

The Digital Communication Landscape: Getting It Right



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Introduction

Strong communication and the efficient flow of information are the lifeblood of organizations. Everything from efficient operations to delivering customer services to developing a strong organizational culture depend on the successful ability for employees to communicate with each other, stay informed and share knowledge.

The digital channels, tools and apps we choose to help us communicate and access information make an enormous difference to everybody's working day, and collectively to the success of each team or division's ability to meet their objectives.

The way organizations orchestrate their digital communications is important. Your digital communications landscape is a key asset and an increasingly important one.

Get it right and your channels make a massive contribution to the present and future success of an organization. Great products and services, a strong brand reputation, growth, profitability, innovation and a happy, engaged workforce only happen because of strong communication.

Get it wrong, and it can lead to inefficiency, low productivity, high risks and employee frustration. All too often poor governance results in a proliferation of apps, siloed information and employees not being able to find what they need.

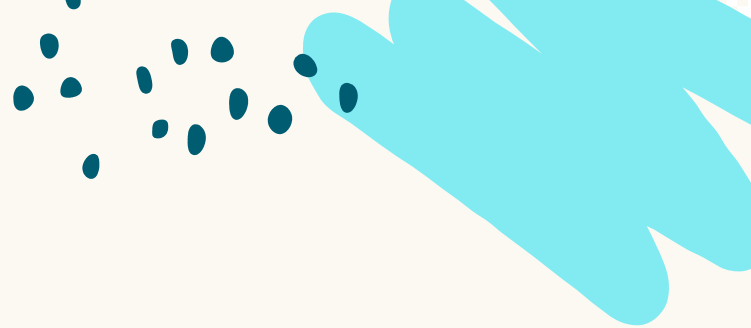
In truth, most organizations have some digital communications channels and processes that work well and some that don't work so well. Even in the most digitally mature and connected organizations there is always more work to do. Typical issues that clients come to us with include low adoption, high use of unauthorized applications, poor findability and an inability to communicate with desk-less and frontline workers.

In this ebook we're going to cover the elements to consider if you need to improve and optimize your digital communications landscape.

We Cover

- what an ideal landscape looks like
- the steps you can take to assess your own digital landscape
- designing the right landscape with the help of a communications matrix
- tactics to improve the digital employee experience focusing on priority areas to drive value

All organizations are different, but we hope you find the approaches and suggestions in this guide helpful and interesting, and it supports you on your digital communications landscape journey.



What Does A Typical Digital Communication Landscape Look Like?

If you took a snapshot of the communications that are happening in an organization at any moment in time it would reveal a highly complex, multi-layered and diverse flow of information and messages. The multiple channels in use and different types of communication reflect the complexity of operations and the frenetic pace of the working day.

This level of complexity means most digital communications landscapes are highly complex. Because the tools being used have usually been built up organically and reactively rather than as a planned ecosystem, they are not always optimized to work together to be truly effective.

There is likely to be a plethora of apps in use, with overlapping capabilities. If you looked under the bonnet of a typical organization you might find some or even all of the below being used:

Channel	Example workplace technologies
Email	Outlook, Google Hangouts
Messaging / Chat	Skype for Business, MS Teams, Slack, Work Chat (Facebook), WhatsApp, Chatter, Workvivo
Online Meetings / Conferencing	MS Teams, Slack, Zoom, GoToMeeting, WhatsApp, Webex, Google hangouts
Intranet	SharePoint / SharePoint Online, Interact, Unily, Wizdom, Workvivo
Social intranet / ESN	Facebook Workplace, Yammer, Slack, Workvivo
Employee Communication Mobile App	Staffbase, Workvivo, MS Teams, Yammer, Slack
Team or Project Space	MS Teams, SharePoint team sites, Slack
Community Site	MS Teams, Yammer, Workvivo
Document Management	SharePoint, File network, Google Drive, Dropbox, Box
Digital Signage	Various providers
HR Portal	Workday, SuccessFactors etc.
Video Portal	MS Stream, Brightcove, Kaltura etc

What Does An Effective Digital Communication Landscape Look Like?

