

# 2025 Employee Communication Impact Study

Change, crisis, and leadership: How US employees perceive internal corporate communication



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This study reveals a critical gap in internal communication within US organizations. While overall job satisfaction may appear stable, non-desk employees report alarmingly low satisfaction with the quality of communication they receive. This disconnect undermines everything from employee retention to the effectiveness of change initiatives, crisis response, and leadership messaging.



1.

# **Summary & key findings**

A volatile economic environment, ongoing restructuring, workforce reductions, and a rollback of DEI initiatives — companies and their employees are facing times of uncertainty.

In this climate of volatility, trust becomes essential for organizational survival and success. Effective internal communication is now the foundation upon which that trust is built.

Unfortunately, many American companies are falling short. While employees may express satisfaction with certain aspects of their employment, such as coworker relationships and time off, our data exposes a deep-seated communication problem: only 10% of non-desk employees in the US are very satisfied with internal communication, and a significant 40% rate communication quality as "only fair" or "poor."

This erosion of trust, fueled by poor communication, poses a serious threat to organizational stability and employee engagement. This is especially true for employees who don't work at a desk or with a computer — the very people who are often the last to receive important updates.

The 2025 Employee Communication Impact Study by Staffbase and YouGov offers new insights into how employees in Australia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States experience internal communication in times of change, crisis, and uncertainty. This report highlights the survey results for the US.

#### Here are seven key takeaways from the US responses:

#### Non-desk employees are underserved

Only 10% are very satisfied and 17% rather satisfied with the quality of internal communication.

In contrast, 16% of desk-based employees are very satisfied and 31% rather satisfied with the quality of internal communication.

#### 2. Poor communication drives turnover

58% of employees who are considering leaving their jobs cite poor internal communication as a contributing factor.

#### 3. Trust starts with the immediate supervisor

The immediate supervisor is the most-trusted source of information for employees overall.

However, those who use an employee app trust it even more, making it their top-rated channel for trustworthy communication.

#### 4. Connection between clear comms and job satisfaction

Clarity in leadership communication and during change tends to have an effect on other areas.

When employees report that leadership communication is very clear, they're three times as happy in their roles compared to the ones who state that communication is not clear at all.

#### 5. An employee app is the best channel for crisis comms

When used as a primary channel, employee apps score highest for crisis communication.

**79% of employee app users** assess their organization's crisis communication as "excellent" or "good" — compared to an average of 54%.

#### 6. Feedback disparity of desk and non-desk

**50% of desk-based employees** feel that their feedback is (somewhat) considered during change processes — but **only 35% of non-desk employees** feel that way.

#### 7. Loneliness at work is a communication issue

**12% of employees feel lonely at work** either always (3%) or often (9%) — with another 23% who say they sometimes feel lonely.

Companies can do better at **fostering meaningful connections at work**; only 19% of employees feel their employer does a very good job in this area.

For internal communication teams, the findings in this report are both a wake-up call and an opportunity. There's work to be done — but also a clear path forward.



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# Introduction to study results

This is **Paul**, a 28-year-old production operator at a manufacturing company in Detroit, Michigan.



And this is **Sarah**, 34 years old, Paul's colleague from the finance department.

**Note:** Paul and Sarah serve as examples of the potentially significant divides between desk-based and non-desk employees within a company or industry. These are relatively small sample sizes which – unlike the other data in this study – are not representative: n Paul, i.e., US, manufacturing, non-desk = 29, n Sarah, i.e., US, manufacturing, desk-based = 60.

Overall, Paul and Sarah are happy with many aspects of their jobs. They enjoy the relationships with their coworkers and are quite satisfied with their vacation and paid time off policies. But one thing that really sets them apart is internal communication.

Sarah appreciates the quality of most of the internal communication and feels that the frequency is just about right. Paul, on the other hand, complains about receiving news and information far too infrequently. He also states that the quality of the content he receives is only fair at best and often poor.

While our manufacturing company employees, Sarah and Paul, are fictional characters, their stories are based upon real data from the 2025 Employee Communication Impact Study by Staffbase and YouGov.

We've collected 3574 responses from employees in Australia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, the UK, and the US. The main topics covered are employee experience, comms impact, change communication, crisis communication, and leadership communication.

