

The state of internal communications in South Africa



The first-ever,
much-needed research
into this critical sector

*Commissioned by New Media
Research by BrandMapp*



A first for South Africa's internal comms practitioner

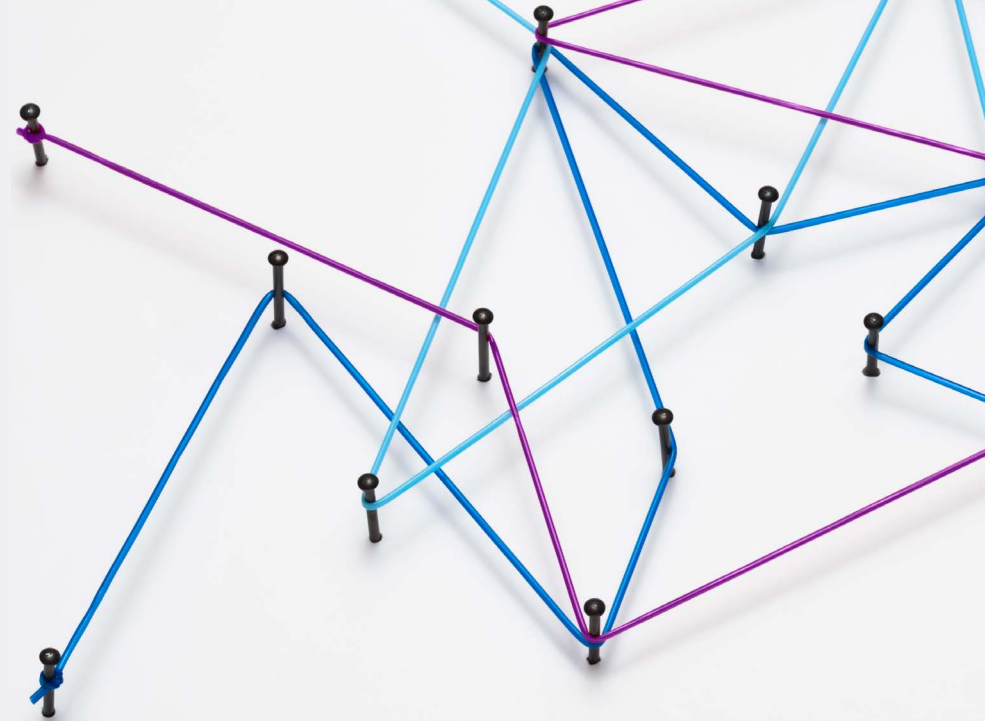
At a time when companies big and small are facing disruption and rapid change, it's more important than ever to keep your employees engaged and informed. They are your greatest ambassadors and a connected workforce drives innovation and, ultimately, growth for the organisation. But what do employees need and expect? Which communication channels do they prefer to engage with and

what are the topics they're most interested in?

Curious to find the answers to these questions, award-winning content marketing and specialist internal communications agency, New Media, teamed up with consumer insights consultancy, WhyFive, and used their BrandMapp survey to take a closer look at the state of internal communications in South

Africa. Surprisingly, this is the first time this kind of research has ever been done.

BrandMapp is the largest independent annual survey of economically active South African adults with access to the internet. Note: the sample group is weighted towards higher earners, representing the top 30% in terms of income.



New Media's dedicated internal communications team has seen rapid growth over the past two years and now services some of the country's biggest organisations, including FNB, AB InBev, Coca-Cola Beverages Africa, Vodacom, Sanlam and MultiChoice.

Through WhyFive's BrandMapp survey, New Media was able to gain brilliant new insights into how employees feel about the way their employers communicate with them, the kind of content they're most interested in and how they prefer it delivered to them. The findings will be discussed in depth in this special report, offering key learnings and valuable take-outs for this complex but exciting sector.

A question any internal communications professional has most likely asked is:

Is there a way to communicate with all staff in a way that engages with everyone?

The short answer is: it's complicated and there's no silver bullet. As you'll see in the data, the answer depends on the unique dynamics at play in your business – from the size of your workforce to the generational make-up of your employee base.

We do believe, though, that the insights shared here will be invaluable to businesses looking to devise (or revise) their internal communications strategies.

We asked...

- **How** many people work in your company?
- **Which** business sector do you work in?
- **What** is your position at work?
- **What** is your profession?
- **What** industry do you work in?
- Apart from your salary or pension, **what** sideline activities do you do to earn extra money?
- **How** do you feel about your job right now?
- **How** well does the company you work for communicate with you?
- **What** do you wish your company would communicate to you more effectively?
- **How** would you prefer your company to communicate with you?

Overview

This white paper unpacks the findings of the **New Media and BrandMapp 2018/19 survey**, focusing specifically on the internal communications questions, with key insights based on the results.

1

Size does matter

Who is "economically active", and do they work for large companies?

2

Job satisfaction

Spoiler alert: South Africans love the work they do!

3

Be content with content

An informed workforce is a happy workforce.

4

Talking about topics

The topics your employees find most interesting and want more of.

5

Change the channel

Email, intranets, apps ... the channels on which people prefer to receive their internal communications.

6

The matter of millennials

This disruptive generation has a few special requests.

