

PoliteMail
for Outlook Email Intelligence™

The State of Corporate Communications Survey 2023



This year's survey showed that **email is still the most dominant form of employee communication**, most organizations want to increase engagement on intranet platforms, and communicators have a sharp focus on increasing employee engagement through messaging.



NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

Here are a few major takeaways from this report:

- A vast majority of communicators found **email communication to be the most effective (74%)**.
- **Intranet use was employed by a majority (57%)** of respondents as a method of reaching employees.
- Corporate communications pros mostly found that the best way **to reach non-desk employees was through direct managers (58%)**
- Communicators are striving to **coordinate their messaging and volume with human resources (HR)**.

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Introduction

As time marches on from the height of the pandemic, the comms landscape has changed and adjusted in kind. Over the past year, internal communicators have refocused their efforts on the best methods to reach their employees utilizing the most effective channels.

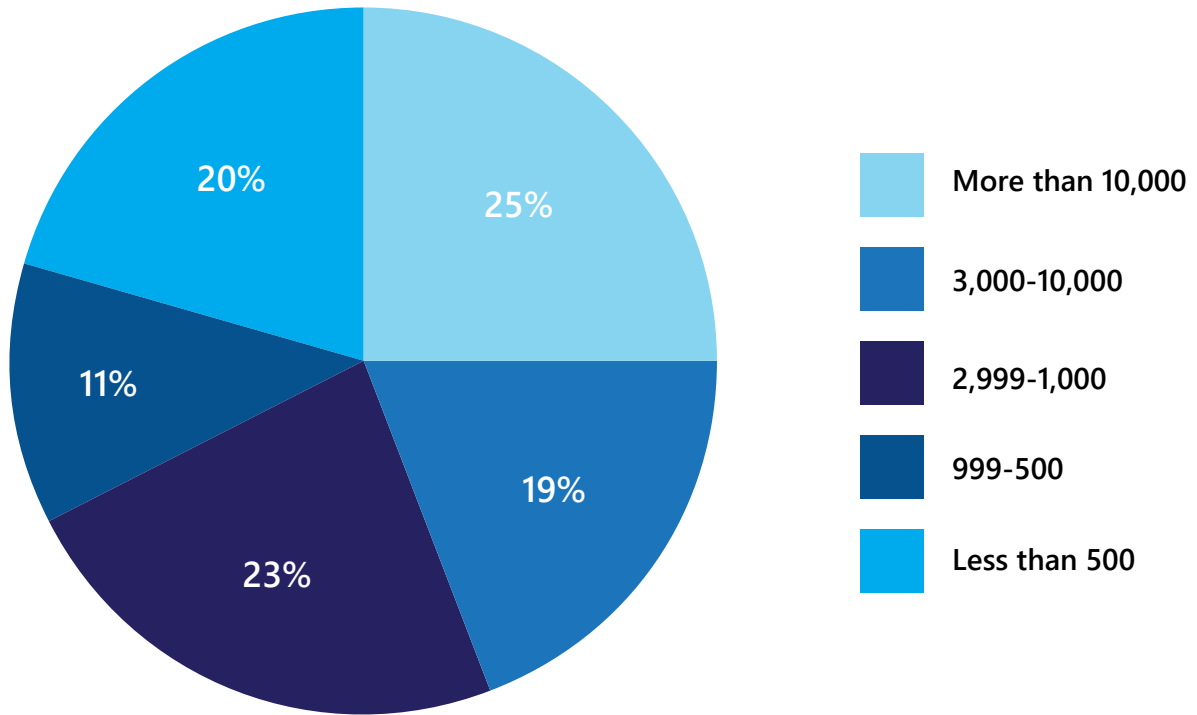
This year, we surveyed a pool of corporate communicators to get a pulse on the messaging strategies and tactics they're engaging in to reach their target audiences. We asked them about everything from the size of their organization to how they reach employees working remotely across the nation and the world. The results were enlightening.

Respondents came mainly from global corporations (24.5%), followed by corporations with employees mostly in one country (24%), while 15% came from government or other related agencies. In terms of reach, 25% of respondents had distribution lists of over 10,000 people.