This report will emphasize the analysis of the data from the United States (1044 responses). The full global report will be available online on the Staffbase blog on May 15, 2025: <a href="staffba.se/impact-study-25">staffba.se/impact-study-25</a>







3.

# Employee experience and comms impact

## Quality of internal communications

Let's spend a little bit more time with Paul and Sarah and have a closer look at how employees who share their personal profiles feel about internal communication.

A striking 66% of non-desk workers at American manufacturing companies — just like Paul — rate the quality of internal communication they receive as "only fair" or "poor." But only 20% of their desk-based colleagues — like Sarah share that negative view. None of the "Pauls" from our survey rate the quality of comms as "excellent" and only 21% say "very good." In contrast, Sarah and 15% of her desk-based manufacturing colleagues consider the quality of comms "excellent" and 28% "very good."

Only 10% of non-desk workers are very satisfied with the quality of internal communication.

Looking at all 1044 responses from a wide range of industries, our research shows that American employees are satisfied with some of the most important aspects of work.

The top 3 on a list of 14 possible responses are:

- Relationships with coworkers: 75% ("rather satisfied" or "very much satisfied")
- Vacation and paid time off policies: 70%
- Insurance and benefits: 64%

The lowest satisfaction scores are:

- Quality of internal corporate communications: 41%
- Amount of internal corporate communications: 41%
- Opportunities for advancement: 41%
- Company position on social issues: 36%

And the data shows a further decline for non-desk workers: Only 17% are "rather satisfied" and only 10% are "very much satisfied" with the quality of internal communication.

When asked more specifically — "Overall, how do you rate the quality of news and information you get from your employer?" — the results show further concern: Only 38% of employees consider it "excellent" or "very good" compared to 29% who say it's "only fair" or "poor." And again, the numbers are worse for non-desk workers: Only 30% rate it as "excellent" or "very good," while 40% say it's "only fair" or "poor,"

#### Frequency and quality of news and information



How would you rate the frequency of receiving news and information from your employer? / Overall, how do you rate the quality of news and information you get from your employer? n = 1044

# Channel usage, preference, and trust

The number-one answer globally (51%) — and in the US (57%) — to the question "Where do you get most of your news and information about your company or employer?" is "Email or memo from management," followed by "My immediate supervisor" (50%).

For IC professionals, the most relevant insights may come from the data on employee communications tools. Here's what the numbers show:

Intranet: 32%

Company newsletters: 23%

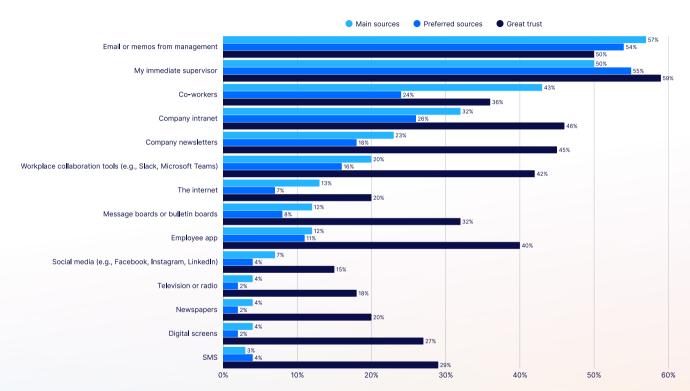
Employee app: 12% Digital screens: 4%

SMS: 3%

Notably, intranet usage in the US is below the global average of 39% — and significantly lower than Germany's 51%.

The immediate supervisor is the most-trusted source of **information** for employees overall. But if they use an employee app, this channel has the highest trust score.

#### Channel usage, preference, and trust



Where do you get most of your news and information about your company or employer? Please select the top three. n = 1044 / What are your preferred ways to receive news and information about your company and your job? Please select up to three answers. n = 1044 / Overall, how much do you trust each of the following sources of information about your employer? (Note: This question received numerous responses stating "I don't know/No answer" because not every employee has access to all of the sources listed. We've cleaned up the data and eliminated these responses to get to a better comparison between communication channels. The displayed percentages show the response "A great deal.")

When employees were asked which channels they prefer for receiving company news and information, the responses followed a similar ranking to the actual sources they currently use. What stands out more, however, are the trust scores for those same channels.

"My immediate supervisor" is the most-trusted source of information for American employees — 59% trust them "a great deal." Email or memos from management (50%), the company intranet (46%), company newsletters (45%), and employee apps (40%) are other sources that receive "a great deal" of trust from employees.

