



Internal Communication Playbook for HR Teams

What's inside:

- practical framework,
- ready-to-use templates,
- and a quick audit tool to transform how your organization communicates from broadcasting into noise to driving real engagement.

HR GUIDE

About MELP

MELP is an **employee engagement platform** designed to help HR teams and managers strengthen everyday habits that drive engagement – especially feedback, recognition, and employee communication. It supports ongoing listening and two-way communication (for example, via pulse surveys), helps reinforce positive behavior through recognition, and is designed to reach all employees with mobile-friendly access (important for frontline, hybrid, and remote teams).

This playbook is platform-agnostic. You can apply it whether you use MELP or not. When relevant, you'll see a few light "how this could look in MELP" notes throughout the guide.

How to Use This Playbook

Use this playbook in two ways:

- **As a diagnostic:** Identify where your current internal comms lose employees (Reality Check section).
- **As a toolkit:** Apply the framework and templates to rewrite your next announcement or campaign within 20–30 minutes, then run the audit to improve continuously.

Internal Communication Reality Check

Why Employees Ignore Internal Messages

Employees ignore internal messages for predictable, research-backed reasons. Understanding these patterns is the first step to fixing them.

Information Overload

Many employees feel they receive an excessive volume of organizational communication, and trends show that volume is not decreasing, creating a constant "signal vs. noise" problem where even good messages get buried.

Scanning, Not Reading

Eye-tracking research in UX shows people typically do not read word-by-word online; they scan for what seems relevant and actionable. Most internal comms are consumed on screens, often between tasks.

Unclear Expectations

A foundational driver of engagement is whether employees know what is expected of them. When messages are vague ("FYI," "please review," "important update"), employees can't translate information into action, so they defer and often never return.

One-Way Broadcasting

Engagement improves when communication becomes meaningful two-way dialogue, where people can ask, challenge, and contribute, and where leaders and managers visibly listen and respond.

Trust & Psychological Safety

Employees are more likely to speak up and engage when they feel safe to do so (psychological safety) and when the organization demonstrates integrity, not "say-do gap."

The Five Most Common Mistakes That Kill Engagement

These mistakes show up across HR announcements, benefits updates, policy notices, and change communications. Recognizing them is the fastest path to improvement.



Too Much "FYI"

When HR messages compete with "everything else," employees stop trying to keep up. Overload emerges when volume and complexity exceed people's processing capacity, reducing decision quality and attention.



Sender's Perspective

If employees can't quickly answer "Does this affect me?" and "What do I need to do?", they move on. Self-Determination Theory shows people engage more when communication supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness.



Not Designed for Scanning

Big blocks of text, buried CTAs, and jargon-heavy writing fight against how people read on screens. Plain language guidance recommends shorter sections, active voice, and clear "who does what" wording.



No Conversation Loop

Employees are asked to accept, comply, or participate, but aren't given a clear path to ask questions, give feedback, or influence outcomes. Two-way communication requires leaders to listen and act on voice, not only collect it.



Managers Not Equipped

Large-scale data shows managers are a major driver of engagement levels. When managers are engaged and aligned, employees are more likely to be engaged. If managers aren't briefed, the message loses credibility and momentum.

The HEART Framework

This playbook uses one simple structure you can apply to most HR and internal comms messages, especially those where you need employees to **do** something (read, sign up, attend, complete, or change behavior). It aligns with scanning behavior, motivation psychology, and behavioral design principles that make action more likely.

Headline → Empathy → Action → Reinforcement → Two-way loop

HEART: Breaking Down Each Element

1

Headline

Make relevance obvious in 3 seconds. Must contain: who it's for, what's changing, or what to do by when.

2

Empathy

Reduce resistance. Answer: What problem are we solving? What changes for employees? What stays the same?

3

Action

Make the desired behavior easy, concrete, and immediate. What exactly? How long? By when? Where to click?

4

Reinforcement

Help the message survive the real workplace. "Less but better" beats "more and forgettable." Use managers as amplifiers.

5

Two-Way Loop

Turn communication into participation. Every high-impact message needs a safe channel for questions, input, and visible follow-through.

HEART in Depth: Headline & Empathy

Headline: Make Relevance Obvious

The headline must contain at least one of these: **who it's for, what's changing, or what you need to do by when** because people scan first and decide fast. Write in plain language. Avoid internal jargon and "marketese," which UX research shows adds cognitive burden and reduces usability.