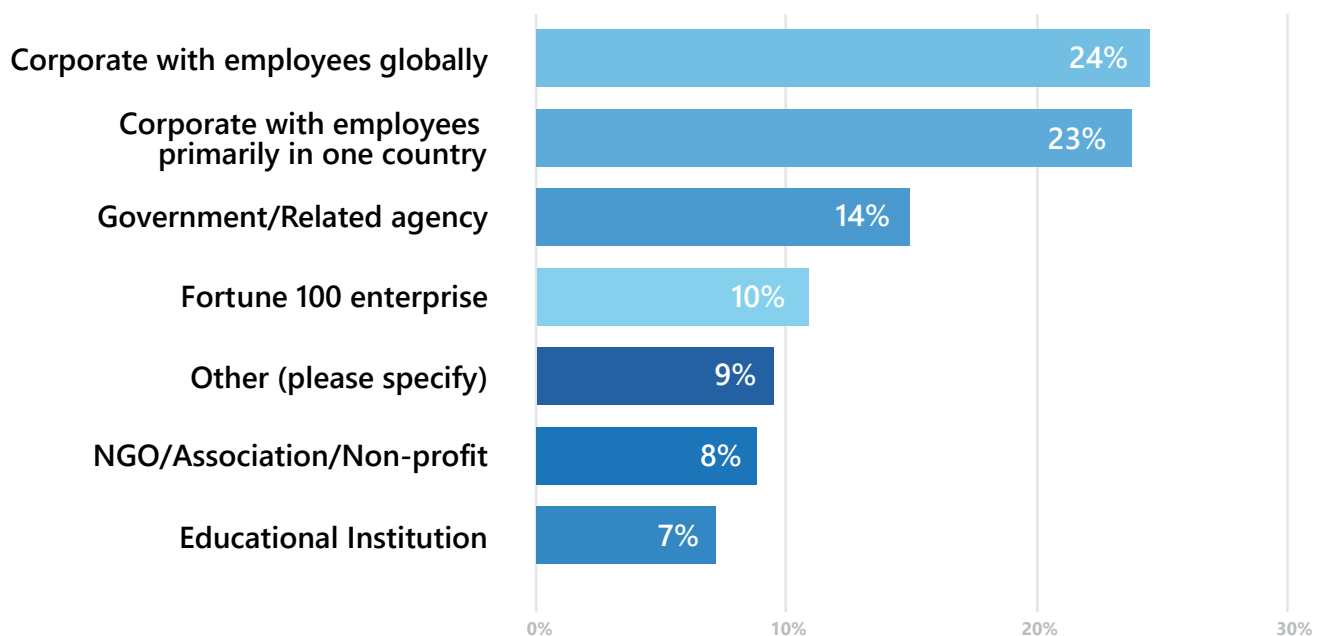
Interviewed 167 people.

Introduction (Continued)

ABOUT WHAT SIZE IS YOUR ALL-EMPLOYEES DISTRIBUTION LIST?



WHAT TYPE OF ORGANIZATION DO YOU WORK FOR?



The biggest challenges

One of the best ways to improve an organization's communication strategy is by recognizing the strengths and challenges of your communication channels, eliminating those that are redundant or ineffective, and developing measurable KPIs to close performance gaps. We asked corporate communicators the channels they were using most frequently to reach their audiences, and their level of effectiveness.

The two biggest concerns among survey respondents were information overload (54%), and not having the data to measure if employees were paying attention to the messages being sent (54%). Half (50%) said a top concern was that employees weren't engaging with messaging enough or at all.

How can communicators prevent this information overload? Survey respondents shed some light on the issue with informative responses. Several respondents pointed to their communications calendar to organize their messages strategically to prevent information overload.

Survey respondents combated information overload by...

