



CREATING AN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY THAT SUPPORTS AI TRANSFORMATION

A practical guide to modernizing your workplace



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Introduction

Your AI rollout is already telling a story. The real question is whether you're shaping that story — **or if your employees are making up the missing parts themselves.**

Organizations are rolling out AI more quickly than they're explaining it. When there's a lack of information, employees fill the gap with rumors, disengagement, and, sometimes, tools they prefer not to talk about.

In the report *Where AI Breaks — or Breaks Through*, IBM surveyed 8,400 employees in 28 countries on how they learn about AI at work. Almost half (49%) said they **only hear about AI tools after they're launched**, or don't know how AI decisions are made.

At the same time, the team best equipped to fill that gap — internal comms — is either stuck in broadcast mode or has no plan at all.

Gallagher's *2026 Employee Communications Report* highlights the issue.



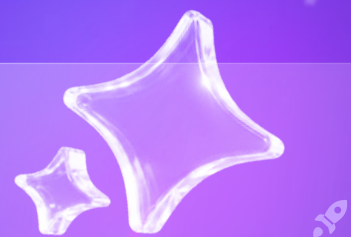
61%

of organizations don't have a formal way to communicate change...

...and another 37% don't provide managers with any resources when change happens.

You can close all of these gaps with the right strategy. This guide covers every stage: the audit, the narrative, the 12-week rollout, the managers, and the measurement.

Your rollout will send a message no matter what. This guide is how you make sure it says what you intend.



Understand the landscape and segment your audience

Before you send any messages about AI, make sure you understand what's happening and know exactly who your audience is.

1.1 Audit the AI roadmap

You can't communicate a plan you haven't seen. Your first task is to have an honest conversation with whoever is steering AI decisions: IT, a transformation lead, an exec sponsor, or sometimes a CFO with a spreadsheet and a target.

Don't leave the conversation without the basics:



Which tools, on what dates, for which teams.

Push for names and dates. Also, ask what's already live – there might be a pilot running somewhere no one announced.



The "why now" in business terms, in one sentence.

Is it cost pressure, a competitor's move, or a capability gap? If leaders can't explain it simply, employees will come up with their own explanations – often negative ones.



Who owns what: HR, exec, legal, IT.

Be specific about decisions, not departments. For example: who signs off the usage policy, who answers a worried employee, or who decides which tools are permitted.

A quick note: don't wait for the plan to be finished. It's better to find out about a rough roadmap early than to learn about a final version only on launch day.

1.2 Segment by readiness and by need

Most AI comms plans are written for one person: **the employee who's already curious**. But that's a small slice of your workforce, and it's rarely the group that needs the most support.

Our *The State of AI Transformation at Work* report found that for one in four frontline workers, the biggest barrier to using AI more at work is the belief that it doesn't apply to their role. Overall, 31% of frontline workers say they never use AI tools in their work.

Every group in your organization is sitting on a different unanswered question. That's why a single all-staff message ends up not helping most people.

Consider these three groups as a baseline:

Who	What they're thinking	What they need from you
The champions Early adopters, eager to automate, usually ahead of your policy.	"How can I use this to move faster and do more?"	Direction and guardrails — where to apply AI, where not to, and how to share what works.
The skeptics Watching closely, worried about job security or falling behind on skills.	"Is my job on the list?"	Clarity and reassurance — what's changing, what isn't, and how they'll be supported.
The unaware Haven't connected AI to their own daily tasks.	"This doesn't really apply to me."	Relevance — specific, practical examples tied to their day-to-day work.

Readiness shows you how to talk to someone, but you also need to think about urgency. Business needs like **cost, speed, or scale** can make some teams a higher priority for automation.

Find out where that pressure is and use it to plan and shape your messages. This way, the right teams get the right sense of urgency.

1.3 Check what your channels can carry

You've mapped your audience. Now, check if your channels can support your message. Before sending anything, sort your channels into two groups:



Broadcast

The intranet, company-wide posts, and launch emails are good for telling people what is happening and when.



Dialogue

Team spaces, Ask Me Anything sessions, and small-group forums are better for handling doubts, objections, and questions that people may not want to share in a company-wide feed.

Most AI communication plans lean almost entirely on the first bucket. The announcement goes out, nobody replies publicly, and leaders read that silence as agreement.

