theEMPLOYEEapp®

A GUIDE TO

# Completing an Internal Communications Audit

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# Internal Comms Audit Basics

## What Is An Audit?

An internal communications audit is a complete, 360 review of the internal communications function. This includes your audiences, channels, current and future messages, as well as the business objectives of the organization. These are also sometimes referred to as "Channel Assessments," but our audit will take you deeper than merely auditing your channel mix.

This guide will give you step-by-step instructions for conducting an audit of your channels, audience, and message strategy and then give you resources for digging a little deeper to make sure you are set up for success.

## Why Conduct an Audit Annually?

Conducting an internal communications audit is a great way to assess the effectiveness of your strategy, find any gaps, and collect sufficient data and information to make the right changes. This kind of work is great to do:

- When you start a new position and need to be brought up to speed
- When you're going through reorganizations or an M&A
- Annually to consider workforce changes and technology advances

Employees may have loved your printed newsletter at one point, but what about now? Changes to the business or economy may create a need for changes to your communications strategy. You may want to infuse more leadership communication, change management tools, and improve transparency. Without conducting annual reviews of your channels, you risk not being able to meet the changing needs of your employees or have the means to achieve your goals.

Leadership is also likely asking for more data than ever, including what the ROI of internal communication is. An audit may reveal that your tools don't give you the information you need to answer that question—and an audit might help you make the case for more budget or new resources.

You know communication is **critical to the employee experience**. But are you communicating the right things to the right people at the right time?

### 3 Reasons to Conduct an Audit EVERY YEAR:

1. **Businesses are constantly changing.** An annual audit helps you assess if your communication needs, audiences, or channels have changed over time.
2. **It's part of measuring the ROI of what we are doing.** Is it working? Are we doing everything we could be? Are we wasting our time?
3. **It's a strategic move** that can help elevate you out of being just a tactician.

# Audit Basics

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## Setting Goals Upfront

As communicators who are often stretched too thin. That's why we think it's very important to always have your goals in mind before engaging in something like an audit.

Maybe you know you have too many channels and you want to conduct an audit to fully understand what those channels are, who uses them (or doesn't!), and which ones you can get rid of.

Or maybe you are realizing that you aren't able to reach your frontline teams effectively and you want to investigate why that is and where the opportunities for improvement are within your existing channel mix or with new channels.

You might even be conducting an audit to see how a new system or campaign is performing, what channels it's performing best on, and what audiences are responding.

There are so many reasons that these audits can be helpful for keeping your strategy on track, but make sure you have an idea of what you hope to learn in mind beforehand. That said, make sure you keep your eyes wide open during this process because you might find something you didn't expect.

# Conducting Your Communications Audit

## Step 1: Audiences

In communication, knowing your audience is key. You craft your messages based on this—what does my audience know, what do they care about, what is their role, what do they need to know to do that job, etc.

You likely know all of this information in your head, but it's important to also document it. With an audit, you'll connect your audience to the channels they have access to and the communications they currently receive (and that you'd like to send them in the future!).

But let's not get too far ahead of ourselves. First, let's talk about how you should review your audience(s):

- **Write down all your possible employee segments** based on all the ways you might want to be able to target information. This may be based on:
  - **Job types:** Corporate Staff, Hourly Staff, Union Employees, Contract Workers, C-Suite, Managers
  - **Titles:** C-Suite Titles, VPs, Executive Directors, Regional Managers, Managers
  - **Locations:** hospitals or factories, different headquarters, or other ways you group your organization's locations (e.g. by region)

- **Write down all your groups that receive your content.** You may notice that there are gaps between all the ways that you could target information and the actual groups you target. That's okay—this exercise shows what groups may be left out of communication. For example, you may realize that:
  - You are only able to send out messaging based on job types and titles, but not locations.
  - You aren't able to target your audiences in the field as easily as to your deskbound employees who have corporate email addresses.

# Auditing
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## Step 2: Channels

Reviewing your channels goes hand-in-hand with the content you create. Start by looking at the current channels you have in place:

- **Write down an exhaustive list of all your channels for communication.** This may include:
  - Face-to-face meetings
  - Town Halls
  - Email
  - Printed Newsletters
  - A Mobile App
  - Digital / Print Signage
  - Intranet
  - Texting

- **Map these channels with the groups / audiences that have access to them.** This will continue to illustrate what groups might be receiving less communication than they need.

- **Take this further and get usage analytics for each of your channels.** Start by looking at these metrics (but don't stop there!).
  - How many people view your Intranet weekly? Monthly?
  - What are your email open and click rates?
  - How many people attend your in-person Town Hall meetings? How many dial-in? How long do those that dial-in stay on the line?
  - Have you surveyed your employees lately to determine what channels they like?
  - Can you measure engagement on these channels in the first place? Do your channels offer limited insights and you need more data?