New Media is proud to partner with WhyFive, a consumer insights consultancy powered by BrandMapp – the largest independent annual survey of higher earning South Africans. To find out more about this unique and comprehensive survey, visit whyfive.co.za or call **083 443 8111**

BrandMapp



Size does matter

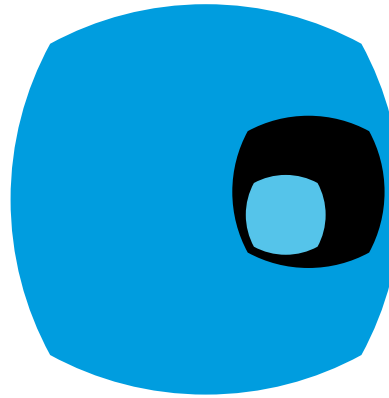
Who is
'economically
active', and do
they work for
large companies?



The sample group of the survey was close to a

50:50 split

between **small** and **larger (100+ employees)**
companies



Almost

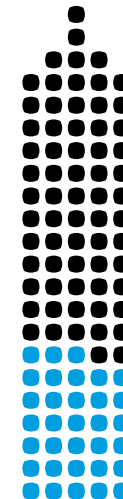
33%

of all respondents work for
very large companies of
1000+ employees

39%

of them are between
35-49 years old

Larger companies
have a majority
black workforce:



2 in 3

people in companies
with **200+ staff**

Our respondents were



51%

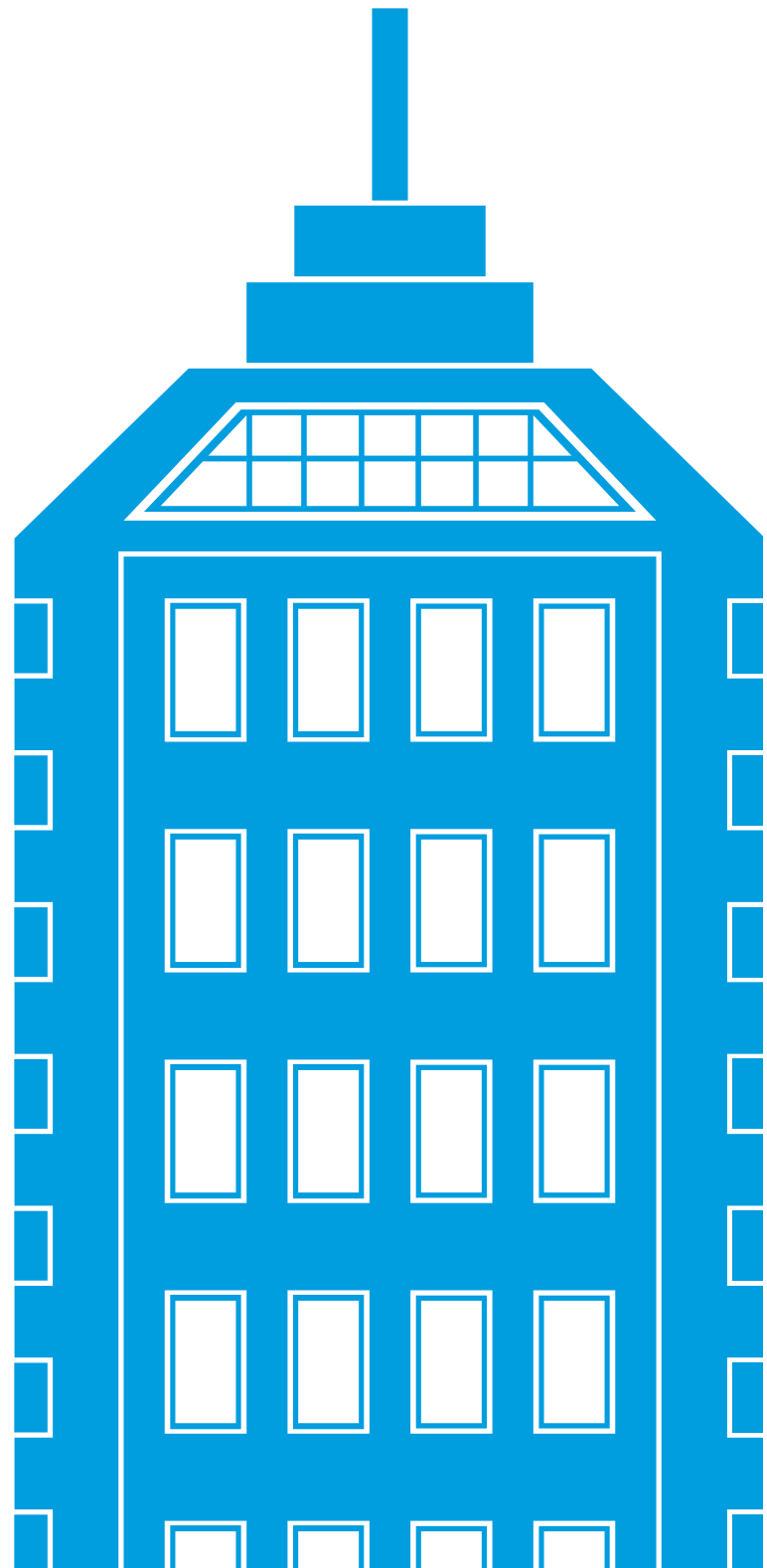
Female



49%

Male

(Source: BrandMapp 2019)



