



Internal Comms for Scaling Tech Companies: The Ultimate Guide



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get lost.**

Early-stage tech start-ups typically don't have to work too hard when it comes to employee engagement. The people who join these companies are often young, ambitious, and keen to be part of something important. Small teams and stripped-back resources mean that communicating with employees is organic, authentic, and easy.

You don't need to work to promote the company culture, because those first ten, twenty, or thirty employees live and breathe it – that's why they're there. Plus, in smaller companies, management has a constant finger on the pulse of the organization and can step in to right the course when things start to go wrong.

But as these companies grow, something starts to happen. Without active management, the company culture can easily get lost. Communication methods that worked when you were just a single-digit team aren't as effective as the organization scales – especially when teams are distributed.

Young companies often have to scale rapidly because of an injection of funding, which means the stakes are high. And success is far from guaranteed: [75% of venture-backed companies](#) fail to generate any ROI at all.

The fact is that without a deliberate, strategic, and carefully executed internal communications plan, you have no way of ensuring that your culture and values don't get left behind as your organization grows – and your employees have no way of sharing the knowledge, ideas, and insights that you need to scale effectively.



Here's what you'll learn*

- What is employee internal communications?
- Why is internal communications important in today's workplace?
- The challenges of reaching employees for scaling tech companies
- 7 ways to connect with your workforce as a scaling tech company
- The must-have features for an internal communications platform
- Introducing Workvivo

*there are no page numbers because they're links, just click one to jump to that section. Click on our logo icon to come back here.



Employee Internal Communications

Employee internal communications is an umbrella term that covers all the ways that organizations communicate with their employees. This includes traditional top-down communications like corporate newsletters or emails, and more modern, worker-focused techniques like employee listening, feedback loops, and peer-to-peer recognition.

Why is internal communications important in today's workplace?

Without internal communications, you have no way of getting your brand values, mission, and strategy across to your employees – and your employees would have no way of giving you their feedback on the way your company is running. In a scale-up situation, this is even more important, since your brand values and mission should be the basis for all decisions.

Simply put, internal communications are a vital part of any organization, and this is especially true in the context of the Great Resignation. As we discussed back in May, it's getting harder and harder for employers to attract and retain top talent. The situation is even more acute for tech companies, who are experiencing unprecedented shortages. According to one prediction, there will be a global shortage of over 85 million tech workers by 2030.

These days, tech companies in particular need to do more to actively engage their employees and attract new ones in a competitive market.

A well-thought-out, targeted internal communication strategy can:

- **Boost employee engagement and productivity:** Employees are likely to be more engaged in their work if they know they're working together towards a common goal. Plus, communication strategies that encourage employees to share their opinions help to make them feel valued, which is also a big driver of engagement. According to a Salesforce survey, employees who feel their voice is heard are 4.6 times more likely to feel empowered to do their best work.

- **Improve the employee experience and boost retention:** When employees are engaged at work, they're much less likely to look for another job elsewhere. A Gallup poll found that highly engaged employees were between 24% and 59% less likely to leave. This is particularly pertinent for tech companies, which have seen some of the highest levels of staff turnover in recent months.

- **Increase efficiency and solve problems more quickly:** When a serious problem arises, do you want your employees to have to deal with it alone? Or to have access to a range of resources and team members who might be able to help them? An effective communication strategy connects your technical employees together so that they can solve problems quickly and work more efficiently.

- **Save the company money:** Poor communications in the workplace can have a devastating effect on the company's bottom line: in an SHRM study of 400 companies with over 100,000 employees, the average company reported a loss of \$62.4 million per year due to inadequate communication.

Despite all of this, 60% of organizations don't have a long-term internal communication strategy in place. Even if you do, you still might fall short if you're not embracing modern methods of communicating with your employees.

The fact is, the old methods just don't cut it: comms emails often go unread and traditional intranet platforms are often clunky, outdated, and poorly used. And in the case of quickly expanding tech companies, a non-strategic approach is even more likely to fail.