Among those who use an employee app as one of their main information sources, it's also the most-trusted channel. It ranks number one with 60%, followed by supervisors (57%) and email or memos from management (52%).

In contrast, external sources are trusted far less when it comes to employer-related information. Newspapers (20%), TV or radio (18%), and social media (15%) all receive low trust scores — and 42% of employees say they don't trust social media at all.

# The impact of good (and poor) comms

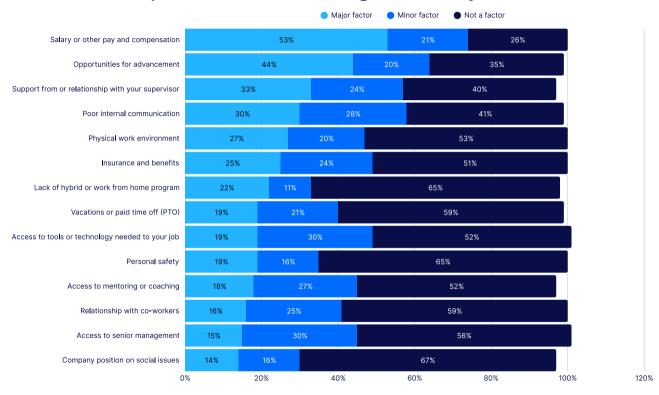
We asked employees who are actively thinking about changing jobs: "To what extent do the following factors contribute to your likelihood of leaving your current job?"

Salary is the top reason for turnover: 53% consider it a major factor, and another 21% say it's a minor one. "Opportunities for advancement" and "Support from or relationship with your supervisor" follow — but "Poor internal communication" also stands out. 30% say it's a major factor, and 28% cite it as a minor one contributing to their likelihood of leaving their job.

It's worth noting that **poor communication** is a much more common driver of employee turnover than factors like paid time off, personal safety concerns, or the company's stance on social issues.

Poor internal communication is one of the **biggest drivers** of turnover.

#### Impact on decision of leaving the current job



To what extent do the following factors contribute to your likelihood of leaving your current job? n = 135

It even appears that it is implicitly an even stronger driver than the respondents themselves estimate. When we cross the answers regarding the likelihood of staying at their job with their assessment of the quality of communication, we see the following:

- Of the employees who rate the communication as "Excellent," 82% want to stay with their company "very likely" and 12% "somewhat likely."
- Of the employees who rate the communication as "Poor," only 22% want to stay with their company "very likely" and 16% "somewhat likely."

Corporate internal communication doesn't just influence turnover. More than 60% of employees say it has some or a great impact on:

- Their overall productivity at work
- Their motivation to do their best work
- Their understanding of the company's vision and mission

This confirms the findings from 2024, which already showed that more frequent communication significantly contributes to a better understanding of the company's goals, objectives, and vision (2024 Employee Communication Impact Study, USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism & Staffbase, page 33).

## The loneliness epidemic

The loneliness epidemic describes a global trend, beginning in the 2010s, of more people experiencing feelings of isolation. We wanted to understand how often employees feel lonely at work — and whether they believe their workplace fosters meaningful social connections.

The results show that 12% of employees feel lonely at work either always (3%) or often (9%) — with another 23% who say they sometimes feel lonely. In other areas of our survey, such as communication quality, non-desk workers often report greater disadvantages. Interestingly, when it comes to loneliness in the workplace, the results are fairly similar for desk-based and non-desk employees. In fact, the numbers look better for non-desk workers: 48% say they never feel lonely at work, compared to just 36% of their desk-based colleagues.

Companies can do better at fostering meaningful connections at work.

#### How often do you feel lonely at work?

#### **High-quality comms**



n = 302 (Quality of news and information rated "only fair" or "poor")

These numbers highlight the urgent need for companies to foster more meaningful connections at work. According to our research, only 19% of employees feel their employer does a very good job in this area — and 25% say "not really" or "not at all." In the automotive industry, that number rises to an alarming 53%.