“COMMUNICATIONS CALENDAR
Adding comms such as projects, BAU, business objectives onto a calendar that's shared with senior leaders to make decisions on when they can / can't launch, and if it's an effective time”

“DUPLICATING COMMS ACROSS MULTIPLE CHANNELS”

“MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS TO CONSOLIDATE MESSAGING”

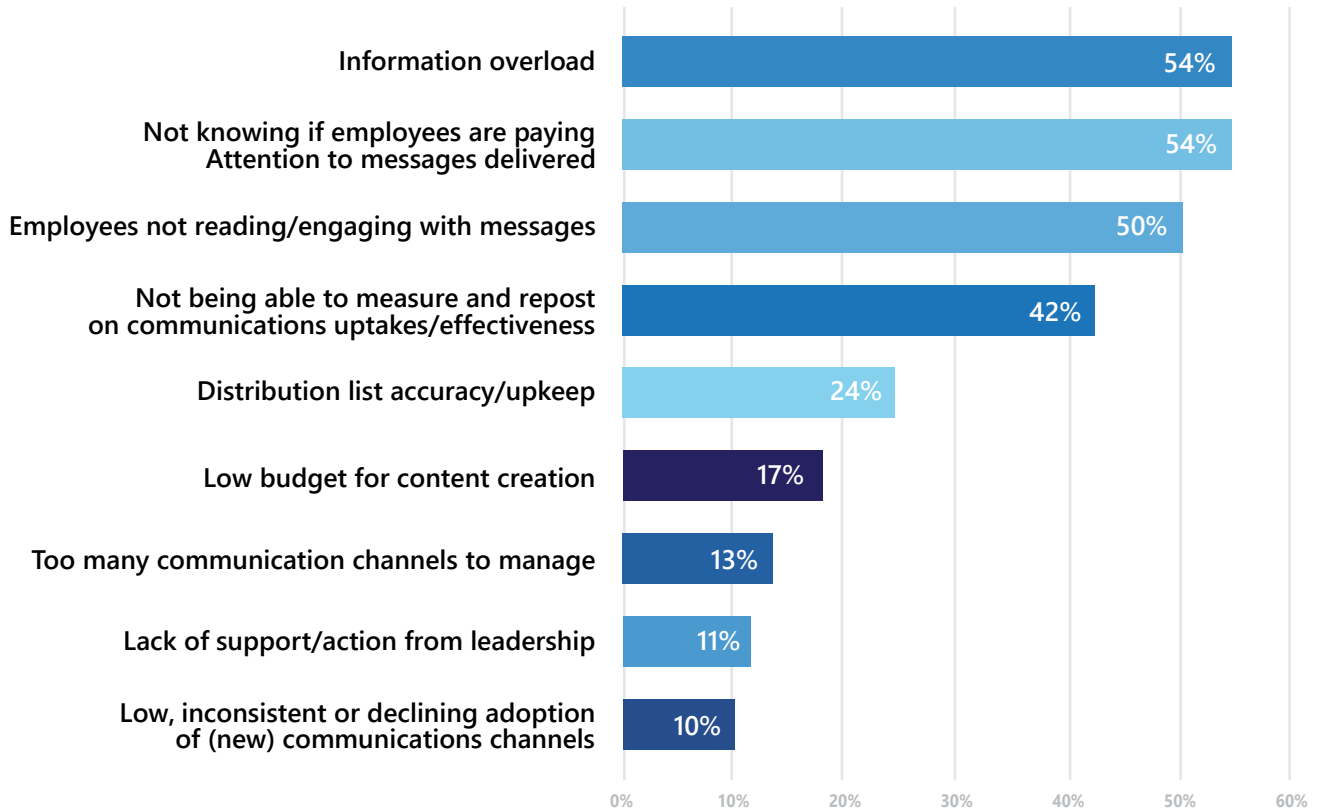
“TAILORING MESSAGING TO SPECIFIC AUDIENCE GROUPS”

“REDUCING OVERALL EMAIL VOLUME FROM INTERNAL COMMS”

“CREATING A MONTHLY TEAM NEWSLETTER”

The biggest challenges (Continued)

