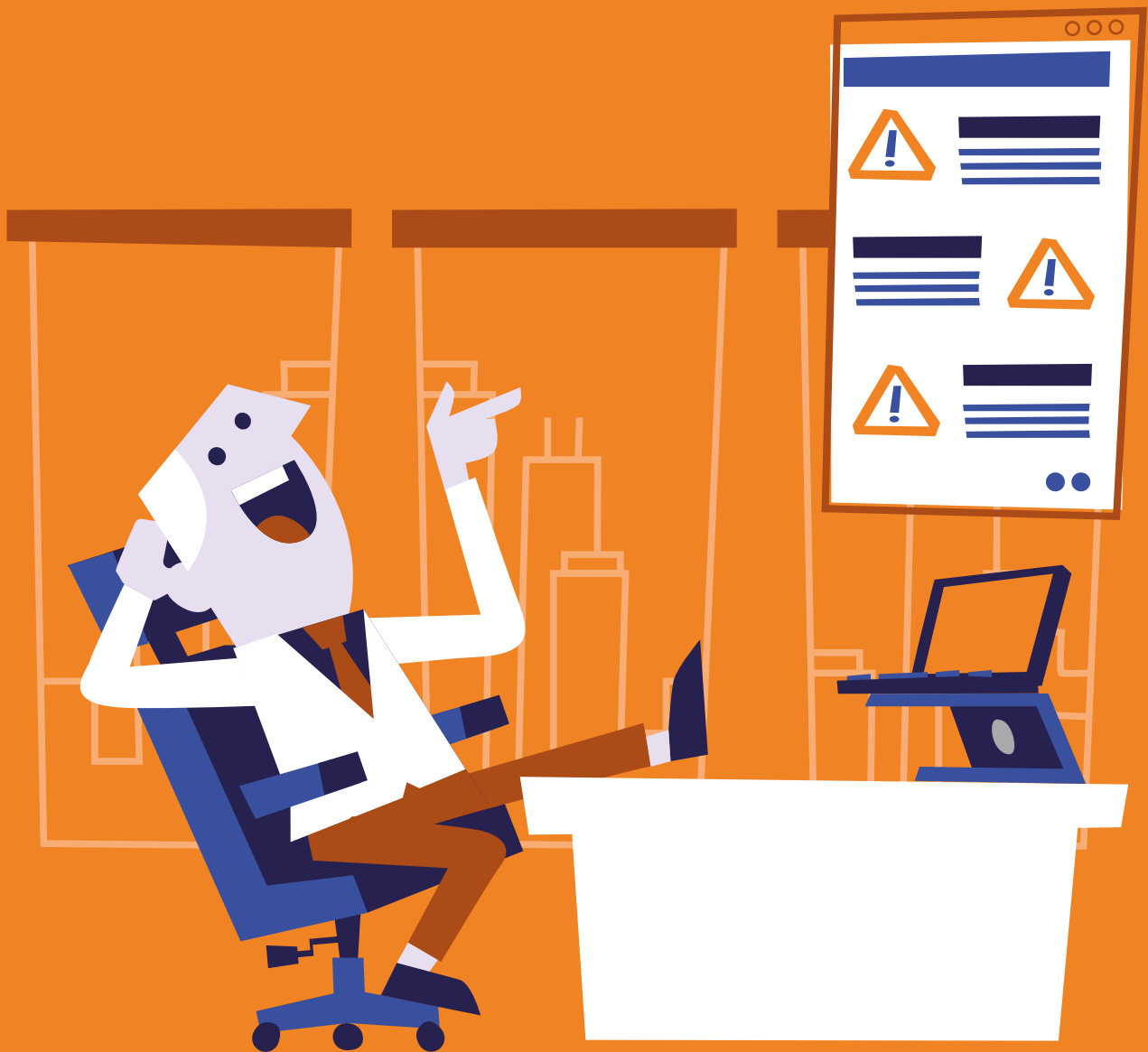


# 5 things we can learn from external communication.

Internal communication will never be the same again



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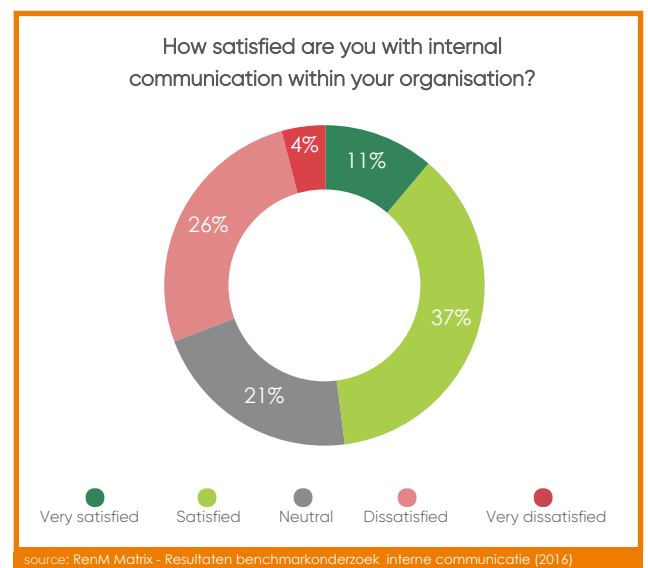
## Introduction

Internal communications is currently not in an ideal state. Practices often consist of brief messages on the intranet, or long pieces of text via e-mail. Think about what is being communicated; often it's not a small update, internal communications is responsible for explaining significant new strategies and changes that can turn the entire company around.

### Is it not important to communicate clearly internally?

Absolutely it is! If your colleagues do not understand what they need to do and why they need to do it, then why will they change their behaviour? Think about your end goal; it's likely that in some shape or form, you are trying to get your employees to change their behaviour. Whether it be using a new digital system, becoming more innovative, or perhaps just motivating them. If employees understand exactly what you're communicating, it will save you countless hours in the longer term.

However, it's not always bad. Some organisations do take internal communications very seriously. What do they do differently? Well, to put it simply, they treat internal communication as they would external communication. Do you expect that if you send a single e-mail to a customer, they will immediately buy three of your products? Of course not. In order to convince the customer, entire campaigns are set up to take the customer on a carefully designed journey. So if we don't expect customers to be convinced after one email, why would it be different for employees?



So how can we tackle internal communications with an external perspective? These are the five things we can learn from external communications!





## Who do you tell this story to?

Internally, we often share a project as one story: This is what will change, this is the new system and so on. The same story goes to employees in the office, in the factory and people working out in the field. Each of these groups are likely to experience something completely different, or have to do something completely different. However, because only one general story is spread, it becomes very difficult for these groups to truly resonate with the message being communicated, making it seem less relevant.