# Auditing
CONTINUED

## Step 3: Current & Future Communications

### Don't Just Look at Right Now. Where do you want to go?

The next step is to review the communication you are currently sharing with employees and what future communications you will need to share. Remember that this audit should include all content your employees receive, not just content coming from Internal Comms. An audit of your internal communications shouldn't just stop with evaluating your effectiveness right now, but should assess your ability to grow, innovate, and continue to be effective.

- List out the communication you currently share and who is delivering it.
- Write what medium those messages are in.
- Write what channel(s) of delivery they go through.

| Communication | Who Delivers Content | Medium | Channel(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Monthly Newsletter | Internal Comms | Written | Email |
| Town Hall Meetings | Internal Comms | Face-to-face, Video | In-person, Link to recording in email |
| Shift Meeting Notes | Internal Comms | Written | Email |
| Weekly Messages | Internal Comms (Weekly), Ops (daily) | Written, Audio | Email |
| New Program Rollouts | Internal Comms | Written, Video | Email, Intranet |
| Open Enrollment | HR, Internal Comms | Written | Email, Intranet |
| Safety Updates | Internal Comms (Weekly), Ops (daily) | Written | Email |
| Compliance, HR Information | HR, Internal Comms | Written | Email |
| Emergency Alerts | Internal Comms | Written | Email |
| Employee Recognition | HR, Internal Comms, Leadership | Written, Video | Email, Intranet |
| Marketing Updates / News | Marketing, Internal Comms | Written, Video | Intranet |

**STOP:**
After you complete this for all existing comms, be sure to think through what you WANT to be able to share (e.g. gamification, engagement initiatives) or what you know you will have to communicate (e.g. an upcoming change) in the future.

# Auditing

CONTINUED

Once you have all your communiations mapped out, the trends should become clear. Are you using too much written and not pulling in multimedia to cater to other learning styles and more engaging mediums? Are you relying heavily on any one channel?

But it's also key to think of your aspirations. What do you want to do differently? What might NEED to be done differently?

So, be sure to add in what you aspire to do in the coming year and think through the logistics. Plot these new communications in your same audit, but denote them (perhaps in another color) as communication you currently can't or don't send.

It might look like this:

| Communication | Who Delivers Content | Medium | Channel(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| NEW: Gamification Program | Internal Comms | Multimedia (varies) | NEW: App |
| NEW: Video library for town halls, education | Internal Comms, HR, Training, Ops | Video | NEW: App |
| NEW: Mobile Alerts Program | Internal Comms, Ops | Written | NEW: App, Texting |
| NEW: Pulse Surveys | Internal Comms | NEW: Survey tool | Email, NEW: App |

# Take it Further: Employee Personas

## What Is An Employee Persona?

Employee personas are a way of understanding groups of employees at your company. They are profiles that you create to outline key characteristics of different groups with the goal of being able to better target and craft messages for those groups.

## Why Do We Use Personas?

We should use personas in internal communications for a few reasons.

First, because we need to be better at creating targeted, personalized communications whenever possible. Although all employees are still unique, knowing what groups and, therefore, personas employees roughly fall into can still help you be better at personalizing and targeting messages at scale.

Personas also are key to empathy. They work great when done in parallel with an empathy map. Empathy maps help you understand how employees might react to certain messages based on their situation and environment. Personas also help you understand what employees want and need on a detailed level.

For instance, it might tell you that your senior field managers need detailed communications that include the technical aspects of a change...whereas your hourly field techs need simplified and abbreviated versions of messages with the actions clearly called out based on their education level and the nature of their work.

Working together, empathy maps and personas will help you be better at guiding your target audience towards the desired action or objective behind the message. We often talk about the Do, Say, Think, Feel Approach—the idea that every message should have an objective of your employees doing something differently, saying something, thinking a certain way, or even feeling a certain way. Without empathy and understanding your audience, it may be difficult to activate employees towards that desired outcome.

**Download Editable Template**

# Cathy Communicator

- **Age:** 35
- **Title:** Internal Communications Manager
- **Income:** $105,000
- **Average Tenure:** 5 years
- **Career Path:** Continued growth on internal comms team
- **Education Level:** Bachelors (sometimes Masters)

Empathetic | Strategic | Creative | Reliable

**Bio:** Cathy is an internal communications manager for a manufacturing company where she is responsible for all strategic communication to corporate and field-based employees. A natural empath, Cathy is motivated by understanding her audience and targeting messages to them. She is constantly striving to help others—which is both her greatest strength and largest source of frustration when she isn't given the resources/tools she needs.