If you could design a digital communications landscape from scratch, what would it look like? A highly effective digital communications landscape has:

- **High efficiency:** Streamlined to help employees get things done
- **Good findability:** Employees can find what they need
- **Lower costs:** Presents good Return On Investment
- **Healthy adoption:** Great levels of usage
- **Good employee experience:** drives engagement and is built around the way people actually work
- **Low risk:** does not expose the organization to risks such as data breaches
- **High trust:** employees trust the information and communications they need
- **Effective processes:** key business processes are successfully enabled by the tools on hand

Let's explore in more detail what an effective digital communications landscape looks like by comparing an organization with a poor landscape and one that is optimized.

Poor Scenario

Chronic inefficiency: Applications and systems are duplicated or exist in siloes so information flows are broken. Employees are confused about which applications should be used for different tasks and it takes extra effort just to complete simple tasks. Employees fall back on email to communicate with each other.

Poor findability: Documents and information are hidden in siloes and people are unable to find the information they need to carry out their roles. Employees waste a huge amount of time trying to find a document or who to contact to help them find that document. There is zero confidence in using search, and many people give up and "make do".

Optimized Scenario

High efficiency: Applications and systems are streamlined and work together so that information flows easily around the organization. It's generally easy to get things done and employees have high awareness and confidence in the digital workplace. There is less dependency on email.

Good findability: Generally, employees can find the information and files they need to complete their everyday tasks, either through a search or through navigation. When an employee is unable to find the information they are looking for, they can easily locate the correct person to ask. Overall, less time is wasted and employees feel less frustrated.



Poor Scenario

High costs: There are duplications of systems in terms of core functionality and capabilities, leading to high licensing costs. Expensive legacy systems are rife. There are also additional costs involved in training, managing and supporting duplicate systems.

Poor adoption: The adoption levels of different digital communication tools are patchy, with some core systems not well-used so their benefits are not being felt. ROI is not being realized and people are still using email. Poor adoption is also not just about the number of users or visitors; employees are not using tools in the right way for the right purpose to drive maximum value.

Poor employee experience: Employees feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of channels and applications they have to visit or use to stay informed and get things done. Information overload is rife. Individuals are frustrated with too many applications open, broken processes, fragmented experiences and not being able to find what they need. The technology landscape is negatively impacting everybody's working day.

High risk: Shadow IT is everywhere. Frustrated with poor applications that fail to help them get things done or that do not work on their mobile devices, teams and individual employees are using consumer-grade systems primarily to fill the gaps. Local pockets of use of different applications such as WhatsApp and Dropbox that are not supported by IT occur. The risks of a data breach security issue or non-compliance with GDPR are considerably higher.

Optimized Scenario

Lower costs: A rationalized digital workplace avoids redundancy with fewer duplicate systems, helping to significantly streamline overall licensing and subscription costs. Resourcing relating to training and support is more efficient.

Healthy adoption: Core digital communication tools are used by a high proportion of employees for the purpose they were designed for. Tools are being used in ways that drive value throughout the organization. ROI is being realized and employees are also gaining knowledge and confidence in the tools at their fingertips, even helping to drive innovative usage of these tools.

Good employee experience: Employees are happy with the technology landscape and tools provided, supporting them in their everyday work. There is one place to go to start the working day, where the majority of tasks can be completed. There is less information overload and less frustration. Employees can find what they need, get things done and stay informed. The digital communication channels on offer support the overall feeling that this is a great organization to work for.

Low risk: There are far fewer instances of shadow IT because there is no need to use these systems. Employees can get things done and can access apps on their mobile device. Generally, the risks of a data breach or security issues are reduced. Your IT function and risk department are much happier.

Poor Scenario

Low trust: With inefficient internal communications and access to content that has not been updated, people have low trust in the information they do receive. Even if they do find the right information or document, they question whether it is accurate or out of date. Finding conflicting information is also not uncommon. Ultimately, adoption suffers.