SELECT YOUR TOP THREE EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES



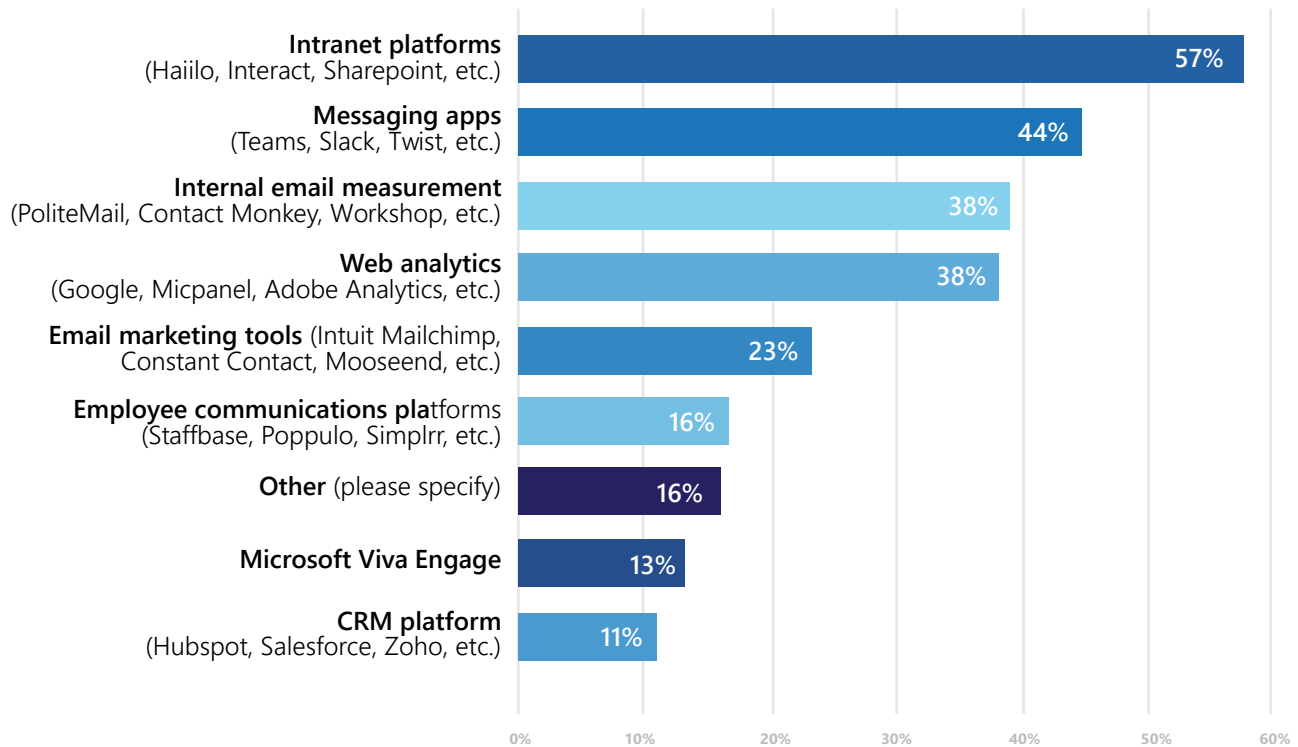
Measurement & finding the right channels

It's great that you've got a carefully crafted message to send out. But without the right selection of channels to distribute it, that message might be ignored or lost in messaging overload. It's also key to know how to measure your communications effectively.

It's not enough to have a well written message and attention-grabbing subject line or headline, although those are key components for increasing readership. Communicators must also know which channels to distribute it through, the days and times that have the best engagement for each channel, and have tools in place to measure the effectiveness of the message, publication, or campaign.

According to survey data, a majority of respondents employed intranet platforms for measurement purposes (58%), while 40% used email measurement tools (like PoliteMail). Additionally, other communicators indicated that messaging apps (45%) and web analytics (38%) helped them get a grasp on which stories employees engaged with the most.

WHAT MEASUREMENT CHANNELS OR PRODUCTS ARE YOU USING?