## Goals:

- Become strategic advisor
- Launch new channels to reach deskless workforce & revamp existing Intranet to meet deskbound team needs
- Achieve Internal Comms KPIs
- Contribute to top-level business objectives

> “ I want a **seat at the table.** I need to prove my value by using my expertise and knowledge of communication strategy to help stakeholders across the organization achieve success.

## Personality:

Introvert — Extrovert

Intuitive — Sensing

Thinking — Feeling

Judging — Perceiving

## Tools & Resources:

- Channels: Employee App, Intranet, Email, Digital Signage, Printed Posters, Shared Kiosks
- Spanish-translation program
- IT support & Zoom for Town Halls & field calls
- Adobe Creative Suite & part-time designer
- Company videographer & editor
- Chief Communications Officer (c-suite champion)

## Challenges:

- Lack of budget
- Small team (1-2 people)
- Leadership doesn't understand the value of video for executive communication
- Lack of clarity from leadership about what internal comms is and should achieve

## Motivations:

- Helping others
- Getting to work in cross-functional teams and understand how all the pieces of the organization's strategy fit together
- Intrinsic motivation to achieve
- Desire to be valued by other stakeholders

# Take it Further: Message Mapping

## What Is Message Mapping?

While an audit can help you find holes in your strategy, you can also use your audit and personas to create your message maps.

Message mapping is a framework for creating your internal (and/or external) communications. It leverages an understanding of your existing audiences, channels, messages, and objectives to create a communications plan optimized to reach your targets!

## Example

We'll walk through an example of how this works. In this case, the message we have to share is a **new safety training manual for your field-based employees in your manufacturing facilities.**

**Step 1: Define the Audience.** Just like with your audit, you need to start by understanding who the message impacts.

- Your primary audience is your frontline teams who will be directly impacted by the change.
- But it will also impact your frontline managers and plant managers who also have to follow safety procedures in the plant. They are also going to be responsible for the actual training.
- It will also have to be communicated to your training/operations teams who will be responsible for oversight and ensuring compliance
- And to HR who will ensure the new guide gets incorporated into onboarding for new hires.

So, we have a lot of employee segments who are impacted either directly or indirectly that will need to receive some form of communication. But, as you know, they won't all need to receive the exact same messages.

**Step 2: Set Objectives.** With your impacted groups outlined, you can now set objectives for your messaging to each impacted group. That might look like this:

- Frontline employees, team managers, and plant managers must pass training evaluations by the deadline to prove they have learned the safety updates and new procedures and then begin following the rules.Roboto Condensed Plant managers must understand the changes and ensure

trainings happen by the deadline. In phase two, they must ensure that the new safety rules are being followed.
- Team managers must effectively train their teams so that all employees can pass their evaluations. They must then ensure that their teams are following the new safety rules.
- The Operations team must make plant visits to audit that all employees have completed their trainings and to ensure that the new safety procedures are being followed.
- The Human Resources team must add the new safety training into the onboarding process by the deadline to ensure compliance with all new hires.

With all the goals set for what each employee group has to do as a result of your communications, it's important to also look at the big picture. Ultimately, rolling out the new safety training is all about improving safety, right? So, meet with the teams responsible and set SMART goal(s) for the program.

- Maybe it is to decrease safety incidents by 20% by the end of the year therefore saving the company money and protecting your employees.
- By doing this, you anticipate will help you retain x% of talent and improve safety-related scores on your annual survey by 10%.

The reason you want to make sure you know your core business objectives in addition to the operational-based goals is that it helps you craft your messages. Since you are hoping to protect employee' livelihoods and create a safer working environment and culture, that might become a core talking point. These main KPIs help you share the why behind a change. It's not just "because we said so" it's "because this will save life and limb and that matters to us."

**Step 3: Map Core Messages.** At this stage, you'll start figuring out what your core messages are. This is also best done with a change management approach in mind—like ADKAR. Keeping a change management framework in mind will help you create the right layers of messaging over time.

In this example, your core messages might be:

- **Awareness:** We are making a change in safety procedures because too many employees are getting hurt and your health and wellbeing matters to us. This is expected to be completed by [a date].

- **Desire:** Here's what's in it for you. We are currently seeing x number of injuries every year, which can result in an inability to work. The training we are implementing has been proven by other companies in our space to reduce injuries by 30 - 40% over 2 years. This will literally save lives.

# Message Maps
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- **Knowledge:** Here's the actual training materials and what you need to know (includes training manuals, talking points for managers, etc.).