Broken processes: High value business processes and organizational use cases such as internal communications, employee onboarding, customer service and innovation are not supported by digital communication tools. Some processes do not operate as effectively as they should and may even be “broken”.

Optimized Scenario

High trust: Because there is one source of truth for information and documents, it is trusted by employees. When an employee finds an official policy or document, they know it is the latest version. Content on the intranet is regularly reviewed to make sure it is accurate and up to date. Because employees trust content, relevant digital channels are well adopted.

Effective processes: Key business processes and use cases are supported effectively by the digital communications landscape. It is essential for the everyday running of the organization.

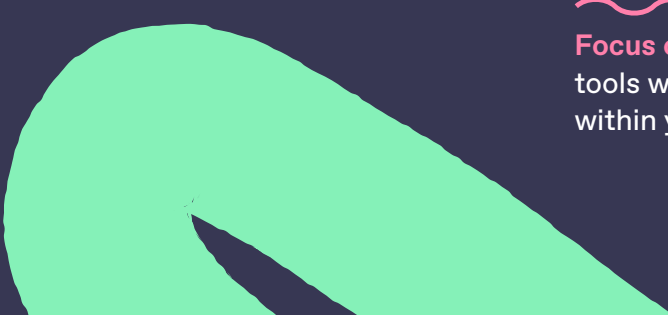
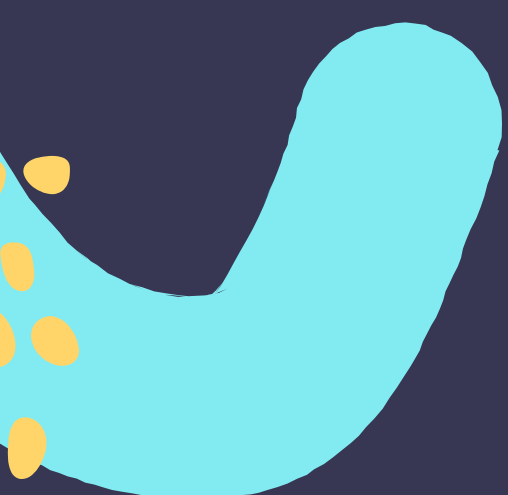




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Four Steps To Improving The Digital Communications Landscape



1

Map the landscape by carrying out user research and an audit of tools to develop a plan and strategy

2

Decode the landscape by developing a **communications matrix** that maps tools to messaging need, providing clarity to both internal communicators and teams

3

Improve the digital employee experience by consolidating and streamlining the tools used, for example, reducing the number of applications that need to be accessed by employees

4

Focus on business value by ensuring that tools work brilliantly for core processes within your organization

Map The Landscape

When it comes to advancing and improving the digital communication landscape, knowledge is power. By mapping the landscape and researching the relative needs of users you can identify gaps and overlaps in tools, assess the risks and start to develop a strategy, a plan and a communications matrix.

1 Research what users need for communication and how they are using current tools

You need to have a solid understanding of how employees are using technology to communicate and also why.

Use a variety of research techniques such as observation, interviews (with both users and stakeholders), workshops and surveys to understand the use cases, needs, pain points, successful approaches and thoughts of users relating to communications.

2 Carry out a tools and channels audit

At the same time try to understand what tools and channels are actually being used and how frequently. There may be some analytics that your IT function can provide that will help.

You also need to find out the extent to which employees are relying on Shadow IT. In doing so, your tools and channels audit needs to be positioned as the start of a process to improve your communications landscape. Make it clear that nobody is going to be disciplined for using an authorized system.

3 Analyze the results

From your results, carry out an analysis that identifies:

- The key types of message and communication that employees are using tools for
- The most important use cases
- The actual applications and channels in use
- How these applications and channels then map to the types of messaging and communication
- Overlaps in the use of tools and the related opportunities to simplify the landscape
- Any gaps and common pain points where the tools on offer clearly do not meet the needs of your employees or your organization's strategic objectives
- Where there are risks in the applications being used, particularly Shadow IT

4 Develop your strategy and plan

Based on your findings, start to work on a plan of action that takes in a strategy, roadmap and potentially a business case for investment. If you're looking to invest in new tools you may also need to carry out some additional research into specific products and tools. In the next section, we cover developing a basic communications matrix that can help you to design and improve your digital communications landscape as well as guide everyone on what tool to use when.