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# Change communication

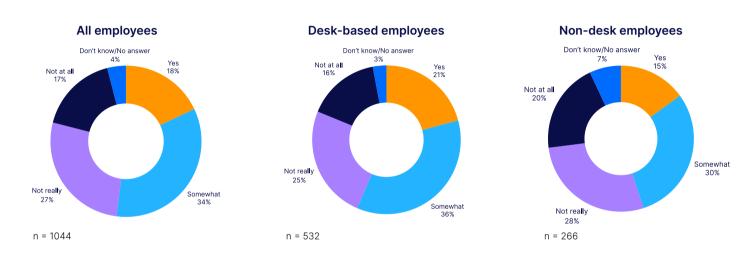
## Level of information and awareness

Do employees feel informed about change initiatives? Are they satisfied with the clarity of communication? And what channels do they find most effective?

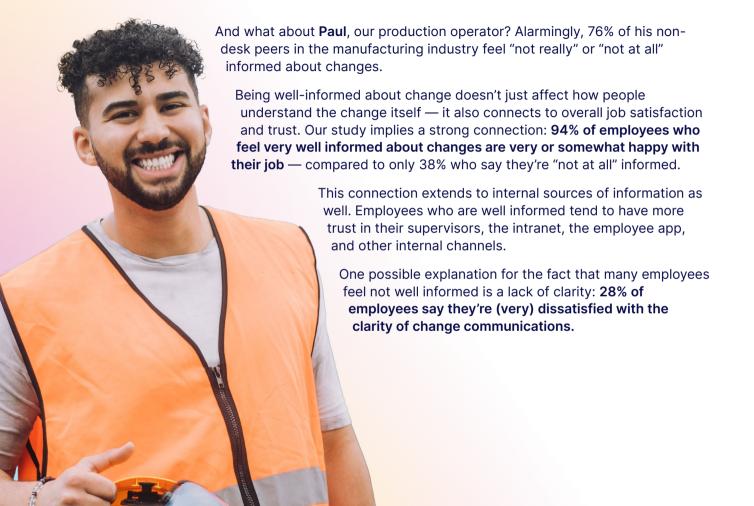


Employees who feel well-informed about changes are happier with their job.

#### Do you feel well-informed about the reasons behind recent company changes?



The graphics above illustrate the dilemma of change communication: 18% of employees feel well-informed and 34% "somewhat" well-informed about the reasons behind recent company changes. On the other hand, 44% feel "not really" or "not at all" informed. Comparing the numbers for different workplace descriptions, we see that the numbers for non-desk employees are slightly worse than those of desk-based employees.



# Most effective channels for change communication

One in four employees says they almost always or often feel left out of important change-related information. With a set of strong internal channels in place, companies could reduce the risk of disengagement across their workforce.

So, which channels do employees find most effective for change-related communication in their company?

The results closely mirror those for trust in information sources. Once again, email or memos from management (56%), immediate supervisors (55%), and the company intranet (28%) make up the **top three channels**.

The top three channels for change communication are emails from management, the immediate supervisor, and the intranet.

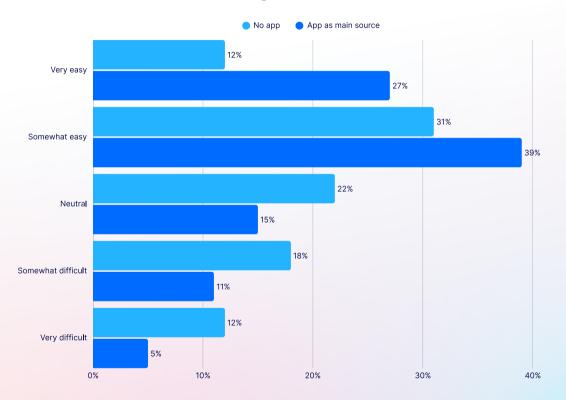
The other channels rank as follows: co-workers (24%), company newsletters (22%), workplace collaboration tools (18%), employee app (13%), message boards or bulletin boards (11%), the internet (7%), social media (5%), SMS (4%), newspapers (3%), television or radio (3%), and digital screens (3%).

It's important to remember that **not every company offers all of the internal communication** channels on the list — but nearly everyone has a manager, supervisors, and coworkers.

Take employee apps, for example: 60% of those who name an employee app as one of their main sources of information also say that this is the most effective channel for change communication.

This group also finds it far easier to find change-related information: 66% of employee app users find it somewhat or very easy — compared to only 43% for those without an app as their main source of information.