- **Ability:** The actual training happens here. Managers will need reinforced talking points and will need to have already passed their knowledge/ability checks. And then you'll send messages to frontline teams about the evaluations to check if the knowledge has transferred to ability.

- **Reinforcement:** This is the ongoing messaging to operations/training teams as well as plant managers to ensure employees are enacting the changes. If they aren't, you have to cycle back to awareness, desire, knowledge, and ability until the change sticks.

**Step 4: Break Out Specific Messages by Audience and Channel.** If you don't already have a handy Editorial Calendar, don't worry, you can download ours. A tool like this (as well as our audit guide template) will help you start actually mapping out your core messages by channel and audience.

This is where you take each core message for each audience and hone in on what that audience needs to know, when, and what channel(s) you'll use to convey those messages.

# Putting It All Together

Now that you have your groups, channels, and content all mapped out, you can put it all together to see the big picture (use our template). This is where you become a strategist.

## Key Considerations

When you've finished your audit, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- Who has access to communication?
- What do they have access to? Is it less than you thought? Are there groups that are not receiving sufficient communication to do their jobs?
- What channels are being used?
- How are your channels performing? Is any channel underperforming or exceeding your expectations?
- If you can, look at the analytics for specific messages. What current messages are getting lost and not engaged with? What messages are really effective? What channels are those messages getting the most traction on?

## Pro Tip: START. STOP. CONTINUE.

We love this analysis because it is so action-oriented. As you go through your audit and begin to look at the results, you may naturally start filling out actions for each of these categories:

- **START:** The new actiities, communications, tactics, or channels that you want to introduce.
- **STOP:** The activities / tactics you should stop doing (e.g. discontinuing an unused channel).
- **CONTINUE:** What's working well already that doesn't require change.

Download Guide

## Taking Action

Once you know what audiences aren't being reached effectively (potentially at all), what channels are most and least effective, and what messages are being engaged with, you can begin making changes.

- **If you haven't surveyed your employees yet about what they want and need, this is a good time to do it.** The findings from your initial audit will help guide the questions for your survey. And

# Taking Action
CONTINUED

ultimately, their feedback should drive the decision-making about what channels to add or remove, what messages to add to the mix, how to share need-to-know messages with them, and generally how they feel about communication at your organization.

- **Focus groups are another great way to "pressure test" your ideas and get more detail and information from your employees.** When you do focus groups, be sure to interview a diverse set of employees—different job titles, types, locations, and seniority.

- **Interview Senior Leaders about your internal communications goals and strategy.** Their opinion is important, but it is also going to be important to have their buy-in and involving them in the process early will help.

Taking this data to your senior leadership team is going to be extremely helpful in getting their buy-in to changes you want to make to the internal communications function. Showing them what employees are asking for and where the gaps are in your current strategy helps you make the case for new tools, channels, headcount, or whatever it is that you need to help solve the challenges you're facing.

# Launching a New Comms Channel

It's possible that by the time you're done with your audit—or after trying to map out a complex change communication plan—that you realize you need a new channel to reach a certain audience segment or to more effectively communicate certain messages.

To help gain adoption for that new channel and see quicker success, we recommend analyzing:

- What type of channel it is?
- Who is it primarily for?
- What are your goals for that channel?

## Defining Channel Type (Primary vs. Secondary)

So, what do we mean by a primary versus secondary channels? Essentially, this is about getting you to think about how the channel will be used. This might be different company to company.

But a **primary channel is one that you use regularly for need-to-know communications**. Another qualifier here might be whether or not it is primary for any of your core audiences. For instance, your Intranet might be accessible to many but not regularly used. Since it's not a preferred channel, it might be more secondary for you. You'll still use it and post updates, but it won't be a main way you communicate key messages.

**A secondary channel is used as a supplemental channel.** This might be a place where you reinforce key messages or mainly share nice-to-know information. This might be a channel that's optional. It still serves a purpose, but it might not be where you see the most traffic.

The reason we make this designation is because the goals we set for these channels will be drastically impacted by how the channel is used. Secondary channels will have very different success metrics than primary channels.

## Defining Your Channel's Target Audience

Another critical step is to understand who is going to use each channel. It's important to keep in mind that not all employees have access to the same channels...but they also might not all prefer the same channels. And that's okay!

# New Channel

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But it does mean that we should take some time to figure that out. It's possible that our field-based teams will never use the Intranet, sometimes use email, and mostly use their employee app. And it's possible that your deskbound employees might always use email and Slack, sometimes check the Intranet, and never use the employee app—or maybe they use the app on their desktop rather than mobile device because they work on computers all day.