Decoding The Landscape By Developing A Communications Matrix

If you're improving your digital communications landscape, a communications matrix can help you to:

- Plan your ideal, optimized communications landscape, matching tools and channels to messaging needs
- Act as a guide to both internal communicators and employees to work out what channels should be used for which message

What are the communication channels in an organization?

If you have carried out research, you will have uncovered many different types of communication channels in your organization. There are more communication options in an organization than most people realize. Not all of these will apply to every business, but typically there are:

- **Meetings / Face to Face:** These can be both face to face and online. For IC folks, cascading messages through managers is still an option for formal, important communication
- **Email:** Perhaps the most prevalent digital communication channel, and one of the least efficient. Nobody ever complains about not getting enough email
- **Messaging / Chat:** Messaging has exploded in organizations and in practice there may be multiple technologies where messaging or chat can happen. Intranet publishing: The news and content publishing element of the intranet is a traditional but still important internal communications channel
- **Social Intranet / Enterprise Social Network:** A social platform helps everybody to communicate through blogs, updates, discussion threads and comments
- **Team or Project Space:** A team or project space provides updates to a restricted group and tends to be used for work-focused purposes
- **Community Site:** A community space tends to provide a place to communicate and collaborate for those with a common interest or professional background. It is sometimes used for non-work interests in a workplace
- **Employee App:** An employee app is deployed to mobile devices and may provide both intranet news and a social network; it's an excellent way to reach disconnected, deskless and frontline workers
- **Digital Signage:** Screens in the workplace are increasingly an option for internal communicators
- **Hard Copy:** Noticeboards and physical newsletters are still commonplace, particularly in workplaces where there is a significant proportion of deskless workers. Yes, it is old school but can be effective, used in the right way
- **HR Portal or System:** An HR portal like Workday is not primarily a communication channel, but in practice operational updates to do with HR may be pushed through it
- **Town Hall / Event:** A town hall is usually a physical meeting for leadership communications, but sometimes it is videoed or streamed

- **Video Channel:** Internal YouTube platforms to share video can be standalone but also integrated with an intranet, social intranet or an ESN
- **Public Websites and Social Media:** An external-facing website or social media is primarily tooled for external audiences, but these can be viewed or even used by employees. Although not that common, organizations do use “open” websites or social media channels to engage with employees

Note that this list is almost certainly not complete

What are types of communication and messaging?

Additionally, there are a whole stack of different types of communication and messaging with different purposes and reach. Some of the most popular are:

- **Personal / One-to-One:** The most prevalent day-to-day communication talking about work but also those “water cooler” conversations (that don’t actually usually happen around the water cooler)
- **Team, Project or Working Group Comms:** Communications within a team, usually about work or operations
- **Division, Function or Location Comms:** More general updates, but again specific to those in a specific part of the company
- **Strategic Comms:** Strategic and important communications and updates that needs to go to all employees
- **People-Focused Comms:** Softer communications celebrating people, values and achievements

- **Leadership Comms:** Messaging from senior leaders that often reflects organizational-wide communications, but often with a more personal touch
- **Crisis Comms:** Updates from management and employees during a crisis
- **Operational Updates:** Operational updates with things that all employees need to know, for example from HR and IT
- **Community Updates:** Updates delivered to a professional community of practice or those with common interests
- **Disconnected Employees:** Communications delivered to frontline and firstline workers not based at desks and often without email or AD profiles. Traditionally these groups have been hard to communicate with digitally, although this is changing thanks to employee apps and social intranets that are accessible on employee-owned mobile devices



So what channels are best for which types of communication?

