across the business.

Why do they communicate differently?

The pre-digital generation often values structure, formality, and face-to-face conversations. The digital-first generations (Millennials and Gen Z) lean into real-time, concise, and often visual forms of communication. But this isn't just about tech, it's about trust, attitude to work, and expectations of authority. Boomers and Gen X are more likely to defer to hierarchy, while Millennials and Gen Z expect two-way feedback loops and flatter structures.

This implies that younger generations may interpret silence or formality as disengagement or lack of authenticity. When it comes to clarity vs collaboration, older employees value clear, top-down instructions while younger ones prefer to collaborate, even on decisions that were traditionally top-down suggesting that overly prescriptive emails can disengage Millennials and Gen Z.

Technology exposure is another area that has undoubtedly shaped the way people prefer to be communicated with. Boomers, we know, learned digital skills later while Gen Z were born into them meaning that they see video/audio content as more 'real' and trustworthy than a long written update. That means that HR needs to consider accessibility across formats. The same can be said for workplace values; Gen Z ranks mental health, flexibility, and inclusion as top priorities (Deloitte 2024) while Gen X and Boomers value job security and progression. For HR and internal comms professionals that means a need to tailor messages to resonate with what each generation values at work.



Talking 'bout my generation

When it comes to the practicalities of communication, it's fair to say we can generalise. Generational comms don't tend to have many outliers. The lived experiences of each generation tends to dictate their preferences, making it easy to target comms so it has the desired effect – it gets digested!

Segment your messaging by platform and tone and use analytics from platforms like Staffbase or Workplace to test which generations engage with what content. You can, for example, create layered communication so a policy update could be sent as (1) a concise email, (2) a 60-second video summary, and (3) a PDF deep-dive for those who want full detail.

This extends to the use of inclusive design. Don't assume everyone wants emojis or long PDFs. Provide variety and accessibility and train managers in generational intelligence so this encourages awareness of generational norms around feedback, motivation, and preferred leadership styles.



The 'F' word

Millennials and Gen Z are obsessed with feedback so foster some intergenerational feedback loops by creating buddy systems or reverse mentoring schemes that allow different age groups to learn from each other's communication strengths. Make them regular and inclusive – some employees prefer formal check-ins; others favour peer chat.

Remember, email still matters for some and while younger employees may see it as outdated, it remains a robust and necessary comms channel. For others, think short-form updates (video, audio, infographics) for younger staff, while ensuring longer-form documents are accessible for all.



DID YOU KNOW?

73% of Gen Z say they prefer real-time digital communication tools like Slack or WhatsApp for work
| Deloitte Gen Z and Millennial Survey, 2025

Millennials were 3x more likely than Baby Boomers to value purpose over paycheck when choosing an employer
| IBM Global Consumer Study, 2025



How can tech help?

a

Employee APP platforms

Applications like Staff or Blink include features like company news feeds, real-time messaging, shift scheduling, digital forms, employee surveys, and access to other workplace software through integrations. This can help HR tailor content by audience segment (age, role, location)

b

Intranet Analytics

Show who's engaging with what, helping you shift from assumption to data-led comms

c

Voice notes and transcription tools

Bridge accessibility needs and time-pressed employees and make short work of long, waffly messages

d

Digital tools to deliver recognition and reward

Thanking people for a job well done via digital solutions is a user-friendly way to introduce older generations to modern apps



Making communications accessible for all employees

HR wants everyone to engage with communications but when we think about inclusive communication, colleagues who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, blind, or partially-sighted aren't always prioritised. These employees already face additional barriers in accessing information, especially when messages are delivered only in one format or channel.

For hard-of-hearing and deaf colleagues, adding live captions or transcripts to all video content is an easy tweak. During webinars, live events or major announcements, where possible, provide a sign language interpreter and offer summaries in written form so information can be reviewed at a comfortable pace.

For blind or partially-sighted employees, use accessible document formats compatible with screen readers, provide high-contrast text options, and ensure that images include descriptive alt-text. Avoid embedding important information only within graphics, and think about font size and layout so messages remain easy to read. It's always a good idea to test content with accessibility tools before publishing and make offering information in multiple formats (e.g. audio, text, video) common practice – and ask for feedback as well!