The challenges of reaching employees for scaling tech companies

Tech scaleups are at a pivotal moment in their development, which means it's more important than ever for them to develop strategies to connect their workforce together. However, leaders of fast-growing companies often fail to understand that the methods they used to communicate with a small team simply won't work as the company grows – especially when many tech employees work remotely.

While employee engagement is typically high in small companies, it can start to drop off as the business gets bigger. In larger organizations, there are fewer opportunities for employees to express their ideas and provide feedback.

And it doesn't help that HR teams, who play an important role in helping companies to pass smoothly through the transitional period, are burning out at an alarming rate themselves, according to our research.

Here are some of the specific communications challenges that you might be facing as a scaling tech company:

A distributed workforce

According to a [McKinsey report](#), the majority of employees in computer and mathematical occupations report having remote work options, with 77% saying they're able to work fully remotely.

Working with distributed teams naturally makes it more difficult to connect everyone together, particularly if you're used to having everyone in the same room. And, while technical employees are better placed than others to embrace technological solutions, you still need their buy-in for your communication strategy to be effective – which means choosing the right tools.

Fast growth leading to misalignment

Maintaining team alignment is a significant challenge for fast-growing companies. According to the Growth Institute, when a team scales by just 33%, this represents a 400% increase in complexity. Now picture a company that needs to increase its headcount tenfold in just a few months, and you can see that they're likely to face real problems if the company isn't strategic in its approach.

Growing companies also inevitably experience changes to their culture, as they move from an everyone-knows-everyone start-up vibe towards something more corporate. Developing and maintaining a specific, explicit company culture that's obvious to new starters becomes more important with every new employee – but it's impossible without effective communications.

Fragmented communication and chaotic information sharing

In a start-up's early stages, communication methods often develop organically. Different employees and teams might communicate through a combination of text, email, WhatsApp groups, IM apps, and other methods. This becomes more difficult as more people join the organization, and the need for consistent communication methods arises.

And shared drives and documents can also quickly get out of hand if a company grows rapidly without putting strict policies in place to manage them. This can have a significant effect on business too: according to some research, information workers spend more than 7 hours every week searching for and gathering information. That's a lot of wasted time that could be recovered with better internal communications and document management strategies.



7 ways to connect with your workforce as a scaling tech company

If you're used to the type of communication that's common in an early-stage start-up, adjusting to a quickly scaling workforce can take some time. It's not enough to simply continue using the same methods and assuming everyone is as on board with your company's mission and values as your first five employees.

Instead, leaders and comms professionals in tech scaleups need to be intentional about connecting with their workforce and ensuring everyone is on the same page. Technical staff are among the best-placed employees to adopt a technological communications solution – but you need to get them on board.

Here are seven ways you could use your communication strategy to connect your scaling workforce together:

Bring everything together with a company intranet

Start-up leaders often use multiple different methods to communicate with their employees. There may be tech solutions involved, but the small size of these companies means that one-on-ones and all-hands meetings are also common. And informal communication might take place through unofficial channels like WhatsApp groups.

But when your headcount hits a certain number, all-hands meetings with everyone physically present become impractical, which means you might need to turn to digital solutions. Continuing to meet with employees individually also becomes more challenging the more employees you have. And unofficial channels like WhatsApp can represent a security risk as your organization gets bigger.

The answer is to tie everything together by deploying an employee intranet to act as a hub for all of your employee communications. If you've used a corporate or school intranet before, don't panic: we've come a long way since the clunky, web-based, and poorly used systems of the early '00s. Modern intranet solutions come with all sorts of features that allow you to connect your workforce together, even as your company grows.

Segment communications for better engagement

In a start-up, everyone knows everyone. And often, everyone is involved at least to some degree with almost every aspect of the business. But as your organization grows, you'll find that some messaging isn't relevant to everyone.