Every organization is different. Here's our attempt to decode the IC channels landscape by matching what we view as the channel options for the different types of communication. You can use this potentially as a resource to help you plan your own IC channel matrix and optimize your own landscape or in preparing a communication guide for your employees and IC network or team.

IC Channel Matrix

	Meeting / Face To Face	Email	Messaging / Chat	Intranet Publishing	Social Intranet & Esn	Team Or Project Space	Community Site	Employee App	Digital Signage	Hard Copy	HR Portal	Town Hall / Event	Video Channel	Public Website
Personal / One To One	✓	✓	✓											
Team, Project or Working Group Comms	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓						
Division / Functional or Location Comms				✓	✓			✓	✓			✓		
Strategic Comms		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	
People-Focused Comms				✓	✓			✓				✓	✓	
Leadership Comms				✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	
Crisis Comms		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Operational Updates				✓	✓			✓	✓		✓			
Community Updates					✓		✓	✓						
Disconnected Employees					✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	

Improve The Digital Employee Experience

Improving the digital communication landscape is a journey. In truth the digital communications landscape is never quite done and will need to evolve. Even if you have already made major changes by introducing a new tool, there will be further improvements to make because:

- Digital communication landscapes are usually very complex and there will be legacy systems and licenses that are still to expire. Communications teams are also small so not everything can be done overnight

- Circumstances and needs change. The demands of the coronavirus crisis show just how quickly situations can transform and evolve, leading to sudden demands for new ways to communicate. Organizations can also restructure with mergers and acquisitions, leading to new demands for tools
- Products and tools develop new capabilities. The digital workplace moves quickly; tools are developing new capabilities all the time, leading to new opportunities. Microsoft's investment in MS Teams is a great example of an evolving product
- User expectations increase. Employees use new tools and apps outside work that changes how they want to use tools inside work. This can also be the case as you start to bring in a younger workforce with higher expectations of the technology they want to use

Internal communications and digital workplace teams can follow a series of tactics to help improve the digital communications landscape. The kind of actions we've seen our customers undertake to optimize the landscape are listed in the table below.

Landscape Characteristic

Tactics

High Efficiency: Applications and systems are streamlined and work together so that information easily flows around the organization.

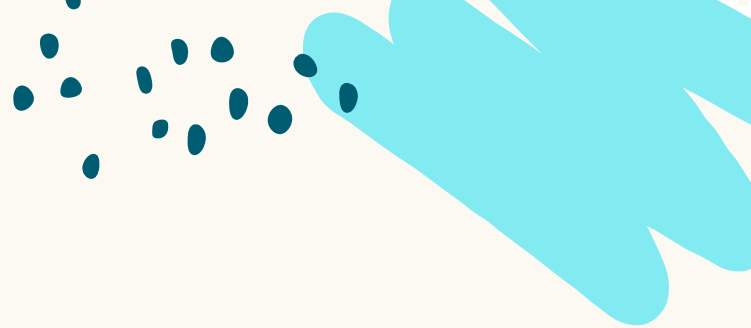
- Provide easy to use tools that connect everybody in your organization
- Drive adoption of the preferred tools to remove application-driven siloes
- Underpin the experience with Single Sign-On

Good Findability: Generally, employees can find the information and files they need to get everyday tasks done.

- Where possible, provide integrated search experiences that search across multiple channels and applications
- Use a user-centred navigation so employees can find what they need
- Provide a central place to find and access all the common applications employees need to on a daily basis

Lower Costs: A rationalized digital workplace avoids redundancy with less duplicate systems.

- Remove duplicate and redundant applications to save on licensing costs
- Manage an ongoing programme to simplify the application landscape as subscriptions run out
- Introduce a governance process to control subscriptions to new applications and services to avoid further redundancy



Landscape Characteristic

Tactics

Healthy Adoption: Core digital communication tools are used by a high proportion of employees for the purpose they were designed for.

- Invest in change management, training and support to underpin adoption
- Involve a group of champions to help drive adoption with their peers; use the group to give feedback and keep improving the communication landscape
- Engage senior leaders to lead by example and be visible on digital channels

Good Employee Experience: Employees are happy with the technology landscape and tools provided, supporting them in their everyday work.