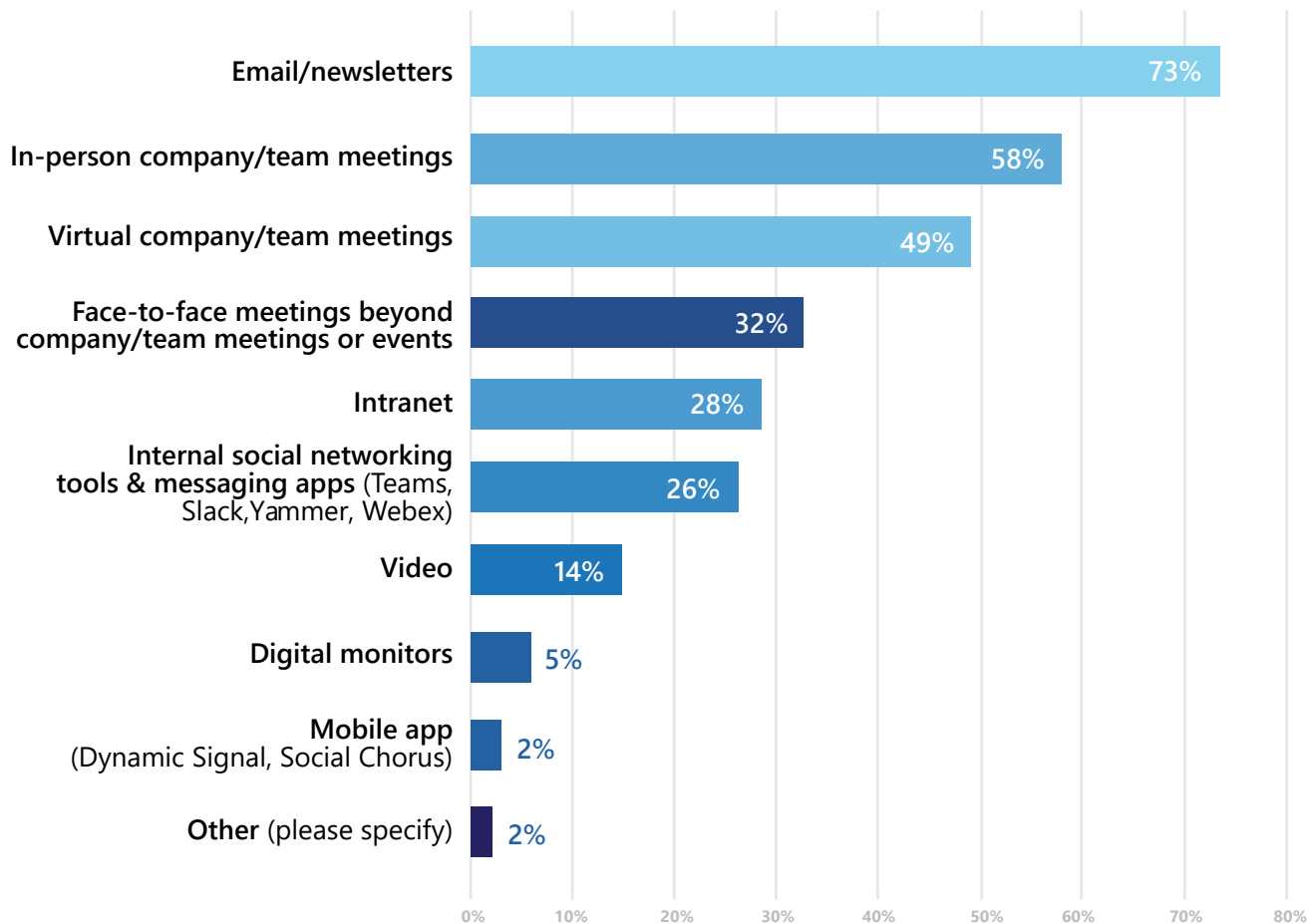
As for what channels respondents found the most effective, a whopping 74% indicated that email was their go-to in terms of success, followed by in-person meetings (58%) and virtual meetings (49%).

It's notable that in last year's data set, in-person meetings were third in the survey and virtual meetings second. This change in position is likely due to shifting COVID-era policies. This data demonstrates that across teams and industries, direct communication with employees is often the most effective.

Despite a high number of intranet deployments and larger budget expenses, effectiveness of that channel significantly lags.