Frontline teams feel this most. They're mobile-first, mid-shift, and often without a company laptop, so the broadcast reaches them, but the conversation doesn't. If your dialogue channels only exist at desks, you've already decided who gets to ask questions.



*The State of AI
Transformation at Work*

[Read the insights](#)

Set objectives and shape the story

Gallagher's *2026 AI Adoption and Risk Survey* found that **only 56% of organizations have shared their AI strategy with their workforce**. Many companies make a plan, but far fewer explain it in a way people can easily repeat to each other.

"People don't resist AI – they resist uncertainty. Your job as an internal communicator isn't to explain the technology; it's to close the gap between what's happening and what it means for the person reading your message and experiencing the change."



Nicolette Roses-Agoro
Service Delivery Manager at Boost by Workvivo

2.1 Set objectives worth defending

Too many AI communication plans stop at "raise awareness" or "drive adoption," but that's not enough. A strong objective clearly states the behavior you want to change, who you want to change it in, and how you'll measure success.

Choose two or three meaningful objectives to start with:

Behavior you want to change	Group	How you'd know it worked
Opening the AI tools they've been given, instead of leaving them sitting unused.	Start with the groups furthest behind, usually frontline and mid-shift teams.	Weekly active use by role and location, against a pre-launch baseline.
Searching for the answer themselves before queueing up a question for HR, IT, or a manager.	Everyone; tracked separately for frontline.	Volume of searches and self-serve answers; drop in repeat questions landing in your comms and HR channels.
Talking about AI without assuming it's a headcount exercise.	The skeptics – the group watching job security closest.	Pulse survey scores on job security, plus recurring themes in open-text responses and comments.
Dropping the workarounds – the personal AI accounts, the tools nobody vetted, the paid subscriptions doing one job each.	Teams that bought their own way around the gap.	Number of overlapping tools retired; spend removed; drop in shadow AI usage.

2.2 Write the core narrative

Whatever objectives you choose, turn them into a story that answers the questions people are already asking:

Why AI, and why now?

In business terms, in one sentence. Use the version you found in your roadmap audit.

What's changing, specifically?

Which tasks, which teams, and which timelines? Be specific so people don't fill in the gaps with rumors.

What isn't changing?

This is just as important, but is often left out.

What will happen with the time saved?

If you don't answer it, employees will assume it means more work for the same pay.

Make "human-in-the-loop" a rule.

Take a clear position on human judgment: no decision that affects someone's livelihood, such as hiring, firing, or performance evaluation, should ever be made by an algorithm without a person being responsible for it.

Support your story with evidence that matters to employees. AI statistics are usually written for investors, focusing on efficiency, margin, and headcount. Instead, look for numbers that matter to workers, like hours saved on manual tasks, new skills learned, and fewer errors.

Then address the rumors directly. What people say to each other about AI is already shaping your story. Write down the main rumor, answer it in one sentence, and you have your FAQ:

The rumor

"This is how they cut headcount without saying so."

"They'll use it to monitor us."

"If I don't use it, I'll look slow."

The honest answer

Only true if it is. Say what's decided, what's still being evaluated, and when people will hear more.

Name what's tracked, what isn't, and who can see it.

State the expectation plainly (e.g., encouraged, required, or neither).

2.3 Set AI comms guardrails

Guardrails help people use AI confidently because they move faster when they know the limits. Your communication strategy should always make these boundaries clear, specific, and easy to understand.

Start by making the boundaries clear and specific. For example:

Category	The test	Example
Go ahead	Output only affects you, or the source is already public.	Summarizing a published report, generic templates, grammar, turning an announced policy into talking points.
Ask first	The task itself might not be appropriate; check before you start.	Anything touching unreleased financials, unannounced strategy, or a policy still being decided.
Check before you send	The task is fine; the output needs a human eye.	Drafting internal content, analyzing anonymized data, anything an employee will read as official.
Not permitted	It involves a person's data, or a decision about a person.	Legal contracts, hiring and firing decisions, performance ratings, customer or employee personal data.



Learn how to write an AI usage guide for your organization

[Click here](#)

Activate the plan and educate your people

Once you have clear objectives and a defined story, create a multi-week plan that rolls out your strategy step by step.