- Provide a simplified overall digital environment, including one central place which is the starting point or “front door” to finding information and communicating
- Provide clear guidance on which tool to use for which need

Low Risk: There are far fewer instances of shadow IT because there is less need to use these systems.

- Remove risky applications that cause security or GDPR issues but promote alternatives
- Communicate the risks of using Shadow IT to drive awareness among employees

High Trust: There is one source of truth for information and documents and there is high levels of trust from employees.

- Establish content management processes such as regular reviews and appropriate approvals to make sure content is up to date
- Make sure every piece of content has an attributed, visible owner to drive accountability for the standard of content
- Ensure there is one source of truth for important documents and information and make sure this is easily accessible for employees e.g. through a central library on your intranet

Effective Processes: Key business processes are supported effectively

- Use measurement to drive continuous improvement
- Prioritize key business processes and make sure these continue to work well
- Establish feedback loops and even a user group to leverage employee input to improve the digital communications landscape



Focus on Business Value

Your digital communications landscape needs to keep on delivering value. One of the ways to make sure it does is to focus on important business processes and use cases such as leadership communications, employee onboarding and innovation.

By considering high value use cases you can:

- Prioritize your efforts
- Make sure particular tools are optimized to different uses
- Easily illustrate value to stakeholders and users
- Get ROI from your digital communications landscape

Below is a table with some of the key business processes that lean in on your digital communication landscape, with some associated tips to make it work.

Process	Description	Tips
Leadership Communications	Leaders communicate directly with employees in ways that are authentic, empathetic and impactful, helping to stimulate dialogue and connection	• Use personal blogs and videos for leaders to drive more impactful messaging • Invite feedback via social channels • Get leaders to regularly comment on other blogs and discussion threads • Use social tools to hold “Ask Me Anything” sessions • Make town hall videos accessible on your intranet
Key Documents and Forms	Employees can access key policies, forms and documents with confidence that they are the latest versions	• Provide a central library of key documents and forms available via your intranet and employee app so it is easy to find and access • Establish the library as the trusted, one source of truth with clear processes so that documents are always up to date
Event Management	Employees can register for events and access relevant resources before and after	• Publicize key events in a calendar • format on your intranet • Use platforms that have event management capabilities out of the box • Embed forms and allow workflow to allow registrations • Distribute pre-event documentation and post-event assets either via groups with restricted access or to everyone as appropriate via a social intranet



Process

Description

Tips

Employee Onboarding

Employees are onboarded in ways that are efficient and engaging, so their experience of joining an organization is less overwhelming, more welcoming and they can hit the ground running

- Consider providing access to your intranet or employee app or to a “new starter” community once a person accepts a role, helping them to prepare for their first day
- Provide a new starters area on your intranet with resources, guides, timetables and tasks
- Establish a community site for new starters to get to know each other and ask questions
- Get new starters to complete their profiles and highlight them on your social intranet

Find an Expert / Ask a Question

Employees can easily find an expert in a particular subject or with a skill and get questions answered if necessary

- Use employee profiles on your social intranet to list areas of expertise and make these searchable
- Create a channel, group or support community area in your social intranet where employees can ask questions and get answers

Employee Pulse Check

Senior leaders, HR functions and internal communications can get a sense of how employees are feeling on different matters and even collect their feedback

- Use surveys and polls to gauge employee opinion on different topics, perhaps complementing a more formal employee engagement survey
- Use a blog or community site to ask for feedback on different initiatives
- Use analytics to get a sense of trending topics on your social intranet

Innovation and Idea Management

Ideas from employees are gathered, shared, voted upon and then turned into initiatives to deliver new products, services and processes

- Use a social intranet to set challenges, gather ideas and then get people to vote or collaborate on them
- Use more formal ideation software to introduce innovation at scale

HR self-service

Employees can carry out simple HR tasks themselves, such as view and book annual leave, view a payslip, record time and more. Managers can also view team rosters and approve annual leave