How is this challenge overcome in the advertising world? Before any commercial is produced or broadcasted, advertisers always conduct research on their target audience. They need to learn who they are speaking to, what they think of the subject and what are the struggles they deal with on a regular basis. Advertisers will even test which message is the most effective to facilitate understanding from the target audience. Based on these research findings, they can determine what needs to be said to the target group and how they can say it best. A good example would be the ads from BeterHoren for the elderly which are quiet and subtle, as opposed to the ads from Tele2 targeted at young people which are very loud and 'busy'.

So, what can you learn from these observations? Target group research is always good, but firstly it's important to see who you are going to address and what they will notice about your project. Generally, there is almost always one question from employees: "What does this mean for me?" The answer to that is a complex one; the answer will be completely different for office employees than for those at the factory. Do you want to go one step further? Go directly to the target group! Find out how they are doing, what they are doing and what they think of the project. Then your communication will appeal to the target group much more effectively and they will immediately understand why it is important to them.



"...First look at who you are addressing and what they will notice about your project."





## Use of language

If something simple changes, internal communication is probably also simple. For example: "Coffee is available in the canteen from Monday morning". Simple change, simple message. But internal changes can often be very complex, particularly in large organisations or those with very technical processes or products. Higher management thinks broadly, because their plans are for the entire company. That's why they often use vague, abstract terms that describe the entire company. A typical internal communications announcement may end up sounding something like: "We want to create a vital organisation in which innovation and decisiveness are paramount". It does sound great, but where do employees get started with this change?