Strong headline examples:

- "Action required: Choose your 2026 benefits by Friday"
- "New hybrid policy: What changes for managers and employees"
- "2-minute pulse: Tell us what would make onboarding smoother"

Empathy: Reduce Resistance

Empathy here doesn't mean being emotional. It means answering clearly: What problem are we solving? What does this change for employees? What stays the same?

This supports autonomy and competence – two psychological needs linked to higher-quality motivation and engagement (Self-Determination Theory).

A useful two-sentence formula:

"We know [context / pain point]. This update is designed to [benefit / fairness / clarity], so you can [practical outcome]."

HEART in Depth: Action & Reinforcement

Action: Make It Easy and Concrete

High-performing internal messages make the action step unmistakable: What exactly should the employee do? How long will it take? By when? Where do they click or go? What happens after? The **Fogg Behavior Model** explains that behavior happens when motivation, ability, and a prompt converge. Your message is the prompt, but your job is also to increase ability by reducing friction.

The **EAST framework** (Behavioral Insights) reinforces this: make actions **Easy, Attractive, Social, and Timely** to increase uptake.

Reinforcement: Help the Message Survive

Because employees are "deluged with content," leaders must choose key messages carefully, simplify, and reinforce through the moments that matter, especially via managers. "Less but better" beats "more and forgettable."

Reinforcement tools that don't feel like spam:

- A manager talking point (30 seconds in a team huddle)
- A single reminder with new value (FAQ answered, deadline clarified)
- A visible "why" narrative tied to purpose

HEART in Depth: The Two-Way Loop

Two-way internal communication, where employees can respond, contribute, and see follow-through, is repeatedly emphasized as central to engagement and trust. Employee voice research also warns that silence increases when employees believe speaking up has costs and few benefits.

Every high-impact message should include at least one of the following: a place to ask questions, a way to give input, or a visible "You said, we did" follow-up.

Ask Questions

Open Q&A doc, dedicated mailbox, or scheduled office hours where employees can safely raise concerns.

Give Input

Micro-poll, pulse survey, or comment channel that makes participation quick and low-effort.

Visible Follow-Through

A "You said, we did" update that closes the loop and demonstrates that listening leads to action.

- ❏ **MELP note:** If you use [MELP](#), a pulse survey can operationalize the two-way loop – quick feedback plus visible follow-through in one place.

Practical Examples: Effective vs. Ineffective Rewrites

The Fast Rewrite Method

When rewriting any internal message:

1. Remove everything that is "nice to know."
2. Then rebuild using HEART.
3. Finally, format for scanning (short sections, line breaks, clear CTA).

This aligns with proven guidance on web/screen reading and plain language clarity.

✗ Ineffective (Common Pattern)

"Please be informed that the company policy has been updated. Review the document attached. Let us know if you have any questions."

Why it fails: Unclear relevance, unclear action, high friction, invites silence. Employees can't answer "Does this affect me?" or "What do I do next?"

✓ Effective (HEART Rewrite)

- **Headline:** "Policy update (5 min): New expense rules starting May 1"
- **Empathy:** "We're simplifying approvals and clarifying what counts as reimbursable to reduce back-and-forth and delays."
- **Action:** "(1) Read the 5 key changes below (2 min). (2) If you submit expenses, bookmark the updated policy page."
- **Reinforcement:** "Managers: please mention this in your next team check-in if your team travels or meets clients."
- **Two-way loop:** "Questions? Reply in the Q&A doc by Thursday. We'll publish answers on Friday."

Template: Benefits Enrollment Campaign

This template uses "Easy + Timely" principles (simple steps + deadline) and reduces procrastination by lowering effort and increasing clarity. Copy-ready for your next enrollment cycle.

1

Headline

"Action required: Choose your 2026 benefits by Friday (10 minutes)"

2

Empathy

"We know benefits decision-making is easy to postpone. This year we've made the selection flow shorter, and you can preview costs in one place."

3

Action

"(1) Open the selection page: [link]. (2) Choose your plan (or confirm 'no changes'). (3) Submit by Friday 17:00."

4

Reinforcement

"Most employees finish in under 10 minutes. If you want help, join the 20-minute Q&A session on Wednesday." (Social proof reduces hesitation.)

5

Two-Way Loop

"What would make benefits clearer next year? Answer one question here: [micro-poll link]."

📌 **MELP note:** Recognition can reinforce desired behavior by celebrating teams with high completion rates (without shaming), strengthening positive norms.

Template: The HR Announcement Employees Actually Read

Use this for: new program launches, tool rollouts, deadlines, surveys, training, updated processes. This format matches plain-language guidance (short sections, clear responsibilities) and respects scanning behavior.