Measurement & finding the right channels (Continued)

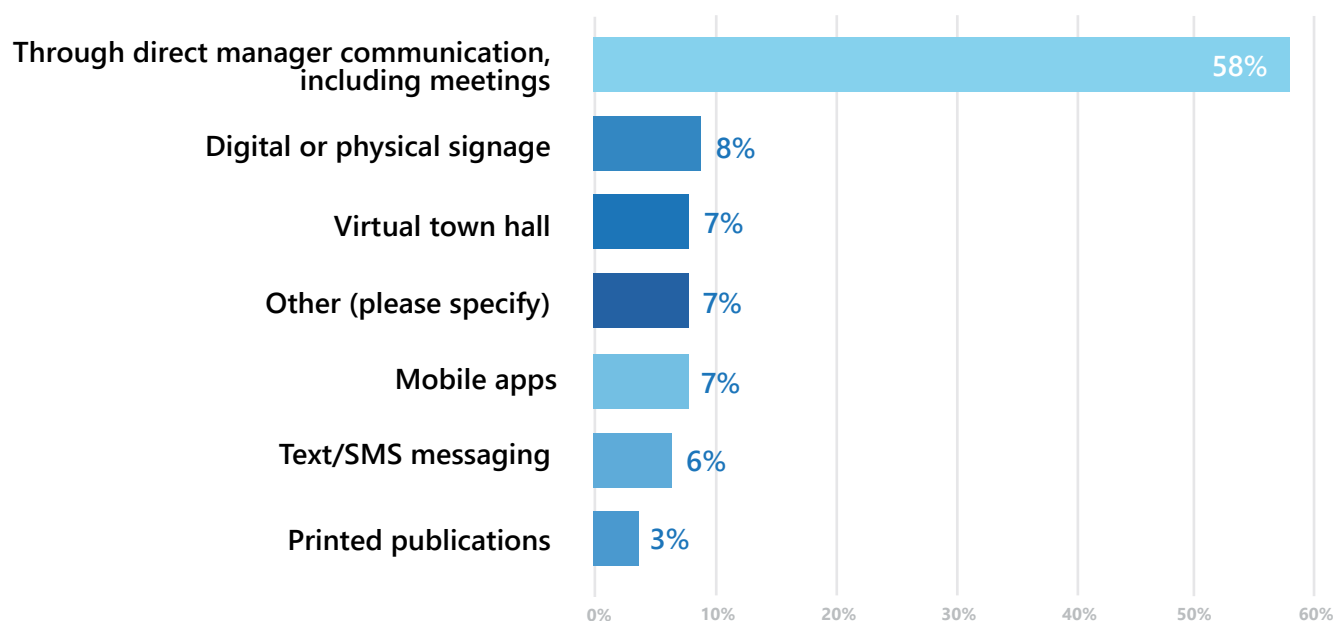
WHICH INTERNAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS DO YOU FIND ARE MOST EFFECTIVE?



Reaching remote workers

In the post-COVID era, many communicators are still trying to figure out how to best reach their employees, whether they're down the hall at an office desk or working from home in a different part of the country or world. Front line workers, which represent a significant workforce population, pose even more communication challenges as many do not have access to a computer or mobile device while on the job. Interestingly, a significant number of respondents (58%) reported that the easiest way to reach employees that aren't located at an in-office desk was through their direct managers. Establishing a good communication workflow with these managers is essential for engaging front line workers and making sure they are being reached.

HOW DOES CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS BEST REACH NON-DESK EMPLOYEES?



Reaching remote workers (Continued)

We also asked about the best possible ways to reach remote employees. The responses provided an informative window into the way communicators find success through remote outreach strategies.

One respondent simply reported that *this wasn't an issue for them, claiming that each employee's laptop provides a sufficient means of contact.*

Another said that *it wasn't a factor because all the company's employees had returned to the office.*

But those that did cite *success through tools mentioned Teams, Slack, Yammer, and other internal intranet or chat platforms.*

It doesn't appear that remote work will ever fade away entirely, and it's encouraging that communicators are finding ways to innovate and collaborate even when they're not physically close together.

KPIs

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are critical for communicators because they help inform what’s working, what’s not, and how to forge a path forward. Our respondents were asked what KPIs were most important to them, and the results were telling.

