

Internal communication



II. STRATEGY
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Not communicating internally is like going on holiday with a group of friends but being the only one who knows the destination. No one will be able to help you along the way, and your pals will have packed their snowshoes instead of their swimsuits. It could get messy! Even if internal communication is the last chapter you want to spend time on, diving into it can actually transform your external communication and its outcomes.

The concept of internal communication is quite simple: It is about getting your colleagues, staff and fellow researchers to understand what's happening in the institution, the projects or the working groups. The specific hurdle of working in science comes mainly from the complexity of the topics. You could say that this is true when communicating to an external, non-specialist audience, but in reality there can be so many different topics, experts and research teams in the same institute that scientific education is often needed internally as well.

Ideally, the content produced for internal communication is tailored to its audience, both from a technical and strategic perspective. So, what are the development goals at the institutional

level? Is the main focus on transversal projects and collaboration between research teams? Do we want to foster collaborations with commercial companies? The stories that will be put in the spotlight internally will contribute to the creation of a corporate culture and foster motivation.

Informing everyone at the right time is the second key step of internal communication. This can be done through dedicated communication channels such as newsletters, the intranet, or information screens in the canteen. The main thing to remember here is timeliness. You would probably not be happy to find out that your child is getting married by reading the engagement announcements in the local newspaper. The same goes for your colleagues: So save them front-row seats for the show!

Finally, internal communication must ensure that everyone in the institution understands the *WHY* behind the activities. In other words, internal communication has to connect the dots between strategic decisions and operational projects. Understanding how and why each individual contributes to the success of the institute, project or working group paves the way for the creation of a community. Who better than proud and genuinely convinced colleagues to advocate the institution or project to external audiences?

Therefore, internal communication can, as a side effect, exponentially improve your external communication – and this applies not only to institutions, but to any initiative aimed at creating a community with a common purpose and shared values. So remember: *“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”*

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