Such terms are so vague that everyone interprets them differently. As a result, misunderstandings quickly arise and nobody actually knows what is expected of them. Often it's simply left up to the mid-level managers to translate, which is not always possible.

External communication does the complete opposite. The more concrete the better! Recognisable situations are outlined: "Does this also bother you?...Then use this now"! Topics are immediately more clear, and the target group knows when it matters and can identify with the situation and the problem. This allows them to better understand what is expected of them; no misunderstanding possible.

Naturally, internal changes can often not be summarised completely in one "this" and one "which". There are a lot of finer details, but "the more concrete, the better" is still relevant. So, to get the message across, try to give a few examples; make it easier for your target group to get a picture of your story. Additionally, examples also make it easier for managers to translate what this means for their team members.

...the target group knows when it matters and can identify with the situation and the problem.

**clarity**

**Pollen in de lucht?**

**Pollinosan neusspray**

- 100% natuurlijk
- Langdurig te gebruiken



## How much do you tell?

You probably have a lot to explain. There's a lot of work involved in internal projects. Months, years or even decades! So if you share everything that needs to be done, everyone will understand and know what to expect, right? Unfortunately, long walls of text are not very fascinating. People will lose interest and not read the full story. Put yourself in their shoes; if you don't know why this long message is relevant, why would you spend so much time reading it? For example, little happens with well-intended intranet posts or well thought-out emails.

Take yet another example from the world of advertising: keep it sweet and simple. 15-second spots and posters with one clear slogan. Only after the first trigger will there be more details, such as prices and conditions. The well-known "click here for more info". But remember, even after that click it still remains short and to the point. Each step of the customer journey has been carefully formulated to be as effortless for the customer as possible: What do they want to know? What information do they need here? Only once a customer is truly interested will they take the time to watch longer videos or read more information.

There's often more to tell internally than just a 15 second clip or a single slogan. But the principle remains the same; short and sharp. Try to only include information that is absolutely necessary, and create a place where people can go for more information.

It's also a good idea to limit yourself to one main message. Ask yourself; what should be the lasting message? You can then substantiate this with a few different arguments. An important part of that one message should be the call to action. Within external communication, it's always clear what they want from you; Buy Now! Consider what action you expect from your colleagues and work towards it.





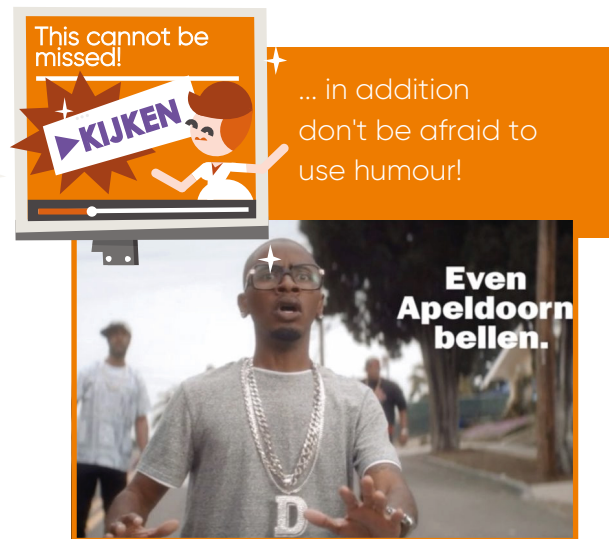
## Attention

Yet again, those long emails and intranet posts are not conducive to maintain the attention of your target audience. Often they are shared with the idea that simply because employees work for the company, they will read it. This expectation is simply unrealistic. Many managers will receive between 50 and 100 emails per day. This doesn't exactly leave them with much time to read a lengthy generic message that doesn't appeal to them in any way.