#### **Easiness of finding information**



How easy is it to find detailed information about changes affecting your work? n "No app" = 917; n "App as main source" = 127

## **Employee feedback**

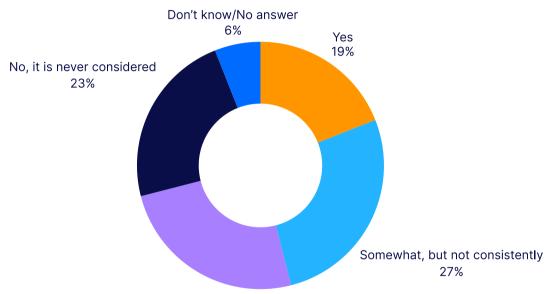
Many companies include phrases like "We value the opinions of our employees" or "The voice of our staff matters" in their corporate values.

But how do employees actually feel about that? We asked: "Do you feel employee feedback is considered during change management processes?"

The answers are fairly evenly split across four options: "Yes," "Somewhat," "Rarely," and "No."

Companies are more likely to ask Sarah for feedback than Paul.

#### Do you feel employee feedback is considered during the change management process?



Rarely, it is only considered occasionally 25%

n = 1044

What stands out most is the workplace comparison:

#### **Desk-based employees**

Yes: 23%

Somewhat, but not consistently: 27%

Rarely, it is only considered occasionally: 25%

No, it is never considered: 21%

#### Non-desk employees

Yes: 12%

Somewhat, but not consistently: 23%

Rarely, it is only considered occasionally: 27%

No, it is never considered: 31%

And what we've learned about Paul and Sarah applies here too: There's a troubling divide in how desk-based and non-desk employees in manufacturing experience feedback. Not a single "Paul" said "Yes, my feedback is considered," while 32% of Sarah's peers felt that their feedback was considered.

#### "No, my feedback is never considered."



15% Sarah (manufacturing, desk-based)



Paul (manufacturing. non-desk)

n Sarah = 60: n Paul = 29





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# Crisis communication

## **Quality of** crisis communication

Crises can take many forms — from natural disasters to financial instability to data breaches or other disruptions to business operations. Regardless of the cause, they pose real challenges for management, employees, and communications teams.

Still, the responses we see lean much more positive than negative. 54% rate their organization's crisis communication as "excellent" or "good" — and only 14% rate it as "poor" or "very poor."

We can also see significant differences between industries when it comes to the overall rating of crisis comms.

Employees who receive crisis comms via employee app rate it the **best channel** for this purpose.

#### A few examples:



#### **Educational services:**

- 60% "Excellent/Good"
- 15% "Very poor/Poor"



#### Healthcare and social assistance:

- 58% "Excellent/Good"
- 13% "Very poor/Poor"



#### Finance and insurance:

- 76% "Excellent/Good"
- 5% "Very poor/Poor"



#### Logistics, transportation, warehousing:

- 46% "Excellent/Good"
- 22% "Very poor/Poor"



#### **Manufacturing:**

- 45% "Excellent/Good"
- 15% "Very poor/Poor"



#### Information:

- 72% "Excellent/Good"
- 2% "Very poor/Poor"

## The best crisis comms channels

Our data suggests that the use of modern communication solutions tends to lead to better ratings of crisis communication. These four channels received the most "excellent" or "very good" ratings:

- Digital screens: 81% (n = 31)
- Employee app: 79% (n = 115)
- Company newsletters: 78% (n = 116)
- Company intranet: 73% (n = 243)

The employee app channel also received by far the highest number of "excellent" ratings, with 39%, and the lowest number of "poor" or "very poor" ratings, with 3%.

The first - and most important – step is: Tell your employees where to find updates during a crisis.

#### Overall crisis comms rating "excellent" or "good"



The data is clear: An employee app can help improve crisis communication. But only 11% of employees currently receive updates this way, putting apps in ninth place among all communication channels. Here's how each channel ranks:

- Email or memos from management: 51%
- My immediate supervisor: 47%
- Co-workers: 24%
- Company intranet: 23%
- Workplace collaboration tools (e.g., Slack, Microsoft Teams): 16%
- SMS: 15%
- The internet: 12%
- Company newsletters: 11%

- Employee app: 11%
- Message boards or bulletin boards: 8%
- Television or radio: 8%
- Social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn): 7%
- Newspapers: 4%
- Digital screens: 3%
- Don't know/No answer: 10%

SMS adoption stands out: While 17% of employees in Australia receive crisis communications via SMS, usage in other countries is lower — but still notable. In the US 15% of respondents said they use SMS, followed by Austria at 13%, Switzerland and the UK at 9%, and only 3% in Germany.