Since it's important not to overload your employees with communications (they have important work scaling your business to do, after all), it's a good idea to use segmentation when disseminating things like thought-leadership content so it only goes out to people it's relevant to.

This is a tricky balance because creating knowledge silos can be disastrous too – but you don't want to risk your employees simply switching off from your communications because they've received so much irrelevant content.

Of course, things like important company announcements should always go out to everyone. But by tailoring other types of content to certain groups, you can ensure the communications your employees receive are highly personalized and targeted – maximizing engagement.

Be intentional about disseminating your culture, mission, and values

It's inevitable that a company's culture will shift as it goes through a period of significant change. And scaling tech companies can feel this particularly strongly since they're often the brainchild of just one or two co-founders, who got their dream project on its feet with the help of a small team.

As more people join your organization, that initial vision can get diluted, and your culture can start to change. This means that leaders and internal comms professionals in fast-growing scale-ups need to be intentional about explaining and promoting their company culture to everyone who works for the organization.

Think about how you could tie the communications you share back to your mission, culture, and values. For example, if you share employee shout-outs when someone does something well, you can talk about this in the context of achieving your company's goals or contributing to the type of culture you want to build. Onboarding new employees is also a good opportunity to promote your culture and values, so make sure your onboarding process is built with them in mind.



Create protocols for information sharing

When an organization grows, the sheer amount of documentation it needs to function grows too. And if you don't have proper strategies in place for sharing and storing information, this can quickly get out of hand.

As your company scales, it's important to put in place a strategy for information sharing that means employees will always be able to find the files they need, even as your headcount reaches triple digits (or more). This might include developing a taxonomy to be used for files and folders, or strict naming conventions for any files saved in a shared drive.

Create opportunities for employees to learn from each other

One of the biggest advantages of working in a start-up environment is that employees have the opportunity to learn from their colleagues almost every day. As your company grows and your workforce separates into more distinct and siloed teams, this might not happen as organically. But making an effort to provide these opportunities for learning can still be a valuable part of your communication strategy.

Your technical employees have a wealth of knowledge about your products and the latest developments in the industry. And they're in the perfect position to share this with their colleagues, new starters, and even management. However, they can't spread their knowledge if they're only in communication with their own team.

One of the best ways to empower your technical workers through internal communications is to provide opportunities for communication across all levels, regardless of their team or location. This way, they can share their tips, best practices, and knowledge, improving performance all round.

You could even go one step further and organize weekly or bi-weekly "teach-ins" or learning sessions where employees take turns to deliver a talk on a topic of their choice. If you do, consider making these events accessible online through your digital platform to boost attendance.

Reward and recognize top performers

Tech employees often spend a lot of time working on solo projects, which means they might not receive as much praise for their good work as others. Plus, as an organization grows, opportunities for organic recognition become more scarce. But publicly praising your employees not only gives those employees a sense of achievement, but helps to inspire and encourage others as well.

Public recognition can hugely affect employee engagement and productivity since people who feel that their work is valued are motivated to put in more effort. And it can help with retention too: 63% of those who feel recognized at work say they're "very unlikely" to look for a new job in the next three to six months, according to one survey. This is a particularly important practice in the context of the ongoing War for Talent, where skilled tech employees have plenty of other options to choose from if they don't feel valued at work.