Communicating with Neurodiverse Employees

Inclusive communication means everyone – neurotypical or neurodivergent – can access, interpret, and act on what you share. Neurodiversity includes ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and more. Each may impact how people process language, visuals, instructions, and interaction. Clear, accessible communication isn't a special measure instead, think of it more as good design. And what works for neurodiverse employees often benefits the entire workforce.

? **DID YOU KNOW?**

Over 15% of the UK workforce is neurodivergent, according to the Neurodiversity in Business (NiB) Coalition

Only 11% of UK businesses have adapted internal communications specifically for neurodivergent employees (NiB, 2024)

📄 **What to consider**

Who should be tasked with comms for neurodivergent employees? While it might seem a specialist task, actually it is a lot simpler than one might think. For a start, design with clarity which means avoiding jargon, using simple fonts, a clear structure, and high-contrast visuals. Instructions and repetition are important, as is breaking down complex tasks. Use bullet points and reinforce messages in multiple formats (visual, verbal, written). Consider sensory sensitivities, so things like flashing graphics or busy layouts can be overwhelming, so swap them for more calming visual design and audio alternatives.

Planning is also something neuro-divergent employees might struggle with, so allow processing time and avoid putting people on the spot in meetings. If you can send materials in advance and encourage written responses, that can also be helpful.



📄 **How can tech help?**



1 **Accessibility tools** | can be built into MS Office and Google Workspace (like Read Aloud, closed captions, screen readers)



2 **Inclusive design templates** | Platforms like Canva or Adobe Express offer neurodivergent-friendly formats



3 **Digital training modules** | Educate managers and teams on neuroinclusive communication practices. Tools like Inclusive, Lexic or NiB's manager training courses equip HR teams to understand cognitive diversity in comms design



4 **AI-powered writing assistants** | Apps like Grammarly or Hemingway can help simplify text, flag passive voice, and ensure reading-level appropriateness



Case Study: BBC's Neurodiversity Toolkit

The BBC, in collaboration with Neurodiversity in Business (NiB), introduced a comprehensive Neurodiversity Toolkit as part of its workplace inclusion strategy.

The toolkit included templates with reduced text density and visual noise; internal policies written in plain English and broken down into micro-learning formats; neuroinclusive meeting guidance (e.g. sending agendas beforehand, optional camera-on policies, structured turn-taking) and comprehensive manager training on how to frame feedback constructively without relying on idioms or ambiguity.

As a result, the BBC saw a 22% rise in self-disclosure of neurodivergent conditions within the first year, indicating greater trust and psychological safety. Teams using the guidance also reported improved clarity and fewer misunderstandings across all employees, not just those with disclosed neurodivergence.

? How this affects the bottom line

Inclusive communication isn't just a moral imperative, it's a competitive advantage. According to a 2023 report by Birkbeck University's Neurodiversity Research Centre, inclusive communication practices **reduced task repetition by 27%** and increased output accuracy by **18% in cross-functional teams**. Similarly, Harvard Business Review found that **neurodiverse teams are 30% more productive** in environments where comms are clear, direct, and supported by visuals. A further study from Deloitte reports that inclusive cultures are **6x more likely to be innovative** and **2x more likely** to meet financial targets.



Five quick wins for neuroinclusive comms

Use structured email templates

e.g. subject, purpose, next steps, deadline

Replace idioms with clear phrasing

Swap 'Let's get the ball rolling' for 'Let's begin the project'

Provide alternative formats

Not everyone likes a long-read; offer a short video or infographic too

Review comms for literal interpretation

Is 'ASAP' realistic or ambiguous?

Invite feedback anonymously

Some people won't tell you they're struggling with your comms so build feedback loops that work for all brains



Inclusive communication: A clearer way forward for everyone

Designing communication with neurodiversity in mind sets a new standard that benefits everyone. When we strip away jargon, simplify structure, and offer information in multiple formats, we create a workplace where clarity thrives and everyone can contribute at their best. The workforce is made of all kinds of people and neurodivergent individuals are a significant part of this. Let's improve engagement, reduce errors, and support high-performing, diverse teams.