Figuring this out will help you properly map your messages. And if you haven't yet, surveying your employees to learn what channels they like and don't like can be really helpful. Ask them if there are channels you don't currently have that they would like. This can help you find the best ways to reach your groups rather than forcing your existing channel mix to work.

So, when you choose to implement a new channel, figure out what audience(s) are mainly going to use it and for what kind of communications.

## Setting Channel Goals

Finally, it's important to set some goals for your new channel. What does success look like? Some examples might include:

- Reaching a certain adoption rate with your primary audience by a certain point in time.
- Improving open rates on content compared to email.
- Achieving a certain level of social engagements on posts with them enabled (e.g. recognition, company news, etc.)

You should also look at your overarching goals here too. Do you anticipate that launching this channel will contribute to…

- Improving employee engagement scores?
- Decreasing churn?
- More positive employee sentiment or eNPS scores?
- Better participation in HR trainings and open enrollment?

The list here could go on! Even if there's a dotted line correlation, it's important to set your objectives for how you think the channel will help you achieve key business results.

# Resources

To help you get started, we've compiled an Internal Communications Audit Template as well as additional resources to help you complete each activity outlined in this guide.

## Download the Audit Template

Download our internal communications audit template to help guide you as you walk through the steps outlined in this guide. Use this to track all your audiences, channels, business partners, and messages.

Download FREE Template

## Additional Resources to Help With Your Audit

- **Leadership communication.** If this isn't already part of your strategy, or if you know you want to improve your leadership comms, we have resources to help:
  - Blog: 6 Tips to Create an Executive Communications Plan
  - Video: 4 Tips for Creating Leadership Videos
  - Video: How to Form Partnerships With Senior Leadership (and Why You Must Do It)
  - Blog: Why CEOs Must Emprace Executive Communications

- **Stretching a limited budget.** We know that internal communications budgets can often be limited, and you may feel like you don't have the funds to create the content your employees want. But it doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg. Learn how:
  - Blog: 5 Tips for Improving Workplace Communication on a Budget
  - Video: Maximizing Your Internal Comms Budget

- **Measurement.** We know measurement isn't always easy. These resources will help you get started and begin proving your ROI.
  - Ebook: Definitive Guide to Measurement & Analytics

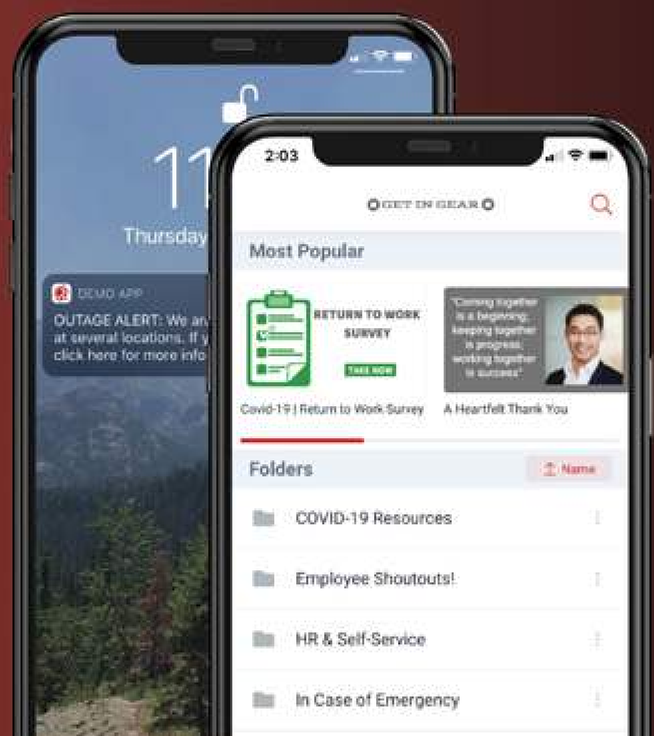
# About theEMPLOYEEapp

theEMPLOYEEapp was created by communications and HR professionals to address the challenges organizations face communicating with a dispersed and deskless workforce. theEMPLOYEEapp is an internal communication and engagement solution that allows workers to have fast and easy access to the information, documents, and resources they need to succeed in their work.

Our app allows you to target information to your employees when and where they need it on their smartphone, tablet, or computer, and empower leaders and frontline managers to engage and activate employees across the organization. Unlike most traditional communications channels, theEMPLOYEEapp creates a customized, branded experience for employees, encouraging your workforce to join together in a single, centralized channel.

**Our Mission** is to enable the effortless flow of meaningful information for organizations driven by frontline workers.

**Request a Demo**

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