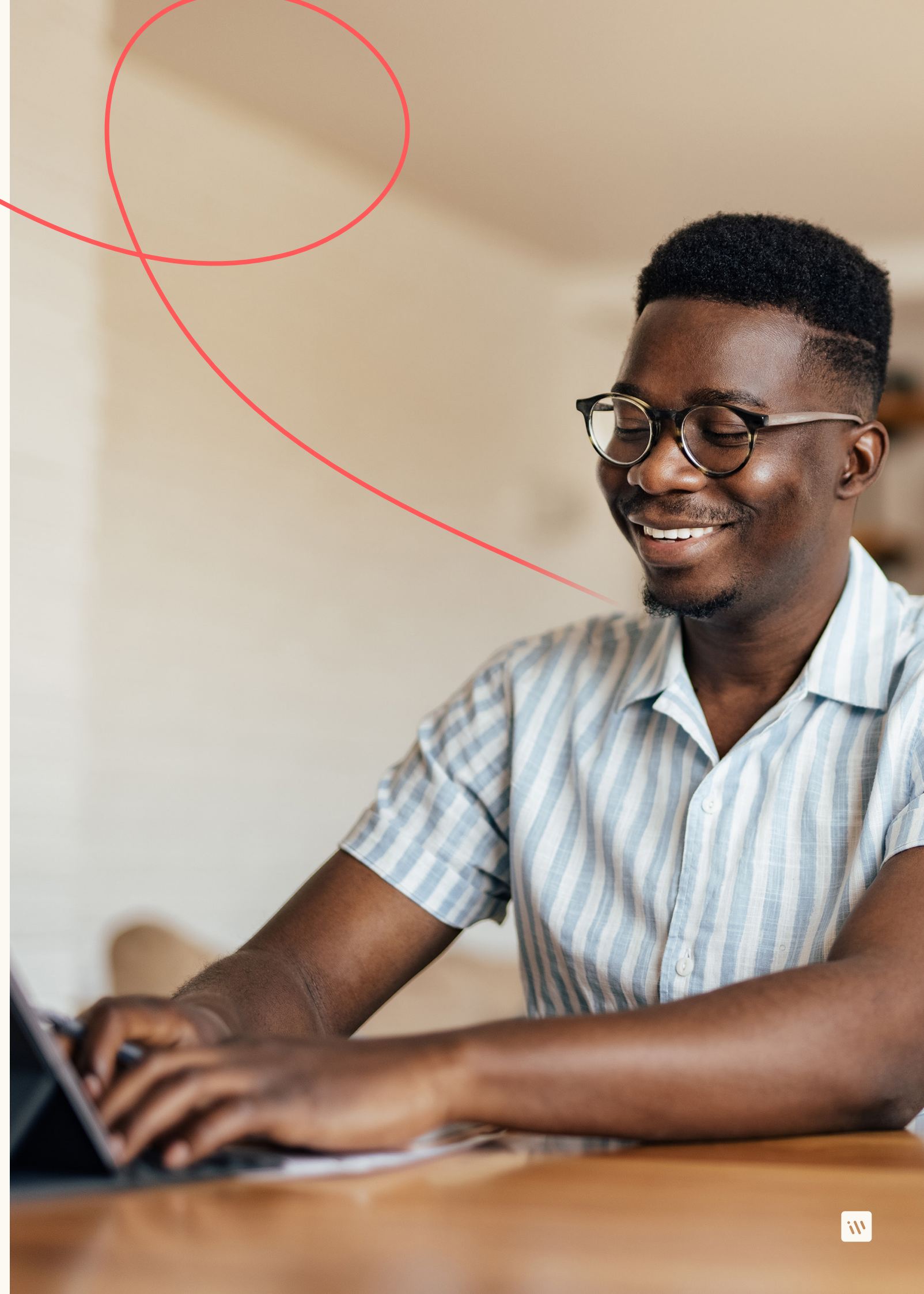
So, how can you make employee recognition part of your communication strategy? One idea is to send out a regular email, blog post, or piece of content that your employees can access on the intranet or employee app, shining a light on individual and team achievements. Some intranet or employee communications platforms even come with this function integrated, making it even easier for your employees to give their colleagues the praise they deserve.

Bring people together by making it fun

Employee communications shouldn't be about stilted company updates from your senior leadership team. Apart from anything else, scaling up often represents a period of intense activity for an organization. This means your employees are busy and don't have a lot of time to spend reading comms messages. There's a good chance they'll just ignore your corporate comms altogether if they're not engaging enough.