"AI doesn't change what internal communicators do; it changes how fast we have to do it. The teams that will thrive aren't the ones with the best tools. They're the ones who built trust before the tools arrived."



Nicolette Roses-Agoro
Service Delivery Manager at Boost by Workvivo



3.1 Weeks 1–4: Build psychological safety

People need to feel comfortable questioning AI, sharing doubts, and admitting when they're unsure. Your job is to set the right tone and start the conversation. In these first weeks, you should:

Involve leaders from the beginning.

Choose live conversations instead of prepared statements for all types of questions, even the ones that don't have clear answers yet.

Talk openly about job security.

Share a clear FAQ before people start to worry. Explain what AI will change, what it won't, and where human judgment remains essential.

Encourage honest feedback.

Set up dedicated spaces for questions, such as AMAs, team discussions, or moderated forums. If communication only goes one way, silence might seem like agreement, but it usually isn't.

3.2 Weeks 5–8: Build AI literacy

In the second month, move from reassuring people to making things clear. Help everyone understand AI, see how it works in practice, and connect it to their daily tasks.

Start by defining key terms in simple language,

like prompting, GenAI, and LLMs. Show examples of good results and point out where AI has limits.

Connect everything to real tasks.

Link each session to what people already do in their jobs. Focus on their workflows first, not just the technology.

Make the information relevant to each role.

Tailor the “*what’s in it for me?*” (WIIFM) to each department, using real examples from projects led by AI champions.

3.3 Weeks 9–12: Launch the campaign

During these weeks, communication and rollout come together. Work closely with IT, but pay attention to how people receive and share the message.

Prepare team leaders before the launch.

If they find out at the same time as their teams, they won’t be able to help guide the conversation.

Pressure-test your message.

Share guides, FAQs, and launch materials with a small group, such as IT, HR partners, risk teams, and early adopters.

Share information in different ways.

Use live Q&As, short sessions, guides people can read anytime, and quick tips. Repeat the main messages across all channels.

Keep up the momentum after launch.

Share practical examples, quick wins, and real stories from teams regularly.

3.4 Ongoing: Keep the loop open

Adoption continues after the launch. Once the first three months are over, focus on listening, making changes, and reinforcing what's working.

Watch for problems as they happen.

Change your messaging as soon as issues come up. Don't wait for the next campaign to make improvements.

Pay attention to how people react to change.

Expect responses like skepticism, curiosity, or resistance, and adjust your communication for each stage.

Keep track of unexpected issues.

Maintain a log of recurring concerns, misunderstandings, and unusual cases. Use these insights to shape your next steps.

Report on the goals you set.

Share the results with those who approved the rollout and with employees, so everyone can see how their feedback made a difference.



How comms teams are
using AI for impact:

*Value Over Volume – The Shift from
Content Factory to Strategic IC*

[Learn more](#)

Empower managers as AI leaders

Your activation plan will only succeed if the person sharing it with the team truly believes in it. That person is the manager, who has the most influence on how teams use AI in their daily work.

Gallup's *State of the Global Workplace 2026* found that employees whose managers actively support AI are **8.7 times more likely** to say their work has been transformed by it.

"The biggest mistake I see organizations make is treating AI as just an IT rollout. It's not. It's a culture shift, and culture shifts live or die in the real conversations people managers have with their teams."



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Service Delivery Manager at Boost by Workvivo

4.1 Assess manager preparedness

Not every manager needs the same kind of support, and treating them all the same often misses the mark. Use a simple **readiness scale** based on their confidence with the tools and their ability to answer questions. This will help you sort them into three groups:

Confident and already using AI:

These managers are already answering questions in their own way. Give them your talking points so their teams hear a consistent message.

Willing but unsure:

This is the largest group. Provide them with ready-made scripts and examples they can use directly in team meetings.

Avoiding it:

These managers tend to deflect questions instead of risking a wrong answer. Begin with a one-on-one conversation to understand their concerns, then give them the toolkit.

In addition, encourage managers at different readiness levels to talk with each other. A monthly peer group where they share what works will reveal more helpful insights than any survey.

4.2 Build a toolkit that managers will open

A manager toolkit is a practical communication tool. Design it for real situations, so someone can use it even if their meeting starts in 10 minutes.