Within external communication, everything is pulled out to stand out. First of all, it is almost always visually appealing. Videos are used in place of text because they have a 75% higher chance of being viewed than a long piece of text, and the most beautiful images are curated to attract the most attention online and offline. Just think of all the beautiful celebrities used during television advertisements, no wonder they get so much attention! In the end, it all comes down to looking carefully at what the target group is interested in and responding to it.

Humour is also a common tool used to grab an audience's attention. A perfect example is the "Even Apeldoorn calls" advertisements from the Netherlands. Such a serious subject as insurance is beautifully exaggerated in absurd situations. The slogan was so popular that it even became a common thing to say in conversations outside of commercials! Humour can be extremely potent and last a long time in the minds of viewers, and of creates an incentive for people to share your message with others.

What can internal communication learn from this? Well, adding a photo or illustration can go a long way. Consider what employees are interested in, why do they work for your organisation? What would they be proud of? And of course, don't be afraid to add appropriate amounts of humour. You may think that this will lead to the audience not taking your message seriously, but it's quite the contrary. As shown by Apeldoorn, a little bit of humour can make your message go a long way!





## Campaigns

Lesson five again! We're all about repetition; often internal projects will be shared once, maybe twice. But then a month later, people are busy with something else again. Half a year later, a project that took a lot of time and effort is completely forgotten. What a waste.

In the world of advertising, they do...well, we don't have to explain that, we can just show you. Think of these sentences; "Just do it" or "think different". They don't even have a single product or brand name in them, yet they are instantly recognisable. Why? Because of repetition! This cannot simply be achieved with repetition on one channel, you need to use a combination of different media; both online and offline. Think of posters, banners, billboards, commercials, social media, everything the target group sees.

And that is precisely where internal communication has a significant lesson to learn. Repeat your message on as many channels as the target audience is exposed to! That means using more channels than just email and the intranet. Think of new ways to reach your audience; maybe there is space next to the coffee machine or the bathrooms. Why not? You're usually not doing much there.

Do you want more? Perhaps you can divide information amongst the various resources available to you. For example, a video works great to introduce a subject. You can then use infographics to give more detailed instructions and posters to repeat your most important message until the your target audience has it imprinted in their mind! A multi channel approach will enable you to connect with your target audience on a much deeper level.



...to make sure that a message gets stuck, you need repetition.







## Conclusion

As you can see, involving customers and encouraging action is now both a science and an art. It's about time that we all do the same with internal communication. We must stop seeing the difference between internal and external communication. We have to handle internal communication just like external communication.

So what have we actually learned from external communication?

- Think like your target audience
- Keep it concrete: Use recognisable examples
- Keep it short
- Get attention: Use images and humour
- Repeat, repeat, repeat!

Yes, investment will have to be made. But at least you can ensure that you employees will know exactly what they need to do, and get more involved. The upfront investment will pay significant dividends in the long run both in financial and time savings.

### To be continued!

Now that we are taking it seriously, we must also learn what works and what doesn't. That means measuring the results of our communication and seeing what impact it is having internally. Because only then can we prove that employee understanding or involvement is actually improving.



# About Funk-e

Once upon a time...

Two international business students from Erasmus University were completely done with it. Why did all the presentations and videos in the business world have to be so vague and boring? The neat suits were exchanged with jeans and t-shirts. They connected with a few creatives from the Rotterdam Art Academy, and Funk-e was born.

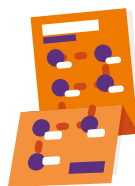
Since then we have helped hundreds of companies with more than 5,000 super clear productions! We no longer make just animations, we also produce infographics, posters and much more to make even the most complicated topics crystal clear. But no matter how much we do and how far we progress, the original drive for clarity and a sense of humour remains.

## Conquering the world together!

How can we do that? Well, that's quite simple; together! We form a team of creative and business people. Art directors, explainers (that's what we call copywriters), account managers, marketing managers, consultants, project managers and developers. By combining our skills with those of our customers, we get the necessary insights to make the most effective and intuitive products to make your lives easier.



animations



infographics



add-ons



campaigns

Interested in applying an external lens  
to your internal communication? We're  
happy to help!

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