Younger employees also rely more on social media during a crisis. Among those aged 18 to 34, 16% reported using social media for updates — significantly higher than the overall average of 7%.

We also asked participants about the frequency of crisis updates, where gaps exist, and whether they feel supported during a crisis.

- Frequency is rated guite well: 53% say "Just the right frequency."
- 32% have sometimes, frequently, or always experienced communication gaps during past crises.
- One in two (51%) feel very or somewhat supported by their organization during a crisis. This number is slightly lower for non-desk workers (42%) and significantly higher for those who receive crisis comms via employee app (71%), digital screens (74%), or company newsletters (78%).

Ten percent of all participants couldn't answer or didn't know how they typically receive updates during a crisis. And only 8% from this group feel very or somewhat supported by their organization. This tells us two things:

- Implementing a multi-channel approach will improve employees' crisis comms experience.
- Organizations need to improve how they inform staff about where to find crisis updates.





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# Leadership communication

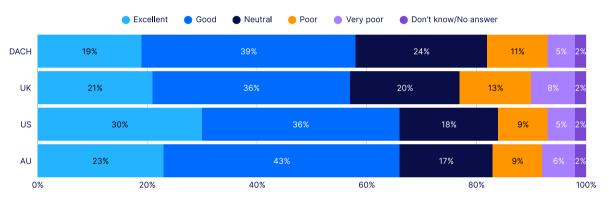
### Communication skills

Previous sections highlighted that immediate supervisors and management updates are key means of communication. But what about the quality? We asked:

"How would you rate your manager's communication skills overall?" and "How well does your manager keep your team informed about updates from leadership?"

Non-desk employees feel less well informed by their managers.

## How would you rate your manager's communication skills overall?



DACH n = 1483; UK n = 529, US n = 1044, AU n = 518

As the chart above shows, managers and immediate supervisors are rated positively across all regions surveyed. Managers in the United States received the highest score, with 30% of respondents rating their skills as "Excellent."

But we also notice a workplace gap here: Non-desk employees feel less well informed by their managers (48% "Well" or "Very well") than their desk-based colleagues (67%).

Considering the numbers for Paul and Sarah, we see how this gap can become a severe threat to a united, aligned workforce in a specific industry or company.

#### Well or very well informed by manager about updates from leadership



Sarah (manufacturing, desk-based)



Paul (manufacturing, non-desk)

n Sarah = 60: n Paul = 29

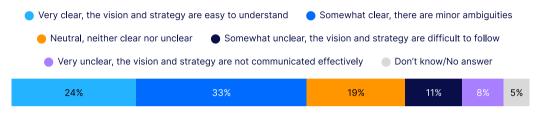
# Clarity about vision and strategy

Every organization wants their employees to understand the bigger picture — the company's vision and strategy. But communicating that effectively remains one of the biggest challenges of internal communicators and leadership teams. Clear messaging is essential to making that vision resonate.

We've asked 1044 employees in the United States: "How clear is leadership communication about organizational vision and strategy?"

There is a strong connection between **clear communication** and overall job satisfaction.

#### Clarity of leadership communication



How clear is leadership communication about organizational vision and strategy? n = 1044

Even if we see a **good number of positive responses** in the chart above, there are connections to other areas of this study that deserve our attention.

First, we see a strong connection between clear leadership communication and overall job satisfaction: Among employees who say leadership communication about the organization's vision and strategy is "very clear," 91% report being very or somewhat happy in their jobs. That's significantly higher than the overall average of 69% — and dramatically higher than the 30% of employees who say communication is "very unclear" and still report being happy at work.

#### Connection between clarity of leadership communication and job satisfaction

"I am very or somewhat happy with my current job or position."



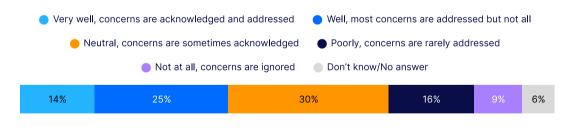
Second, clarity seems to be a strong indicator for the overall quality of internal communications: 78% of those who say "the vision and strategy are easy to understand" rate the overall quality of internal communication as "excellent" or "very good." In contrast, only 2% of those who feel the vision and strategy are not communicated effectively give such high ratings.