What's in it	What it looks like
Talking points	The main story in five or six sentences — why now, what's changing, what's staying the same, and how the saved time will be used.
Q&A for tough questions	Clear answers to questions like "is my job at risk?", "will AI judge my performance?", and "am I being monitored?" Include a script for questions that don't have answers yet.
Two-minute explainers	Short videos or single-slide guides showing what the tool does, what it doesn't do, and one example in action.
Role-specific use case	Show one task the manager's team already does, before and after using AI, and highlight the actual time saved.
The guardrails, on one page	List all the different categories, plus the approved tools.
The escalation route	Provide a contact person for questions the manager can't answer, along with what happens next.



How to use AI to build
your own IC strategy

[Read our guide](#)

Measure, iterate, and scale

Earlier, you set your objectives. Now it's time to find out what happened. Most internal comms teams focus on measuring simple activities, like opens, clicks, and attendance. These numbers show what you sent, but not what actually changed.

To show the **value of comms in the AI rollout**, you need to connect positive adoption to real business results.

5.1 Track the data points that matter

Quantitative and qualitative data only make sense when you look at them together. Alone, each one gives you only part of the story.

For example, if adoption is high but sentiment is low, it usually means people are using the tool because they have to, not because they like it. If sentiment is high but adoption is low, people feel good about the tool but aren't actually using it.

Track both, side by side:



Quantitative – what people do

Weekly active use (by role, team, location)

Search volume and self-serve completion rate

Repeat questions in channels and HR inbox

Shadow AI usage trends (rising or falling)

Tools retired and subscriptions dropped

Qualitative – what people say

Pulse surveys on trust, confidence, and job security

Open-text feedback: do people feel "supported" or "monitored"?

Themes from comments: confusion, friction, or lack of clarity

Manager feedback from team discussions and peer groups

Insights from teams furthest behind (via focus groups/interviews)

Create a single view that combines adoption and sentiment, and links them to what the business already measures, like retention and engagement. This shifts your reporting from comms activity to real business transformation.

Being able to prove this is less common than you might expect. [In our survey](#) of over 5,000 leaders, we found that while executives value internal communications, 92% of IC teams can't show their ROI. Tracking the data points above can help you **join the 8% who can.**



Internal Comms ROI Report

Download the full report and prove your impact.

[Click here](#)

5.2 Celebrate what you want repeated

Transformations like this take years, so it's important to keep up the momentum. People may lose interest or shift priorities, and if progress isn't visible, the whole strategy can slow down.

Recognition works best when it's specific and can be repeated:

Share an internal case study every month.

Focus on one team, one task, and what changed. Showing the before and after tells a stronger story than sharing numbers alone.

Let someone who's already using AI well lead a session.

Peers often teach each other faster than formal training, and it only takes a bit of time to set up.

Share the results with the people who approved the rollout,

and do it in public so employees can see the impact too.

Give credit to the person who spotted a bad AI result,

not just the one who automated the fastest. What you choose to celebrate is what will grow.

In IBM's *Where AI Breaks — or Breaks Through*, **74% of the organizations most successful at AI-related change** say employees trust leadership's guidance on AI transformation. Everywhere else, that figure is 49%.

That 25-point difference isn't really about technology. The real difference is communication, and that's a gap you can help close.

Where AI, communication, and work finally meet

AI is moving faster than most people can plan for, and it's easy to want to wait until the roadmap is clear before communicating.

But you don't need to have all the answers about AI to communicate well. You just need a roadmap you understand, a clear audience, a story managers can share, and a way to listen to feedback.

The real challenge is bringing everything together. Most organizations spread this work across many disconnected places, while expecting employees to keep up with AI, changes to their work, and answers that often come too late.

It all becomes easier when communication, knowledge, and AI are brought together in one place.

That's why we created Workvivo HQ. It's the first AI-native employee experience platform for everyone, where employees can connect, find answers, take action, and see what's really happening across the business.

"We believe the future of work isn't another AI tool. It's an employee experience where AI is woven into the flow of everyday work and accessible to every employee, not just a select few. That's why we built Workvivo HQ. Because every employee deserves a headquarters."



John Goulding
Workvivo's CEO & Co-Founder.

Bring everyone home

workvivo **HQ**



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