	1	2	3	4	5	Weighted Average
Email open rates	3.16%	6.96%	17.72%	36.71%	35.44%	3.94
Intranet page views	7.05%	5.77%	23.72%	29.49%	33.97%	3.78
Attention rates (opened, but didn’t open immediately)	5.92%	12.50%	28.29%	26.97%	26.32%	3.55
Readership/read time /time on page	5.10%	10.19%	18.47%	33.76%	32.48%	3.78
Feedback responses	3.16%	6.33%	22.15%	23.42%	44.94%	4.01
Click-through rates	3.21%	8.33%	24.36%	35.26%	28.85%	3.78
Engagement rates	3.25%	2.60%	16.88%	35.71%	41.56%	4.10
Video views	3.95%	5.26%	29.61%	36.84%	24.34%	3.72
Podcast/audio listens	32.19%	15.07%	19.86%	18.49%	14.38%	2.68
Participation rates	7.89%	3.95%	21.71%	32.24%	34.21%	3.81
Financial outcomes	19.86%	11.64%	24.66%	21.92%	21.92%	3.14

The data reveals that employee engagement rates top the list of measurable KPIs, beating out common “vanity metrics” such as open rates and intranet page views. While it’s important to know whether or not employees are even opening messages or visiting the intranet, these metrics do not offer a clear scope of employee engagement. It is critical to define what constitutes engagement (read time, shares, comments, etc.), and then develop processes for measuring those KPIs.

KPIs (Continued)

Communicators were also given space to share the measurement strategies or pieces that might be missing from their communication plans.

One offered an anecdote about a client who didn't prioritize comms measurement due to a lack of time and resources. Another wrote that they wanted their measurement efforts to provide more insights and recommendations that they can use to inform business goals.

Other thoughts on the matter included:

- **"We can't measure our insights with our current tools."**
- **"We want better intranet engagement."**
- **"We want to know how employees prefer to receive their communications."**
- **"How to measure engagement beyond just views and clicks."**

While every organization is going to have slightly different KPIs, it's enlightening to see how communicators want to better measure employee engagement and the strategies with which they do so.

Responding to the big, automated elephant in the room, respondents placed value in AI-generated content going forward with a specific focus on automated language translation and content management systems.

