

A FREE UNCOM MEDIA RESOURCE



The Internal Communications Playbook

A practical framework for keeping every department aligned before, during, and after any project, so nothing gets built, launched, or announced in a silo.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read section by section, in order. Each one builds on the last.

Use the fillable pages to plan your next project before it starts.

Revisit this guide any time a new initiative kicks off.

CLARITY • CONSISTENCY • TRUST

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A Note Before You Start

Most organizations put enormous care into their external communication. The website copy gets reviewed. The press release gets drafted, redrafted, and approved. The social post gets scheduled at exactly the right time. Almost none of that same care goes into the communication that happens inside the building first, the conversations that tell your own people what is happening, why it is happening, and what it means for their day to day work.

That gap is where good projects quietly go sideways. Not because the work was done poorly, but because the people affected by it never really understood what was coming, who was responsible, or how to raise a concern before it became a problem.

This is true whether the project is a new piece of software, a marketing campaign, a policy change, a reorganization, or a crisis response. Every one of those starts with an internal communication decision, whether anyone realizes it or not.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A project can be executed flawlessly on paper and still fail in practice, because the people affected by it never understood what was happening or what their role in it was.

This guide is intentionally practical. It is built to apply whether you are rolling out a new CRM, launching a marketing initiative, or preparing your organization to respond to a crisis. Adapt it to your structure and your size. Use what fits, and set aside what doesn't.

We built this at UNCOM Media because we have watched capable organizations lose weeks of goodwill and productivity, not because their idea was wrong, but because IT found out too late, the front line staff found out from a customer, or nobody ever circled back to ask whether the rollout actually worked. Read through it, adapt it to your organization, and put it to work.

*With clarity,
The UNCOM Media Team*

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Why Internal Communication Comes First

Every project your organization takes on starts and ends with communication.

A software integration, a marketing initiative, a crisis response, a new hire, a policy change. Every one of them depends on the same thing before it depends on anything else: whether the right people inside your organization know what is happening, why it is happening, and what their role is in it.

Most organizations spend the bulk of their energy getting the external message right and almost none of it making sure their own people are aligned first. That order of operations is backwards. Your employees are the ones who will actually implement the project, answer questions about it, and live with the results. If they are the last to know, or find out in pieces, the project starts on shaky ground no matter how good the underlying idea is.

Internal communication is not a soft skill or a nice to have. It is the operating system every other initiative runs on top of.

WHY THIS MATTERS

When internal communication is treated as an afterthought, every project inherits that risk, regardless of how well it was planned on paper.

The Silo Problem

In most midsized organizations, departments operate like separate companies that happen to share a building.

IT builds and maintains systems on its own timeline. Marketing runs a campaign without looping in the people who will field the calls it generates. Finance makes a decision that ripples through every other department and finds out later who was affected by it.

This is rarely intentional. It happens because no one owns the job of connecting the dots between departments. IT, in particular, tends to get treated as a support function that gets called in only after something breaks, instead of a partner that should be at the table from the beginning of nearly everything the organization does. The same pattern shows up with social media and customer facing teams, who are often told about a change after it is already public.

If a decision touches people, systems, money, or your public reputation, every one of those teams has a stake in knowing about it early, not after the fact.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Silos do not just slow things down. They create blind spots that turn manageable issues into full blown crises.

SECTION 03

Roles and Responsibilities

Before any project begins, someone needs to own internal communication for that project specifically.

Not vaguely “everyone,” which in practice usually means no one. Assign a single point person responsible for keeping the right departments informed at each stage. This does not need to be a full time role. It needs to be a clear one, written down, and known to everyone involved.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
Project Owner	Accountable for the outcome of the project itself, start to finish.
Communication Lead	Owns the internal messaging plan and makes sure every affected department hears about changes before they take effect.
Department Stakeholders	One named person per affected department who represents that team's questions and concerns.
Executive Sponsor	Removes roadblocks and gives the project the authority to require cooperation across departments.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A project without a named communication owner defaults to whoever remembers to send an email, which is not a plan.

SECTION 04

The Four Phases of Any Project

Internal communication is not one announcement. It is a process that runs alongside the entire life of a project, from the first conversation to the follow up months later.

Phase 01**Announce**

Tell the right people before the work starts, not after it is already underway.

Phase 02**Align**

Confirm every affected department understands its role, its timeline, and who to ask if something is unclear.

Phase 03**Implement**

Communicate progress and changes as they happen, not only at the very end.

Phase 04**Review**

Check back in after the fact to see what worked, what did not, and who was missed along the way.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Most breakdowns happen in the gaps between phases, when a project moves from planning to implementation without anyone confirming the whole organization moved with it.