20%



16 - 24
years old

27%



25 - 34
years old

28%

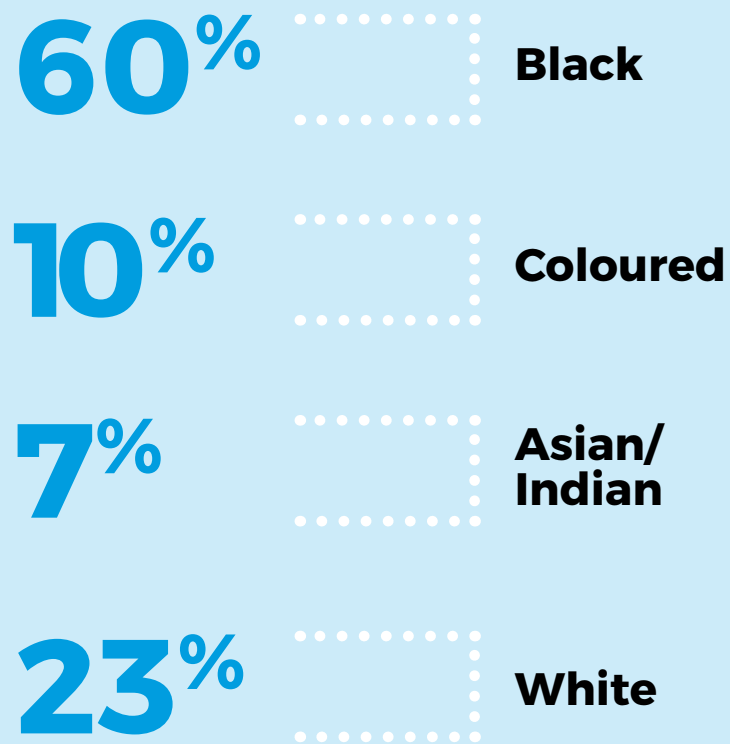


35 - 49
years old

25%



50+
years old



(Source: BrandMapp 2019)



Job satisfaction

Spoiler alert: South Africans love the work they do!



If you used social media as a gauge, you'd think everyone hated their jobs because of all the "I hate Mondays" memes and "Happy Friday" GIFs doing the rounds. But all is not as it seems ... the majority of South Africans love their work!

Globally, the Danes continue to dominate as the happiest

workers in the world, but considering that they even have a word for "happiness at work" (it's *arbejdsglæde*), there's really no stealing that title from them.

South African companies for the most part, meanwhile, are creating pleasant work environments.

69%

of respondents said they were either **quite happy or, indeed, loved their work.**

(Source: BrandMapp 2019)

That women are generally less than happy at work (see right) is no surprise since women still face a number of challenges their male counterparts don't. Aside from **the gender pay gap that ranges from 20% to 25%** around the world, the 2018 Women in the Workplace study by Lean In and McKinsey & Company highlights other factors that contribute to women's unhappiness at work. These include an uneven playing field, less day-to-day support and access to senior leaders, harassment and discrimination, and the difficulty in advancing their careers.

Taking size into account (because as we established in the previous chapter, it does matter), the bigger the company the less happy the worker.

Companies of **1 000+ and 201 to 1 000 employees scored 35% and 36%** respectively in the "I love my work" category, with the smaller companies scoring between **40% and 50%**.

Which groups don't love their jobs

only
10%

of respondents say they are miserable or don't feel great about their company



62%

of them are female



38%

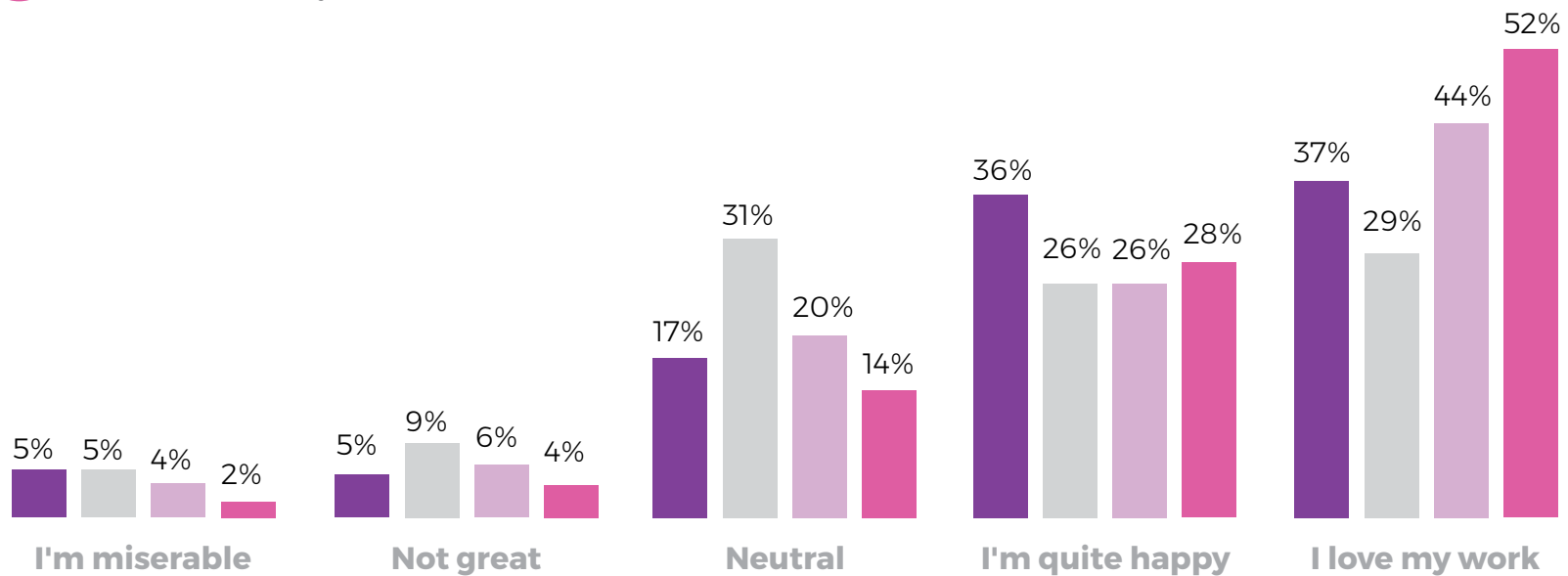
of them are male

(Source: BrandMapp 2019)

(Source: BrandMapp 2019)

How happy are you at work?