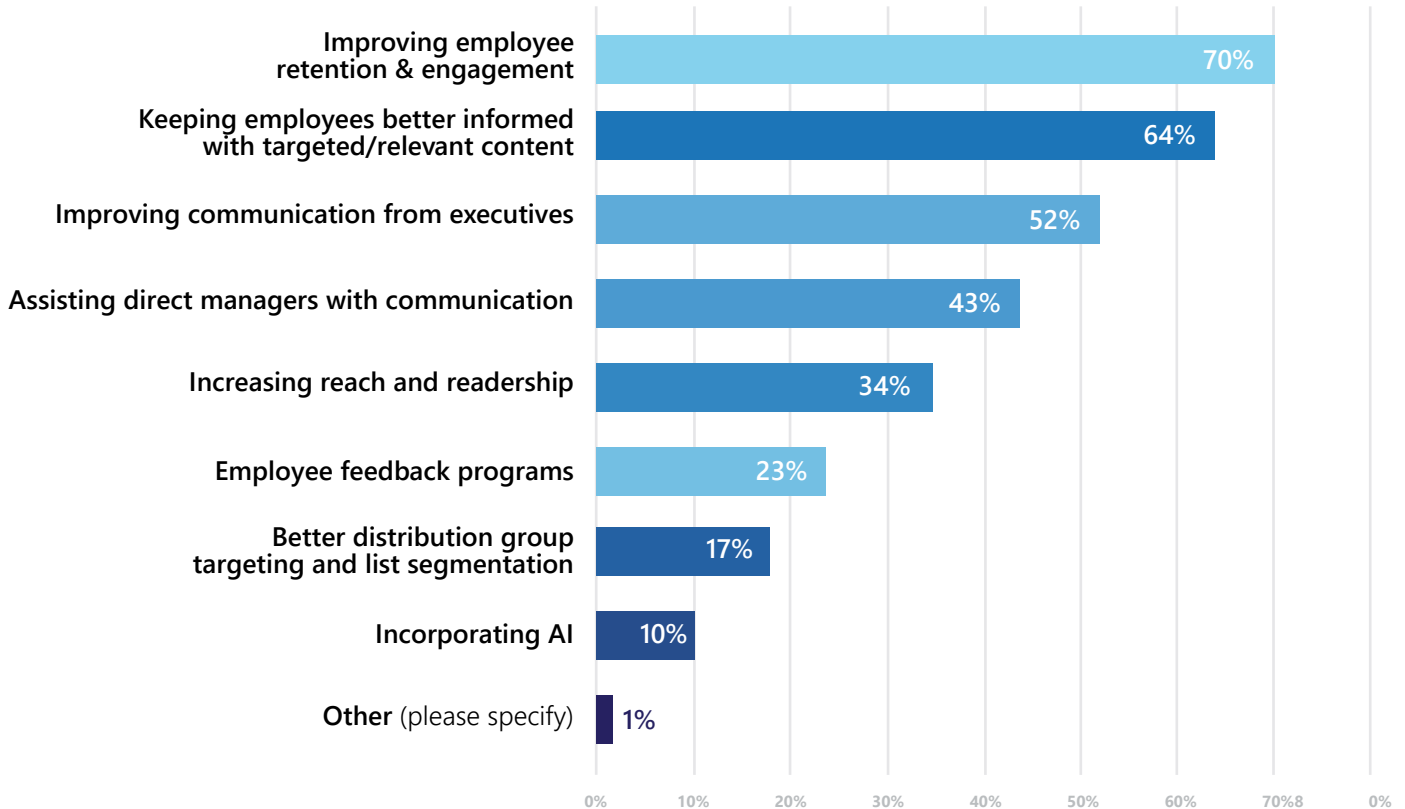
	1	2	3	4	5	Weighted Average
Content management system (Manage content input/ assignments/due dates)	10.26%	10.26%	19.87%	21.79%	37.82%	3.67
Automated distribution list creation and updates	7.59%	13.29%	15.19%	17.72%	46.20%	3.82
Automatic publishing to multiple channels	7.50%	7.50%	20.63%	21.88%	42.50%	3.84
Multi-channel analytics dashboard	3.80%	3.80%	10.76%	27.22%	54.43%	4.25
Automatic language translation	16.34%	27.45%	17.65%	11.76%	26.80%	3.05
AI generated content	25.81%	21.29%	27.74%	12.26%	12.90%	2.65
Intranet measurement tools	5.10%	10.19%	19.11%	25.48%	40.13%	3.85
Measurement for internal social messaging tools	10.53%	13.16%	17.11%	24.34%	34.87%	3.60

Goals for the year ahead & wish lists

At the end of our survey, we asked communicators what goals they had for the year ahead and how they'd spend additional budget resources that came their way.

The top goal for the year ahead is a major focus on employee retention and engagement (70%), with other top responses included informing employees better through content (64%) and improved communication from leadership and executives (52%).

WHICH OF THESE ARE PART OF YOUR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION GOALS FOR THIS YEAR?



Goals for the year ahead and wish lists (Continued)

Other goals included:

- **Assisting managers with communication (44%)**
- **Increasing reach and readership (35%)**
- **Employee feedback programs (24%)**

Who doesn't love a little bit of money set aside in the budget to help do their job better? Our respondents certainly had some thoughts on the matter.

One person asked for:
"More videos and events and digital channels to increase employees engagement and motivation."

Another would spend the money on:
"Email publication tools that allow for better engagement with employees and easier integration of graphic design elements."

One respondent would use budget to build infrastructure that included:
"An employee experience intranet site, enterprise digital signage and [an] invest[ment] in a measurement tool to generate data & reports for multiple communication channels"
With results captured on a central dashboard.



Conclusion

While there's no telling exactly what lies ahead in the remainder of 2023 and years beyond, communicators have a few unifying goals and aspirations they'd like to achieve.

First, they'd like to **increase the reach and effectiveness of their messaging** so that it resonates more with employees and stakeholders. Additionally, they are aligned on the different **metrics they value**, along with a determined push to continue reaching employees directly through **in-person meetings and manager communications**.

With nearly half the year left in 2023 to go, it'll be fascinating to see how the needs and wants of communicators shift and change in the ever-evolving world of comms.