“ Neurodivergence is common, maybe even the norm in some sectors, but many neurodivergent employees struggle for years without identifying or disclosing our neurotype. Neuroinclusive communication can help everyone – whether those you are communicating with have neurodevelopmental conditions, hearing impairments, a different first language, a chronic health condition including long Covid, or they are going through grief, or menopause. Respecting different communication needs and preferences is a win: win.

Remember: Neurodivergent employees don't have special needs; we have human needs. Everybody does. Respect our differences and needs, so people with all kinds of minds can thrive in our roles.



Charlie Hart is a neurodiversity inclusion speaker and founder of Ausome Charlie, with a background in HR Analytics. Charlie is Autistic and has ADHD and complex PTSD



AI, Chatbots and Digital Comms

A communications revolution



From personalised onboarding emails to 24/7 chatbot support, AI is rapidly reshaping the HR communication landscape

What was once the work of entire teams can now be automated, predicted, and optimised through machine learning and large language models. But with that power comes responsibility and as AI becomes embedded in internal comms strategies, HR professionals must balance efficiency with empathy, automation with authenticity, and innovation with ethical considerations.



1

The rise of Gen AI in HR

AI tools like ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, and Jasper are being used to write job descriptions, onboarding messages, even birthday greetings. Total time-savers, but AI can also introduce tone-deafness or bias if not properly trained. Instead, HR leaders should think of AI more like a co-pilot, not a substitute. Don't forget the human sense-check, especially when it comes to sensitive messaging.

2

Chatbots and when not to lose the 'human touch'

Chatbots are ten a penny these days, and their ubiquitousness has come about at lightning speed. What was once a novelty is now commonplace, and within organisations, it is now a quick way of saving time, and money. Modern HR chatbots can answer hundreds of questions about benefits, leave, policy, or career paths which frees up teams from repetitive queries. The best bots use natural language processing (NLP) to 'understand' intent and provide helpful, context-specific replies. However, poorly implemented bots can frustrate employees. So how can companies make sure they strike the right balance? Just like people, they need to be trained on internal language. Keep escalation paths for the real humans.

Automating standard messages such as reminders, benefits enrollment or timesheet deadlines is a no-brainer but when it comes to things like mental health check-ins, performance feedback, or major business updates, a human voice is irreplaceable. Use AI for volume, not for vulnerability.

3

Ethics and bias: Who's writing your message?

AI learns from data and if yours is biased, your messaging will be too. Before rolling out AI-driven content, HR teams should audit their systems for exclusionary language and check how different demographics interact with tools. Accessibility, readability, and fairness must remain front and centre of any comms.

4

Tips for scaling up safely

Many businesses are starting to put codes of practice in place for their AI usage. This will become common practice to ensure the 'human' remains at the centre of all communications; that employee data is protected, and so the business complies with policy and law. This also means that HR should expect to see a lot more of the digital team. In fact, the Chief Technical Officer (CTO) is likely to need a space in the fridge in the internal comms department in the near future.

Don't launch AI blindly. Start with a pilot, gather employee feedback, and measure success beyond efficiency - think trust, accuracy, and employee experience. The future of HR comms isn't just automated; it's augmented, tested, and improved continuously.



DID YOU KNOW?

Gartner predicts that by 2026, 50% of employees will interact with AI-driven tools on a daily basis as part of their job | Gartner HR Tech Trends 2024



AI presents a unique opportunity to change how we work. It gives HR, IT and internal communications the chance to work in partnership to automate and streamline processes to free up time for what truly matters – human connection, authenticity and building cultures where people can thrive. This is our time. We need to be brave with AI: let it support us but never replace the conversations, connections and culture-shaping that only humans can do.



Jo Coxhill , Workplace Culture, Employee Experience, Listening & Internal Comms Consultant, Vision 29



Crisis Comms and Metrics

Employee communications in times of crisis



Executing Plan B, and managing messaging around change, critical incidents or controversy

Not every HR message is a wellbeing update or engagement campaign. Sometimes, communication is high-stakes: a crisis announcement, a change programme, or an urgent update that affects people's jobs or safety. Other times, it's the dreaded 'mop-up' comms that HR are tasked with. Did people understand it? Did they feel heard? Here are three essential (and often under-planned) areas of HR comms to help HR respond to crises, build two-way feedback loops, and use metrics to learn and improve.