- 16 - 24 years Generation Z
- 25 - 34 years Millennials
- 35 - 49 years Generation X
- 50+ years Baby Boomers



Be content with content



An informed workforce is a happy workforce



In the States, a 2015 study by Mental Health America estimated that disengaged employees cost up to US\$500 billion a year in productivity losses. A leading culprit in employees becoming disengaged? A lack of trust. Without open and effective communication in an organisation, there is little to no trust. Furthermore, a Social Market Foundation study claimed **unhappy workers were 10% less productive**, while **happy staff were 20% more productive** (up to 37% for happy salespeople).



While we can't put a number on the impact a lack of communication has on productivity in SA (New Media aims to have this data next year), these sentiments are backed up by our survey.

Going back to

those who love their work

45%

feel the companies they're employed by communicate extremely well or quite well

5%

feel their employers communicate quite or very badly

Conversely,

of those working in misery

9%

feel their employers communicate well

36%

feel their employers communicate badly

Like the age-old "chicken or the egg" dilemma, it's unclear whether employees feel their companies communicate well because they are happy, or whether they are happier workers thanks to good communication.



An interesting finding is that the larger the company, the less likely employees are to feel their company communicates well. As companies grow they can be more fractured and thus it becomes challenging to engage with all staff members in a meaningful way. It is also difficult to find one platform that suits the

varying demographics within a larger company.

Granted, communicating to a team of five to ten people versus a thousand presents significantly fewer challenges, but larger companies have to try harder or risk disengagement.

17%

of all employees, on average, feel their companies communicate badly. In the States, 29% of people say their company's internal communications is failing

(according to a 2017 Bambu report)

In large companies

19%

say their companies communicate extremely well

49%

feel their employers communicate quite well

16%

feel they communicate quite badly

4%

very badly

In micro-companies

44%

say their companies communicate extremely well

37%

feel their employers communicate quite well

7%

feel they communicate quite badly

3%

very badly

(Source: BrandMapp 2019)



What do a policeman, a car salesperson, a lawyer, a beautician and an engineer have in common?

Well, very little – apart from the fact that they all work in industries that are rated as the worst at internal communication.

Law enforcement has the poorest result with 49% of the sector's workers surveyed saying their organisations don't communicate well.

On the other side of the spectrum is **food and beverages – up to 94%** of those working in this sector say their companies communicate well.

(Source: BrandMapp 2019)

Which industry sectors communicate best?



Top communicators

Respondents from these industries think their company communicates well

94% Food and beverage

92% Security

89% Building and construction

87% Marketing, advertising and PR

83% Accountancy



Worst communicators

Respondents from these industries think their company communicates badly

49% Law enforcement

33% Automotive

32% Legal

29% Beauty

29% Engineering

Need an internal comms strategy that gets results?

Africa's foremost internal communications specialist, New Media has a results-driven team of 20 experts in strategy, design, content creation and production.

[Get in touch.](#)



**Talking
about topics**



The topics your employees find most interesting and want more of



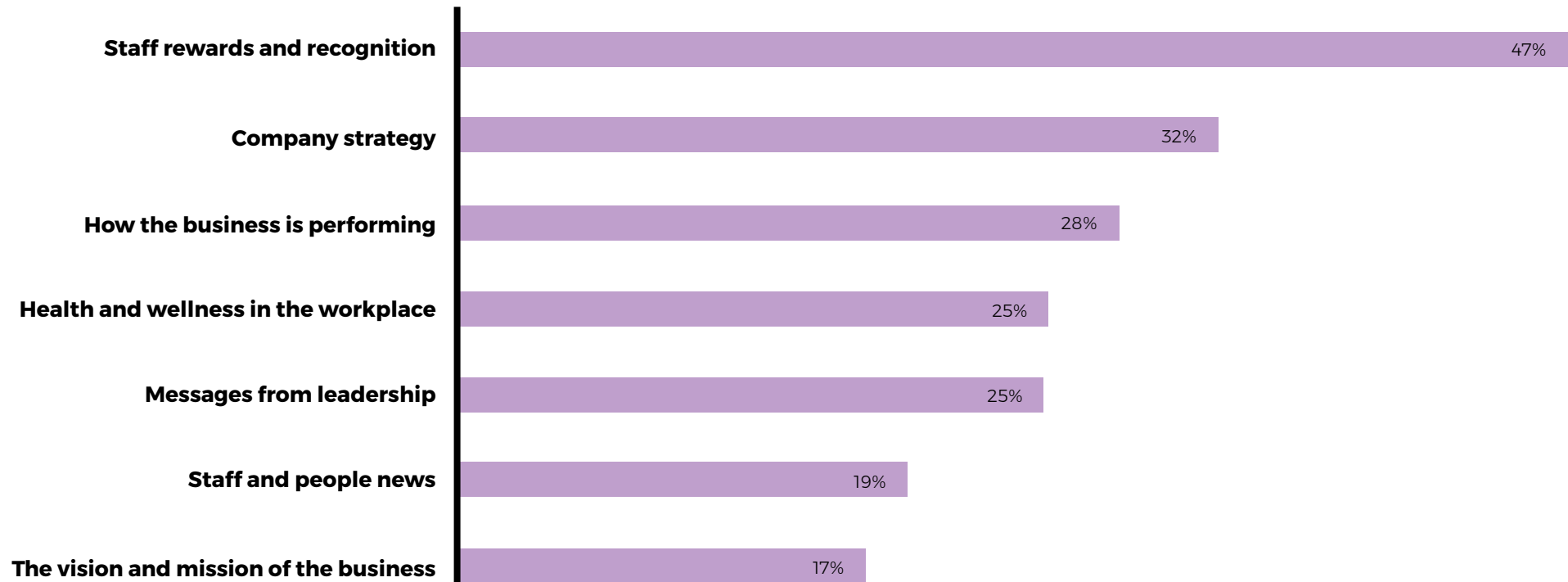
When it comes to putting in extra effort, raising performance or finding new solutions to problems, most workers want to know:

“What’s in it for me?”

For too long, money was thought to be the most powerful motivator, but as employees seek more meaning in the workplace and their values evolve (while companies tighten their belts), it’s becoming less effective for retaining staff, boosting productivity and encouraging innovation. This is why many companies have introduced exceptional reward schemes that benefit their staff in a more substantial way.

Why mention this in a white paper about internal communication you might ask? It turns out, this is the very thing your employees want to know more about.

Most popular internal communications topics



(Source: BrandMapp 2019)

Top-rated topics

① Staff rewards & recognition

By far, the most popular topic, with 47% of respondents saying they are most interested in receiving this information. This is particularly true in companies with more than 200 employees, where between **51% and 53% indicated this as their topic of choice.**



② Company performance

But, it's not all about self-interest. You might think those behind-closed-door meetings, leadership strat sessions and budget planning are none of the greater workforce's business, but they actually *are*, very much. A business's annual results and future plans affect employees and their role in the company. If they aren't kept in the loop, staff begin to feel anxious, uncertain, insecure and, you guessed it, unmotivated (which is a big deal as it affects the bottom line, remember?).

It's no surprise then that most of the topics workers are interested in are about the company, including **company strategy (32%), how the business is performing (28%) and messages from leadership (25%).**

(Source: BrandMapp 2019)



Elsewhere in the world, Bambu states that **80% of American employees want their employer to keep them updated about company news and 77% said this would help them do their jobs.**

But there's definitely room to improve here. Deloitte's 2017 Global Human Capital Trends Survey found that **only 23% of companies believed their employees were fully aligned with the corporate purpose.** It's possible that this information is being communicated but not in the most effective or engaging way.

Staff have different skills and knowledge, so you cannot simply post your financial results and expect all employees to, firstly, take the time to read through all the information and figures, and, secondly, to understand it all.

Explore ways to share this information so it's easy to digest, be it a leadership video, infographic or even motion graphics on TV screens around the office.

3 Health and wellness

Work/life balance and how to achieve it is a hot topic for employees and employers alike around the world. While no-one has really been able to crack it (except perhaps those happy Scandinavians), people want to know how they can improve their quality of life in an age where working hours are disappearing, information overload is a reality and stress is claiming lives. Proactive companies will have a health and

wellness strategy in place, but it will only be effective if everyone knows that it exists and what it entails. Analytics firm Gallup last year revealed that **44% of employees experienced burnout at work.** Naturally, burnout equals lower productivity equals money being lost.

Internal communications plays a vital role in educating employees on lifestyle changes, stress management, mindfulness, financial wellbeing and more. It can also be used as a tool to organise events such as meditation or yoga sessions as well as surveying staff about their stress levels.



International stats to note

87%

of employees expect their employer to support them in balancing work and personal commitments

53%

of organisations aim to create a culture that promotes health and wellness

60%

of organisations currently offer wellness programmes

71%

of companies provide resources and information about wellness (making this the most common benefit in this space)

62%

of companies provide wellness tips and information at least quarterly through newsletters, email, columns or tweets

61%

of employees say they've made healthier lifestyle choices because of their company's wellness programme