- Integrate your intranet with your HR system to provide employee self-service via the intranet
- Bring HR information together that is helpful for individuals and their managers
- Provide guidance on how to complete HR tasks so employees can complete process themselves

Process

Description

Tips

IT Support

IT support can resolve technical and application issues efficiently for employees

- Integrate your intranet with your IT ticketing or support system so that employees can log issues
- Provide IT support material and FAQs so employees can sort out their own issues as much as possible
- Establish application-specific support communities so super-users and product experts can answer questions that can't be dealt with by the IT helpdesk

Peer and Manager Recognition

Employees and peers are recognized and praised for great service, helping to drive employee engagement and a values-driven culture

- Use your social intranet to celebrate employee success through shout outs, thank you's and milestones from peers and managers

Frontline and Deskless Communications

Head office can communicate efficiently with frontline and deskless workers who don't have access to terminals during the working day and may not even have digital identities

- Use an employee communication app accessible from corporate and personal devices for internal communications

Frontline Operations

Various frontline operations are supported such as the ability to swap rosters, smooth out logistics and swap best practices

- Use team spaces or community sites to set up process-related communities such as roster swapping, fault reporting with photos, advice on dealing with customers etc.

Digitizing Paper or Email Processes

Simple processes involving paper and email are digitized or automated as far as possible driving efficiencies

- Use forms and workflow on your intranet to digitize processes as far as possible
- Integrate applications into your intranet for custom workflows involving different applications
- Use team spaces or community sites to set up process related communities to support each other

Process

Description

Tips

Training and Learning

Individuals and teams are supported in their learning, development and growth, and can also complete any mandatory training

- Integrate your Learning Managing System with your intranet so users can easily access your course catalogue and course material
- Allow employees to book themselves onto courses and training from your intranet or employee app
- Post and share links to learning resources, perhaps through professional or themed communities that support 'social' and blended learning

Health and Wellbeing

Employees are fully supported in their health and wellbeing

- Create a health and wellbeing portal or site on your social intranet with resources, guidance and contacts
- Detail employee benefits on your intranet such as gym memberships
- Provide communities for hobbies and non-work interest groups to help people relax, connect and play e.g. running club, book club, even cat videos!

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)

Digital communications reflect and support diversity and inclusion within the organization

- Reflect and celebrate D&I in your internal communications
- Build communities on your social intranet for Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)
- Create an area for D&I champions
- Detail D&I policies on your intranet



The Journey To a Better Communication Landscape

It might feel like there is a lot of work to do but starting out on the journey to a better communication landscape can reap benefits surprisingly quickly. There's always some 'low hanging fruit' that will result in relatively quick improvements that get noticed by management and employees.

When you introduce new tools adoption can also be very rapid. When IC teams have rolled out Workvivo they often tell they are pleasantly surprised by the speed of the uptake from employees.

A clear intention to improve the digital communication landscape can also make a big difference. Carrying out user research and getting feedback from employees (and acting on it) produces a lot of goodwill. Employees want to communicate better and get things done with the kind of digital experiences they have outside work.

Whatever stage of your journey to a better communication landscape you're on, we hope you've found the insights and tips in this report useful.



About Workvivo

Workvivo is the communication platform employees love to use. We took the digital social experience people are familiar with in their personal lives, and applied this to business. Employees can read and post content, like, share and comment in exactly the same way they do outside of the working environment, but they can also recognize others through shout-outs, link posts to company goals and values, create community spaces and publish company articles and events.

The way employees interact is changing, and companies must adapt if we're to maintain high levels of employee engagement. We founded Workvivo to connect employees in new and interesting ways. To increase engagement, to amplify culture and to create a real sense of community.



Give Back
Organizational Goal

Shout-out to:



Joe Deane



Mia Cambridge

127 49



Workvivo's mission is to elevate everyone's workplace experience by helping employees stay informed, engaged, and connected wherever they work from.



Simple Communications. Happier Teams.



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