Considering the central role of senior leadership in conveying corporate values, vision, and strategy, it's all the more concerning that 16% of non-desk employees say they never receive communication from senior leadership.

On the contrary, employees who receive communication from senior leadership weekly or more are twice as happy (82%) with their job or position as those who never receive any communication from senior leadership (41%). Yes, there is always a risk of information overload, and communicators should always be mindful of the frequency of internal communication. But the survey results make it clear: It's better for senior leaders to communicate regularly than to stay silent.

When it comes to the themes and messages of leadership communications, companies should be especially mindful of employee concerns. One in four employees respond to the question "How well do leadership communications address employee concerns?" with either "Poorly, concerns are rarely addressed" or "Not at all, concerns are ignored."

#### Addressing employee concerns



How well do leadership communications address employee concerns? n = 1044





# **7**.

# Conclusion

## Takeaways for comms professionals and leaders

by David Maffei, SVP & General Manager, North America, Staffbase

#### Communicate more than less. But measure impact, not just output.

Don't just communicate more; measure the impact of your communication. Clicks and views are not enough. Utilize metrics such as employee satisfaction, behavioral changes, and the influence on key business objectives to demonstrate the ROI of vour communication efforts.

#### Improve leadership clarity to cut through the noise, especially during change.

Employees are overwhelmed by information overload, but this can be combated by creating a clear and unified communication strategy. Encourage leaders to communicate early, clearly, and consistently during times of organizational change. Delivering the right content to the right employee is crucial for capturing attention and preventing burnout.

#### Train and empower immediate supervisors as communication champions.

Equip supervisors with communication training, talking points, and toolkits for key announcements or changes. Ensure they understand their role in building trust and maintaining open lines of communication.

#### Combat workplace loneliness through connection-driven communication.

 Go beyond superficial wellness programs by creating a communication culture that supports and involves employees. Equip managers with the tools to lead their teams effectively, and ensure that all employees, especially non-desk workers, feel valued and heard. This is essential for combating burnout and building an engaged workforce. Loneliness is a growing issue tied to poor internal communication, but meaningful connections can reduce isolation and increase employee well-being.

#### Prioritize non-desk employees in your communication strategy.

 Pay special attention to non-desk employees, as this target group is often underserved with information. Audit your current internal communication channels and assess whether non-desk employees are being reached effectively and regularly. Invest in mobile-friendly platforms like employee apps and create content tailored for frontline workers' needs and schedules.

#### Reimagine your crisis communication.

 Evaluate all channels you have been using for crisis communication. Ask different target groups among your workforce which channels they find most effective. Our data shows that a mix of modern tools — like digital signage, employee apps, newsletters, and intranets — is well-perceived by employees and contributes to a better experience.. These tools enable you to deliver targeted messages, increase reach, and gather valuable data on the impact of your communication. This data is crucial for measuring success and continuously optimizing your strategy.

## Study design

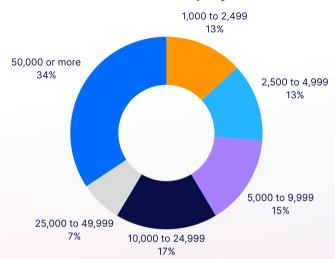
For the 2025 International Employee Communication Impact Study, we've collected 3574 responses from employees in Australia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This report highlights the 1044 responses from the US.

The study includes responses from a wide range of **industries**, with a special focus on:

- Healthcare and social assistance
- Retail trade
- **Educational services**
- Logistics, transportation, and warehousing
- Manufacturing

Participants represent all age groups, with 90% working full-time and 10% part-time.

#### **Number of employees**





n = 1044

Looking at **how people work**, 51% of the respondents are working exclusively or mainly on their computer ("**desk-based employees**"), 25% are working "mostly without" or "not at all" with a computer ("**non-desk workers**"), and 24% are working equally on and off a computer.

All participants work for an organization with more than 1000 employees; one-third work for a company with more than 50,000 employees.

# Get access to the full global report

Does your organization have employees around the world? This year's study includes insights from 3574 employees across Australia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Read the full global report now – no registration required. It's available on the Staffbase blog:

staffba.se/impact-study-25