78%

of companies view employee wellbeing as critical

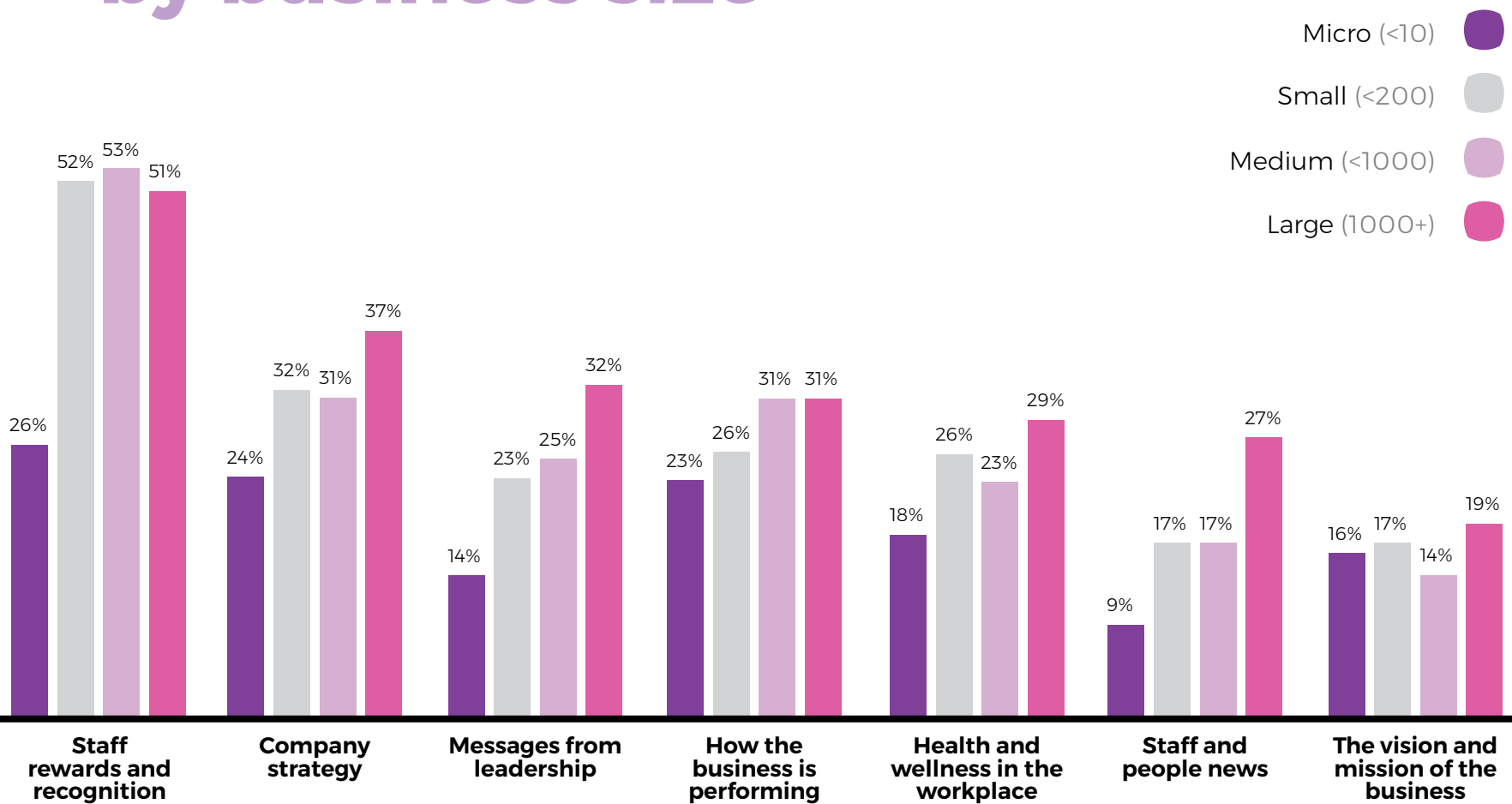
74%

of employers view wellbeing as a tool for recruiting and retaining staff

(Sources listed in References)



Most popular internal communications topics by business size



Change the channel



Email, intranets, apps, magazines: the channels that speak to your employees

With more methods of communication available to companies than ever before, choosing the right channels to deliver the right message to your employees at the right time can be an overwhelming business. Here's how South African employees say they prefer to receive their internal communications:

74%

Email

28%

Live presentations

26%

Company intranet

19%

Mobile messaging

13%

Company website

12%

A mobile app

7%

TV screens in the building

6%

A printed magazine

(Source: BrandMapp 2019)



Everybody loves email

Eight years ago, Thierry Breton, CEO of European IT firm Atos, sparked outrage when he announced that he was banning all internal email for the company. At the time, commentators dismissed his move as “stupid” and “impossible” but he insisted that email was a distraction and had a negative impact on productivity. In the years that followed the company increased its earnings and decreased administrative costs. Other

companies followed suit and with the arrival of communication tools like Slack and Facebook’s Workplace, it’s expected that email as a tool for communicating internally will become obsolete. In fact, there are some who believe email will go the way of the fax machine as early as 2020.

For now though, particularly in South Africa, it is the go-to channel for communication. Whether it’s because most employees have yet to experience a more modern approach (such as a bespoke app or enterprise social network) or they just prefer the rather passive nature of email, survey respondents **(74%) prefer having internal communication delivered to their inboxes.**

Tell them in person

Live presentations rank high up (28%) on the list of preferred channels for internal communication. Workers want to see their leaders and have the

opportunity to talk back. For those who aren’t in the same office, live video is increasingly being used to ensure everyone gets the message.

At the **bottom of the list of ways employees want to receive their internal communications is print, with just 6%.** Technology has made consumers more demanding than ever. We want our content and we want it now. Unfortunately, print can’t do that. But that doesn’t mean it’s irrelevant; what print can do is give companies the opportunity to carefully curate content that isn’t time sensitive and that is sentimental to an employee, i.e. it has a longer shelf life.

A great example of the power of print is New Media’s work with Sanlam to produce *Centennial*. The magazine marked Sanlam’s 100th birthday and was filled with beautiful imagery and insightful text that took advantage of the tactile and nostalgic nature of print. The publication won gold at the global Pearl Awards that took place in New York.

The rise of the social networks

As the pace of information sharing quickens and the need for peer-to-peer communication on mobile devices emerges, companies will move to more intuitive social platforms. 2018 saw a rapid rise in organisations adopting enterprise social networks (ESNs) such as Facebook's Workplace and Social Chorus (at the expense of older, less engaging platforms like Yammer and Sharepoint) and collaboration tools like Slack – to name a few. These allow for open communication and higher rates of participation. A 2016 McKinsey Global Survey on social tools found that these have had a positive impact on the effectiveness of internal communication within organisations that have adopted them. The benefits of social tools executives listed included real-time interactions, the ability to collaborate with specific groups

and cross-platform availability. While old-school intranets were useful for offering a central place for all company documents and information, they're fast becoming outdated due to their limited functionality, often clunky user experience and limited accessibility.