DID YOU KNOW?

63%

of employees say the way their company handles a crisis affects their long-term loyalty
Institute for Public Relations, 2023

37%

of UK organisations say they have a "fully prepared" crisis comms plan in place
CIPR State of the Profession, 2024

74%

of employees say they want comms during a crisis to come directly from senior leadership
Edelman Trust Barometer, 2023

1 Crisis Comms: Clarity under pressure

In moments of crisis, whether that is during a restructuring spell or in the midst of a health and safety event, HR may be the organisational mouthpiece that needs to impart swift, clear and compassionate messaging. A good crisis comms plan will outline who says what, when and via which channel. This avoids overloading people with jargon or corporate spin and places people at the heart of the comms. Being human, factual and providing regular updates is the best approach. It's the silence that creates anxiety.

2 Building a feedback culture

Great internal comms don't stop once a message is sent either, in fact, building a culture of feedback means giving employees safe, anonymous, and regular ways to share their views – then acting on what you hear. Think beyond the annual survey and make use of quick pulse checks and digital suggestion boxes to keep the conversation alive, and show you are listening.

3 Measuring impact

Click rates and open rates only tell part of the story. HR teams should measure not just who saw the message, but what they understood and how it made them feel. Consider using sentiment analysis, focus groups, or simple follow-up surveys to dig deeper into communication outcomes.



Leaders under the microscope

In tough times, people don't just listen to what's said, they watch how it's delivered. Authentic leadership comms – especially from the top – can make or break employee trust. Coach leaders to communicate with transparency, empathy, and calm authority. According to the Qualtrics Employee Experience Trends Report, only 34% of employees feel that their feedback leads to meaningful change in the workplace. There is clearly room for improvement and the C-suite is well-placed to model good comms across the organisation.



How can tech help?

- Use pulse platforms like **PX Hub** or **Glint** for quick feedback
- Deliver crisis alerts via **SMS tools** or mobile push notifications (that means ensuring that your people data is up-to-date and relevant apps or digital tools are activated by employees)
- Track sentiment with AI-powered dashboards like **Microsoft Viva**
- Integrate comms analytics via platforms like **Staffbase** to monitor impact

When crisis comms go bad

Even the biggest companies can get crisis comms wrong. A classic example is the BrewDog employee letter leak in 2021. After former staff publicly accused the craft beer brand of fostering a “culture of fear,” the CEO issued a public apology that was widely criticised as deflective and insincere. The letter failed to acknowledge the specific harms raised, used overly polished language, and was signed off with what many saw as corporate spin rather than accountability.

The backlash intensified, with customers, staff, and the media calling the response tone-deaf. Rather than calming the storm, the communication poured fuel on it, demonstrating how critical tone, timing, and authenticity are in moments of reputational crisis.

A tough lesson indeed but one that proves that rushed or defensive messaging can do more harm than the crisis itself. HR and leadership must co-create crisis comms that feel personal, transparent, and timely.



In a critical incident, the message you send is as important as the actions you take. As a Police Gold Commander managing major and critical scenarios, I learned that clarity, calm, and compassion aren't optional, they are the anchors people hold onto in uncertainty. In those moments, silence creates fear, spin destroys trust, and only truth builds the path forward.



Kul Mahay, Former Police Gold Commander and Leadership Expert and Founder of Ignite Your Inner Potential



Creating a 'Communications-first' Culture

What is the future of workplace comms?



Time to shake up, re-evaluate and reconsider your comms strategy to make your business future-proof

For a long time, internal communication was seen as a support function – something reactive, often overlooked, and rarely prioritised. But that view is changing, and fast. Employees are asking for more clarity, more connection, and more meaning in their working lives, and the way organisations communicate internally has become absolutely central to the employee experience. And HR is right at the heart of that change.

By rethinking the way we speak, listen, and share, HR can lead the shift toward a culture that doesn't just deliver information, but builds understanding, trust, and belonging. This isn't about fancy campaigns or flashy tools. It's about putting people first, using technology to support – not replace – the human touch, and creating space for voices to be heard at every level of the organisation.



