

Internal communications mandate

Leadership discussion questions

**This list is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive — let your existing knowledge and what you know of your organization’s culture and priorities lead the way. Use this as a starting point!*

ASK What would you consider successful internal communication to look like in this company?

WHY This is a high-level question, and what you’re looking for is a high-level answer to outline the general shapes of your leadership team’s expectations. The language that they use without prompting will let you drill down on what is inherently important to them. This should not only lead you to further questioning but should also inform the themes and details to report on.



ASK What communication challenges has the organization had in the past, or is currently facing?

WHY Know what you’re up against. If there are current or endemic communication challenges in the organization, you’ll need to factor those into any plans you make. They may or may not be fixable in the short or long term, but you need to be aware of the obstacles you’ll be facing. This question is good to take beyond the leadership discussion as well, try to get a gauge from various levels of the organization.



ASK Is there a defined budget for the internal communication function? If not, could there be?

WHY Pretty basic, and necessary information. If you find that there is no defined budget for internal communications, make sure that leadership is aware of the constraints that puts on the function. You should also be careful if it's indicated that budget is shared or borrowed from other functions (HR, marketing, etc.) as that could create tension with stakeholders in those areas if the relationships aren't managed well.



ASK How do you see internal communication supporting corporate goals?

WHY You are asking this question not only to gain clarity about how leadership might see internal communication supporting the company, but also to indicate that *you* see internal communication tightly tied to strategic support. Drawing this connection early in the course of your work helps lay the groundwork for being well integrated and strategically involved moving forward.



ASK What are the organization's priorities for the coming quarter/year?

WHY You ask for these details because they will be the structure around which you will build out your campaigns and editorial calendar. When it comes to sorting content by what is urgent vs important vs relevant, these priorities will guide what falls where.



ASK Is there a plan or process for addressing employee feedback?

WHY Employees who believe their voice matter are more engaged, and more engaged employees have shown to be more productive. Find out what tools or processes are (or aren't) in place for collecting and addressing feedback in your organization.



ASK What sort of information or reporting have you found/would you find valuable?

WHY Knowing what information will satisfy or excite your stakeholders will informs how you report on your activities. This will define what metrics and measures you need to build into your work from the outset, so that you're not chasing down numbers and details after the fact.



ASK Do you anticipate any roadblocks for the internal communicator within the organization?

WHY This is a particularly useful question for feeling out any resistance there might be within the organization to the internal communication function. For example, industry-wide, line managers are often identified as a roadblock to effective employee communication. In some organizations, there are departments that have been DeFacto communicators that may be resistant to giving up control. Knowing what you're up against, will help you tailor solutions to move forward.



ASK What additional resources could be made available for/to internal communications?

WHY There may be other teams in the organization you can partner with to maximize efficiency (marketing or HR for example). You might have access to external contractors or an agency, or additional support from non-communicators for specific objectives. The more you know up-front, the better you can plan.



ASK What has historically worked well in this organization in terms of internal communication?

WHY This question will help, particularly if you are new to the organization, to determine what the employee base is already receptive to. If there have been specific campaigns or an approach that has been effective in the past, you want to be able to build on that. Be aware, however, that this is only the perspective from the top level, and it may or may not necessarily reflect the experiences of most employees.



ASK What has historically worked poorly in this organization in terms of internal communication?

WHY For the same reasons you want to know what worked well, you need to know what fell flat. If possible, you should also try to find out why something didn't go over well — was it a flawed strategy, or were there simply hiccups with the execution? You can often learn more from a badly executed campaign than from one that went off without a hitch.