44%

of employees want a wider adoption of internal communication tools

85%

of employees use more than one device to communicate at work

(according to uSamp research)

Get your next employee email campaign right

Our team of specialist internal communications strategists, designers and copywriters are ready to apply their extensive knowledge and experience to help you get the most out of your email communications.

[Get in touch](#) to find out more.



The matter of millennials



This disruptive generation has a few special requests



The 80s ... a time of shoulder pads, lycra, frizzy hair, Pac Man, Dallas, Walkmans, Duran Duran, smoking in the office and the launch of the Apple Mac. It's also the decade that saw the birth of the first millennials (otherwise known as generation Y).

Narcissistic, entitled, unhappy, are all words often used to describe the generation that makes up a large portion of the current workforce and is beginning to trickle into leadership positions. But it's not all bad. Millennials are forcing companies to do more meaningful work, to value their employees, to change the way they operate and to experiment with state-of-the-art technology. They also have a huge impact on the way companies communicate with their staff.

So, are millennials happy at work? Or is there truth to the rumour that this generation is impossible to please? Our survey indicates that millennials' feelings about work are, largely, lukewarm.



That's particularly interesting when you compare millennials' feelings about work to their Generation X counterparts: only **18% of Gen X employees feel neutral** about their work and **48% of this group say they love their work**.

.....

Millennials are also on the fence when asked how they rate their employers' communication.



While Generation X employees tend to **agree that their employers communicate quite well (52%)**, far more Gen X employees **(29%) think their employers are excelling at internal communications**.

So could better internal communication make for happier millennials?

Our survey results certainly suggest a link between their job satisfaction and their feelings about their employer's internal communications effectiveness.

Here's how they believe their companies communicate with employees



Those who love their work, feel their company communicates...

46%

extremely well

46%

quite well

7%

quite badly

1%

very badly



Those who are quite happy, feel their company communicates...

18%

extremely well

70%

quite well

11%

quite badly

1%

very badly



Those who are neutral, feel their company communicates...

9%

extremely well

64%

quite well

27%

quite badly

2%

very badly



Those who don't feel great, feel their company communicates...

4%

extremely well

31%

quite well

51%

quite badly

14%

very badly



Those who are miserable, feel their company communicates...

6%

extremely well

14%

quite well

44%

quite badly

36%

very badly

Interestingly, the US Bambu study found one-in-four millennials doesn't think their company's internal communications practices are working.

45%

say the important
information is buried
by too much other
information

30%

say the
communication
feels dishonest
or self-serving

27%

don't feel
included
in internal
announcements

23%

say they work
remotely and
that news is often
shared in person

What millennials really want

They're not exactly the disengaged generation many believe them to be. Millennials follow the topics-of-interest trend, overwhelmingly preferring internal comms content that's rewards-focused and recognises their achievements. They're **almost 10% more likely to engage with internal comms about staff rewards and recognition** than their Gen X colleagues. And **13% more likely to consume content about company strategy** than the baby boomers in the building. Here's how much millennials care about popular internal comms topics:

55%

Staff rewards and recognition

38%

Company strategy

31%

Health and wellness

30%

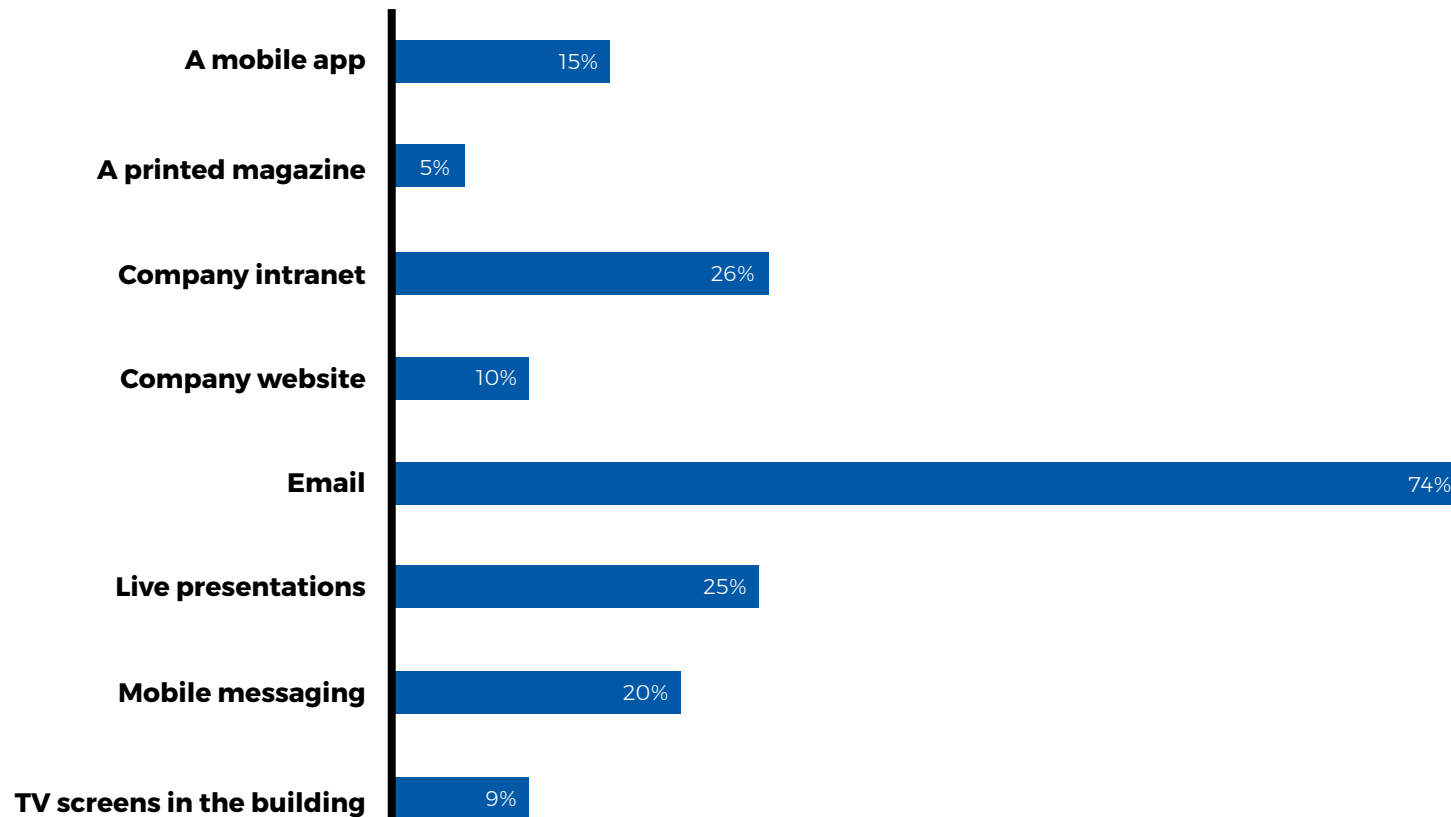
How the business is performing

23%

Messages from leadership

(Source: BrandMapp 2019)

Millennials' channels of choice





Our conclusion

Global research has definitively shown that internal communications should be a priority for all companies.

Not only does it help create a happy work environment for employees, it also boosts productivity, drives innovation and benefits the bottom line. The findings in this survey show a correlation between employee engagement and job satisfaction and indicate that staff are hungry for company news, want to be kept informed about company performance and expect to be heard.

But simply having an internal communication function is not good enough. The messages you as internal communicators send to your employees have to relate to their varying needs and interests. They also have to be delivered through a channel that is engaging and appealing to your employees – in many instances, as the research suggests, this should be more than one platform.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution and your employee engagement strategy is safest in the hands of experienced and knowledgeable internal communications practitioners. As technology, the business landscape and the workforce continue to evolve, so too should your employee engagement communication strategy.



Communicating what your company stands for and how you are contributing positively to society and the communities in which you operate is a rallying cry for employees

Research shows that purpose-led organisations outperform their peers, and companies that relentlessly focus on communicating their broader purpose have higher staff engagement rates. Communicating what your company stands for and

how you are contributing positively to society and the communities in which you operate gives employees a rallying cry and unites them.

The other big imperative is to get your channel mix right. Different organisations face different challenges in terms of access to information and making sure you have a channel strategy that supports knowledge sharing and engagement to your diverse audiences is a must. This requires collaboration between communicators and IT teams to ensure staff are able to engage with messaging on the right platforms.

Another point to consider is that content takes craft. It's not simply good enough to communicate – companies need to make sure that the quality of what they are putting out is excellent, reflects their brand and company values and delivers useful, relevant information that's memorably presented.

You've read the insights, now get in touch with the team that uses them every day.

New Media's specialist internal comms team has the know-how to deliver the content your diverse workforce wants. [Email](#) for more information today.



References

State of the Sector: The definitive survey of the Employee Engagement and Internal Communication landscape. Volume 10: 2018. Gatehouse. [View reference](#)

8 Reasons Why Internal Communication Is More Important than Ever. by Robert Grover. Staffbase. [View reference](#)

The social economy: Unlocking value and productivity through social technologies. July 2012. [View reference](#)

Women in the Workplace. October 2018. By Alexis Krivkovich, Marie-Claude Nadeau, Kelsey Robinson, Nicole Robinson, Irina Starikova, and Lareina Yee. [View reference](#)

Mind the Workplace. Mental Health America. [View reference](#)

Happiness and productivity: Understanding the happy-productive worker. Global Perspectives Series:

Paper 4. DANIEL SGROI. October 2015. The Social Market Foundation. [View reference](#)

The New Internal Communications. Bambu by Sprout Social. [View reference](#)

Rewriting the rules for the digital age 2017 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends. [View reference](#)

10 Timely Statistics About The Connection Between Employee Engagement And Wellness. By Naz Beheshti. Forbes.com. [View reference](#)

23 Fascinating Statistics About Workplace Wellness. Elizabeth The. October 2017. [View reference](#)

2017 state of the industry survey results reveal wellbeing as key driver of workplace culture and employee engagement. January 2017. Virgin Pulse. [View reference](#)

Employee Burnout, Part 1: The 5 Main Causes. BY BEN WIGERT AND SANGEETA AGRAWAL. Gallup. July 2018. [View reference](#)

Email Client Market Share Trends for the First Half of 2018. BY BETTINA SPECHT. July 2018. [View reference](#)

How social tools can reshape the organisation. May 2016. McKinsey Global Institute. [View reference](#)

RingCentral's Top 4 Trends in Workplace Communication. March 2015. ANDREA KINLOCH. [View reference](#)

7 Workplace Collaboration Statistics and Advice That Will Have You Knocking Down Cubicles. Sylvie Woolf. ClearCompany. [View reference](#)

Work in Progress. May 2016. Adobe. [View reference](#)