No longer a soft skill

For years, communication was treated as a nice-to-have, often bundled into HR generalist roles or passed over in favour of policy updates and process changes. But now, as hybrid work, digital tools, and cross-generational teams create more complexity, the ability to communicate clearly and compassionately has become one of the most important strategic levers HR has. When communication is done well, it can shape culture, reduce attrition, and strengthen performance. It's not just about what you say but 100% about how you say it. So make it consistent, clear and authentic.

HR professionals are increasingly expected to wear many hats. In the context of internal communication, that means acting as translator (making complex policy make sense to everyone), storyteller (bringing company culture to life through real experiences), and signal booster (amplifying voices that might otherwise go unheard). Make sure the right messages land with the right people, in the right way, and at the right time.

1 Create trust and build community

It's tempting to focus on big moments like the sparkly launches, cultural changes, or powerful announcements but what really builds a communications-first culture is consistency. When employees know what to expect, where to find information, and who to turn to for clarity, trust follows. That trust doesn't just make them feel good, it makes them more likely to engage, contribute, and stay.

2 People first (but with a digital helping hand!)

It's also worth saying that creating a human-led communications culture doesn't mean avoiding technology. In fact, the smartest HR teams are using tech to personalise messages, track impact, and open up new channels of feedback. The trick is to make sure tech is used to elevate the experience, not replace it. A chatbot might answer questions faster—but it's empathy that builds loyalty.

Good communication is more than messaging. It's how culture gets lived, understood, and shared. HR has a unique opportunity to make every interaction more meaningful, so make it count!

Is your EVP attracting and retaining the best people?

My Staff Shop are experts in helping clients to build the best possible Employee Value Proposition with bespoke perks, discounts, Reward & Recognition and wellbeing packages to suit your people and your business! Our quick EVP quiz can help you to see where you are winning and what you could be doing better.



Wellbeing

Do you have multiple absences, long-term sickness and rising employee mental health issues hampering productivity?



Recognition

Is it challenging to motivate and engage remote and hybrid workers?



Discounts & Cashback

Struggling to engage your people and provide a cash boost, wage increase or bonus?



Reward

Is rewarding your people an ineffective and time-consuming admin burden?

Take our
● **5-minute**
QUIZ
to find out



Have you read our other books?

The My Little Book of... series explores employee benefits and provides expert advice and ideas on how to use employee benefits to best serve your people and support your EVP

Visit our Insights Hub to download your digital version: MyStaffShop.com/insights-hub



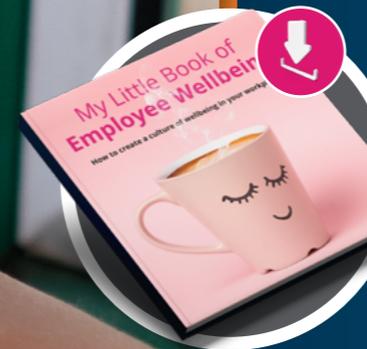
My Little Book of Employee Benefits

This definitive guide explores the wealth of benefits on offer to HR Professionals and Reward Directors



My Little Book of Reward & Recognition

Elevate your HR strategy with our focused guide, crafted for HR Professionals and Reward Directors



My Little Book of Employee Wellbeing

Discover how you can support employees' wellbeing and curate solutions that promote wellness in your workplace

About My Staff Shop / Why Us?

My Staff Shop is a one-stop benefits hub that brings employee benefits, reward and recognition, and communications into a single centralised Platform and Mobile App. With fully-customisable design and branding, streamlining your benefits in this way aligns with the organisation's strategic business goals. This allows you to measure the impact of any campaigns revealing how engaged your people are – what works for them – and what isn't cutting the mustard.

Founded in 2011, My Staff Shop has served clients from small businesses to large multi-location organisations. In 2022, we became an Employee-Owned Trust (EOT) – in fact, we are the only employee-owned employee benefits business in the UK. We are proud to work hard with our clients to design the best possible employee benefits solutions to help them future-proof their workforce.

For a demo of how we can create the perfect, tailored benefits solution for your organisation, visit www.mystaffshop.com and fill in the contact form, call us on **03300 242281** or email info@mystaffshop.com.



GET IN TOUCH

Let's get social



MyStaffShopLimited



@MyStaffShop



@_mystaffshop



my STAFF
SHOP

MyStaffShop.com