Instead, a good communication strategy should be focused on the employee experience, bringing people together and engaging them so that they truly feel like part of a team, even as that team gets bigger. Consider stepping away from long pieces of content that your employees probably don't have time to read and opt for bite-sized formats that are engaging and concise.

Formats like employee shout-outs, competitions, and interesting conversations that everyone can contribute to will always do a better job of improving the employee experience than boring top-down emails highlighting the company's latest achievements.



The must-have features for an internal communications platform

There are many parts to a good communication strategy. It needs to involve carefully crafted, well-branded content. It should also allow your entire workforce to contribute to the conversation, which requires careful planning as well. However, none of that will work if it's not sitting on a powerful platform that's designed to bring employees together.

There are many different platforms out there, and they all come with their own unique features – the one you choose will depend on the specific needs of your organization.

However, there are some key features that you shouldn't compromise on. Here are some of the must-haves to look for when you're choosing a platform:

An intuitive and familiar interface

If you want your employees to actually use the platform you choose, you need to make sure it's easy and inviting. That means looking for solutions with an interface that's pleasant and easy to navigate. While technical workers are better-placed than most to learn a new, complicated program, these employees are still often busy and will likely revert to their previous communication methods if it's not user-friendly.

A mobile app

To really engage your technical workers, you need to ensure they can access your communications wherever they're working from – which means a mobile-friendly solution is non-negotiable. More than this, the solution you choose should be mobile-first, not just a website that's technically accessible on a smartphone if you turn your phone on the side and wait for it to load.

Push notifications

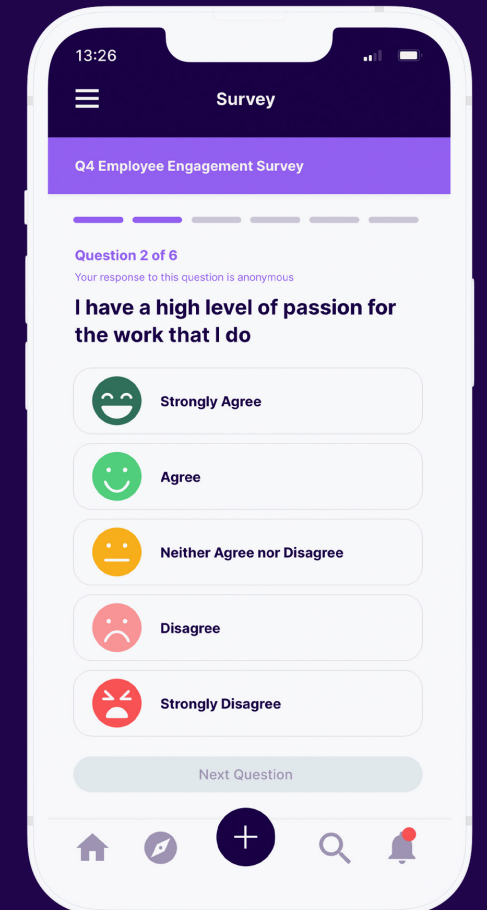
There are times when you need to get a message out to your entire organization – and know they've received it. This is a particular consideration in scaling companies, where things typically move quickly and employees need the latest information to work effectively. To get around this, use an app that has a push notification feature. Then, when you have a really important message to transmit, you'll know it's gotten to everyone.

