



# Staying Connected

## IMPROVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS BY INTRODUCING OR IMPROVING SOCIAL NETWORKS

By Heather Hudson

**A**re your organization's employees satisfied with the standard of internal communications? If they're anything like the 1,000 U.S. workers surveyed by Bambu, an employee advocacy platform by the company Sprout Social, the answer may be, "Not quite."

Although four out of five employees surveyed said effective internal communications helps their job performance, 29 per cent reported that their company's current method isn't working.

Almost a quarter of respondents said they work remotely and completely miss company news. And perhaps most damning of all, 30 per cent of Millennial respondents feel that their organization's current communication feels self-serving or dishonest.

"Millennials expect something more modern and rooted in the digital ecosystem that they're used to," said Kris Kazibut, general manager of Bambu. "Most of them have only known the Internet age and that social world. Their primary consumption device is their phone, so having information delivered in a way that's easy to consume that way and is connected to their social media is critical. Most internal communications methods we've seen are disconnected from that."

It's the missing feedback loop that makes Millennials feel communications are inauthentic, he says.

"When there's no mechanism that allows them to be part of the conversation, they feel like it's self-serving," said Kazibut. "If

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# communications

**“ANY SUCCESSFUL MODERN BUSINESS NEEDS TO EMBRACE SOCIAL...EMPOWER YOUR EMPLOYEES TO BE THOUGHT LEADERS IN THEIR SPACE BY GIVING THEM ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND ALLOWING THEM TO SHARE IT.”**

— KRIS KAZIBUT



there's a way for them to participate, engage and share, it feels more meaningful.”

The Bambu survey found that four out of five employees want to be engaged and invested in their company. Seventy-seven per cent said internal communications helps them at their jobs and 66 per cent said it would help them build better relationships with their colleagues. Sixty-three per cent said it helps them become better advocates for the business and tell others about their company.

“It's important to keep [employees] in the know because it's ultimately what leads to engagement. If people don't feel connected to what they're doing, they're not going to go above and beyond and be advocates for that business,” said Kazibut. “We believe every employee should love where they work and they should be ambassadors for the brand.”

The survey found that existing channels employers use for internal communications include:

- Regular, in-person meetings (52.8 per cent)
- Email (48.1 per cent)
- Internal online hub for all company news (32.6 per cent)
- Printed newsletters (29.8 per cent)
- Chat or instant messenger platform (18.9 per cent)

“We've noticed with our clients that they may struggle with feeling that people might not get a critical piece of information about a huge initiative that the business is working on. Everyone is busy so the more you can streamline and centralize information in a way that makes it easy to consume, the more your employees will be informed and feel more connected to the company,” said Kazibut.

## MODERN WAYS TO CONNECT

Brie Weiler Reynolds is a senior career specialist at FlexJobs, a job search website that specializes in connecting potential employees with telecommuting and other flexible jobs. A virtual company with nearly 100 employees located across the U.S., they've found creative and efficient ways to ensure everyone feels well informed.

“At FlexJobs, we have a number of communications tools and use them for different purposes,” she said. “Yammer is used as a replacement for a water cooler – it's where we can take a break and talk about casual things like vacation and hobbies. We use Slack for quick work-related questions or to chat with your team throughout the day.

“When it comes to email, we have a rule that if an email chain goes beyond three or four exchanges, we pick up the phone,” said Weiler Reynolds.

With so many tools available, Kazibut says it's important for organizations to set clear parameters around how employees can get information and engage with each other.

“People will find unique and clever ways to try to communicate and they may not be the best places,” he said. “We hear all the time that information gets lost because it's not being communicated in the right way.”

He recommends having one department – whether it's communications, marketing or HR – own the strategy and be clear about which channels are meant to do what. All-in-one solutions can make it easy to set up a system.

“Users will log [in] and see a number of stories listed in chronological order from a mix of social feeds, similar to Apple News or a newsreading app but framed in the context of the organization. All of them can be consumed inside the product and then shared to the social media app of their choice straight from there,” said Kazibut. “When people can share information about their company, they can be ambassadors for the brand and position themselves as thought leaders in their space.”

## TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS RIGHT NOW

The simplest way to improve your internal communications? Ask employees through a simple survey to share what they like and don't like, says Weiler Reynolds.

FlexJobs settled on their communications tools by testing a number of them, including social networking platforms and web and video conferencing software to see what worked best for the company.

Kazibut agrees that an audit of your current internal communications is critical. When it's time to settle on a new strategy, he strongly advises incorporating social networking.

“Any successful modern business needs to embrace social. Some companies struggle with allowing people to access social networks, but if you embrace it and make people part of the conversation, you'll be more successful,” said Kazibut. “Empower your employees to be thought leaders in their space by giving them access to information and allowing them to share it.” ■