SECTION 05

Before You Start: The Alignment Checklist

Before kicking off any initiative, whether it is a software rollout, a marketing push, or a new policy, work through this list. If you cannot answer one of these confidently, that is the gap to close before you move forward.

- ☐ Have we identified every department this project touches, not just the obvious ones?
- ☐ Does IT know before the rollout, not during it or after it?
- ☐ Does the social media or communications team know if this affects public perception in any way?
- ☐ Have we told the people whose day to day work will actually change?
- ☐ Is there a single point of contact people can go to with questions as they come up?
- ☐ Have we set a specific date to check back in and see how it actually went?

SECTION 06

Mapping Who Is Affected

Take a concrete example: a new software integration.

Before that rollout happens, ask how many departments it actually touches. Who logs into that system every day? Who has to be trained on it? Who is going to field frustrated calls if something breaks in the first week? Who owns the vendor relationship if there is a problem to escalate?

A simple impact map, even a one page list of departments and how each one is affected, prevents the most common failure point in any rollout: someone finding out about a change only after it has already disrupted their work.

DEPARTMENT	HOW THEY ARE AFFECTED	WHO NEEDS TO KNOW	BY WHEN

SECTION 07

IT Cannot Be an Island

IT should not be siloed off and called in only when something breaks.

In practice, IT needs a seat at the table for nearly everything the organization plans. A marketing campaign that will drive a spike in website traffic. A financial system change that affects reporting. A new hire who needs equipment, access, and accounts ready on day one. A physical security change tied to badge systems or cameras. None of these are purely technical decisions, and none of them should be made without IT in the room from the beginning.

The same logic applies to your social media and customer facing teams. If a decision could show up in a customer conversation, a support ticket, or a public comment, the people who handle those conversations need to know about it before it happens, not while they are being asked about it in real time.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Treating IT, social media, or any department as a downstream afterthought guarantees they will be the last to know and the first to be blamed when something goes wrong.

SECTION 08

Building In a Feedback Loop

Communication is not finished when a project launches.

Most organizations treat the launch date as the finish line, then never really find out whether the work accomplished what it was supposed to. Building in a feedback loop means asking, on a set date, real questions. Did this work the way we intended? Who ran into problems nobody anticipated? What would we do differently next time?

Without this step, the same mistakes repeat project after project, because no one ever circled back long enough to actually learn from them. A feedback loop does not need to be elaborate. It needs to be scheduled, and it needs to happen whether the project felt like a success or not.

WHY THIS MATTERS

If nobody asks whether something actually worked, you will not find out until it fails again, and louder.

SECTION 09

The Post-Implementation Review

Thirty to sixty days after any significant rollout, hold a short, honest review. Keep it simple and keep it consistent so it actually becomes a habit rather than a one time exercise.

-  Who needs to be in the room: the project owner, one representative from each affected department, and whoever fields questions from customers or the public.
-  What worked as planned, and what did not?
-  Was anyone affected who was not part of the original plan?
-  What would we tell ourselves at the start if we could do this again?
-  Where should these findings be documented so the next project owner can actually find them?

WHY THIS MATTERS

A review that is not written down and shared is a conversation. A review that is documented and shared becomes an asset the next project can build on.

SECTION 10

Sample Internal Communication Plan

Use this simple template at the start of any project, large or small, to force the right conversations before work begins.

PROJECT NAME

PROJECT OWNER

DEPARTMENTS AFFECTED

ANNOUNCEMENT DATE

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

REVIEW DATE

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS TO BE USED

HOW FEEDBACK WILL BE COLLECTED

SECTION 11

Warning Signs You Are Siloed

If any of these sound familiar, internal communication is a gap worth closing before your next project, not after.

- Departments learn about changes from a customer before they hear it internally.
- IT is contacted only after something has already broken.
- No one can say, without checking, who actually owns a given project.
- The same rollout problems keep happening project after project.
- Feedback gets collected, but nothing ever changes as a result of it.
- Announcements go out to leadership but never reach the people doing the work.
- Social media or customer service finds out about a policy change from the public.

SECTION 12

Quick-Start Checklist

A short version of everything in this guide. Keep this page close whenever a new project starts.

-  Name a single communication owner for this project.
-  Map every department the project touches, including IT and social media.
-  Announce the project to affected teams before work begins.
-  Confirm every stakeholder knows their role and timeline.
-  Communicate progress during implementation, not only at the end.
-  Schedule a review date before the project even launches.
-  Document what you learned and share it, not just file it away.

A FINAL NOTE

Better internal communication does not slow projects down. It prevents the far more expensive delay of doing the work twice because the first attempt left people out.