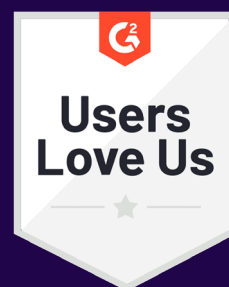
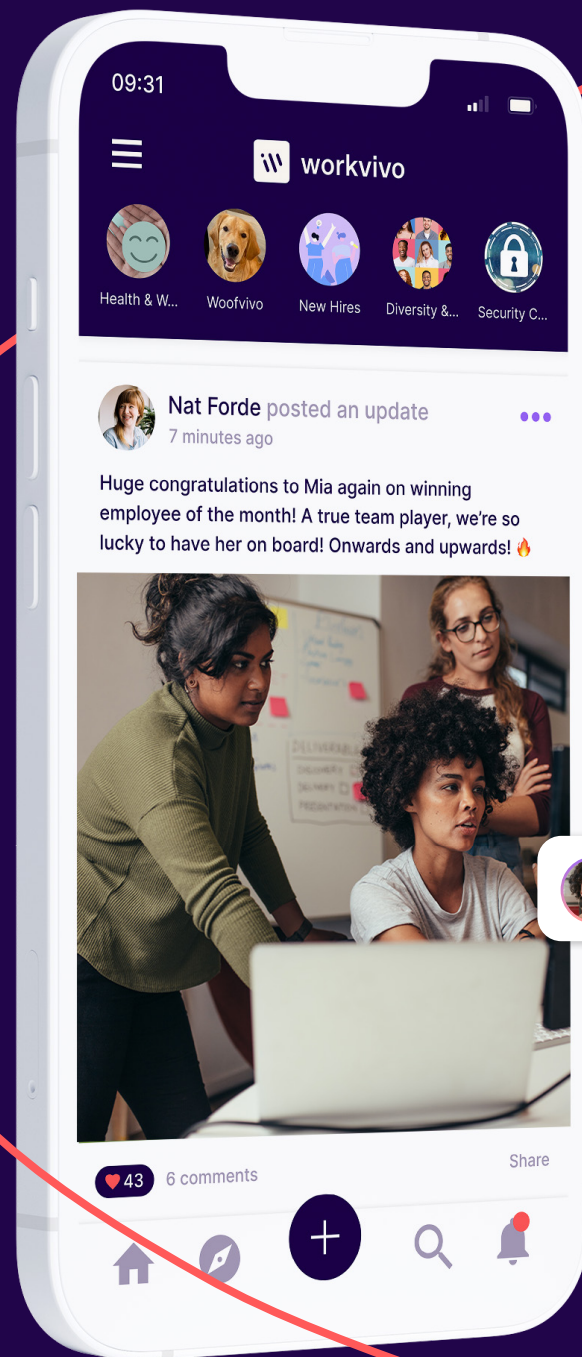
Pulse surveys and polls

Pulse surveys are a great way to keep an eye on what's actually going on in your organization in terms of employee engagement. And polls can be used to great effect with technical workers in particular: for example, when you need feedback on a new policy you're thinking of implementing. Often, things seem like a great idea at head office, and it takes someone with the technical knowledge needed to point out an obvious problem. Any communication platform you choose should make it easy for you to send out these surveys and polls, and for your technical employees to respond to them.

Opportunities for bottom-up and cross-functional communication

As we've discussed, the most effective communication doesn't come from the top down. To really empower your employees, you need a solution that allows them to communicate with each other regardless of their team or location, discuss problems, and even connect on a social level. Bonus points if your platform has social media-like functions like comments and emoji reactions, which all help to make things more fun and engaging.





What's going on, Victoria?

Introducing Workvivo

Workvivo is an employee communication platform with the power to bring your whole organization together – whether they're in the office together or working remotely from home. Our platform helps your employees to communicate, share ideas, and better understand your company's core mission and values.

Employees from all parts of your organization can post updates, ask questions, and give shout-outs, and they'll appear to other employees in a personalized news feed. Our employee recognition features can help you to build a culture of real-time, spontaneous peer-to-peer recognition. And you can easily send out polls and surveys that employees can respond to with just a few taps of the screen.

And did we mention? Our platform is fully accessible through our mobile app, which means it's the perfect tool to engage your remote employees.

Want to learn more? [Book a personalized demo](#) to understand how Workvivo can help tech companies to supercharge communications and scale with confidence.

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