1

Subject / Headline

"[Action or impact] + [who it affects] + [by when]"

2

What's Happening (1 sentence)

"Starting [date], [change]."

3

Why It Matters (2 sentences, employee lens)

"This matters because [practical impact]. We're doing this to [benefit / fairness / clarity]."

4

What You Need to Do (3 lines max)

"Do: [single action] | Time: [how long] | Deadline: [date/time]"

5

Support (Reduce Friction)

"Need help? [link / office hours / steps / owner name]."

6

Two-Way Loop

"Have a question or concern? [Q&A link]. We'll respond by [date]."

Template: Manager Talking Points & "You Said, We Did"

Managers are an engagement multiplier: large-scale engagement research shows the manager relationship is central to engagement variance, and internal communication guidance consistently flags "engaging managers" as a core enabler. Use these templates to equip them every time.

60-Second Manager Brief

01

"Here's the headline: [one sentence]."

02

"Why it matters for our team: [one sentence]."

03

"What I need from you: [one sentence action + deadline]."

04

"If you're unsure or disagree: [where to raise questions safely]."

05

"I'll follow up when we have answers / next steps: [date]."

"You Said, We Did" Follow-Up

Employee voice only builds trust when it leads to visible action; otherwise it can increase silence and skepticism.

Copy-ready follow-up:

- **You said:** [top 2–3 themes]
- **We did:** [actions taken]
- **What's next:** [next step + timing]
- **What we can't change (yet):** [honest constraint + why]
- **Keep telling us:** [next feedback channel]

Quick Internal Communication Audit

Score each item 0 (no), 1 (partly), 2 (yes). Total out of 20. Use this audit after every major communication to continuously improve your approach.

#	Dimension	Audit Question
1	Clarity	Is the headline action- or impact-based (not "FYI")?
2	Relevance	Does the message clearly say who it affects and how?
3	Scanning	Is the message readable in under 30 seconds (short sections, not walls of text)?
4	Action	Is there one obvious next step, plus time and deadline?
5	Effort	Is the action genuinely easy (few clicks, minimal friction)?
6	Two-Way Loop	Is there a safe channel for questions/input – and a plan to respond?
7	Manager Enablement	Did managers get talking points before or at the same time?
8	Integrity	Does the message avoid overpromising and acknowledge what's unknown?
9	Measurement	Are you tracking outputs AND behavioral outcomes (not only opens)?
10	Reinforcement Plan	Is there a single, intentional reinforcement moment planned?

Interpreting Your Audit Score

0–9: Broadcasting Into Noise

You're broadcasting into noise. Reduce volume and rebuild structure from the ground up using the HEART framework. Prioritize clarity and one clear action per message before anything else.

10–15: Good Intent, Inconsistent

Good intent but inconsistent execution. Prioritize HEART rewrites and manager briefs. Standardize your templates so every message meets a minimum quality bar.

16–20: Strong Structure

Strong structure in place. Optimize with measurement and consistency. Focus on tracking behavioral outcomes (not just open rates) and building a repeatable reinforcement cadence.

Five Practical Actions to Implement Immediately

1 Create a Message Hierarchy

Reduce noise by defining tiers: **critical action / important update / optional culture**. This directly addresses overload and improves signal quality so employees know what actually demands their attention.

2 Standardize HR Messages Using HEART

Consistency reduces cognitive load for employees ("I know where to look for the action") and improves clarity across all HR communications – from policy updates to benefits campaigns.

3 Equip Managers with 60-Second Talking Points

This is one of the fastest ways to improve uptake because managers are central to engagement and local trust. Brief them before or at the same time as the broader message goes out.

4 Build a Real Two-Way Loop

Questions + answers + visible actions. Voice mechanisms only work when employees see listening and response, otherwise silence increases and trust erodes over time.

5 Measure What Matters

Align measurement with objectives and move beyond surface metrics (open rates) toward **behavior and impact**: Did employees complete the action? Did behavior change? Did participation increase?

Book a Call

If you want to improve internal communication with a practical system (not just nicer emails) we can help you map your internal comms, reduce noise, and implement a repeatable engagement structure.

We'll also help you build stronger listening loops through tools like pulse surveys and two-way communication.

This is a no-obligation, practical consultation focused on your specific communication challenges and team structure. Whether you use MELP or another platform, the framework applies.

[Book a Call](#)

What We'll Cover

- Map your current internal comms structure
- Identify where messages lose employees
- Implement HEART across your key channels
- Build manager enablement habits
- Set up listening loops and measurement