

WHITE PAPER

Frontline Work Internal Communication Trends 2024



"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

George Bernard Shaw

Frontline workers form an essential part of the talent pool in any organization. They're instrumental in carrying out different operational processes, improving products and services, and navigating growth. It's these individuals who interact with end-customers regularly and thus know the on-field realities best. Therefore, ensuring precise and consistent two-way internal communication is critical to ensure they:

-  **Handle various customer queries efficiently**
-  **Provide accurate information**
-  **Maintain a consistent brand image**
-  **Relay customer interaction feedback to higher management**

However, despite the influence of effective internal communications on frontline productivity, efficiency, and organizational growth, a gap is widely prevalent.

Data suggests that 74% of employees miss crucial company-related information and news.

Furthermore, only 21% of internal communicators believe employees understand why their senior leaders make certain decisions. Such differences are more pronounced in the frontline workforce, who tend to be on the move in their daily operational flow. This ultimately results in misunderstandings, reduced productivity, ineffective collaboration, and a flagging employee experience - collectively derailing business growth.

This white paper takes a closer look at the current situation of internal communication for the frontline workforce and strives to introduce decision-makers to critical trends shaping successful internal communications.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Current situation of frontline workers and internal communication	5
Trends that are shaping the future of internal communications for frontline employees	7
• Trend 1: A preference for an asynchronous style of communication	7
• Trend 2: AI, AI and once again AI	9
• Trend 3: Rise of the FRONTLINE Employee Experience (EX) and Employee Experience Platforms	11
• Trend 4: Emphasis on employee self-service	15
Ensuring effective frontline internal communication is a success strategy	18



CURRENT SITUATION OF FRONTLINE WORKERS AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Today, there is a gap in internal communication efficiency and effectiveness when communicating with frontline employees.

- According to a survey, 40% of frontline employees feel their managers are out of touch. 42% believe communication from their managers is often irrelevant. 30% also think that internal communication gets in the way of their work.
- 53% of global frontline workers confirm using messaging apps like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and GroupMe for work-related communications up to six times daily.
- 16% say their HR departments are unaware of such usage for work purposes.
- 30% of frontline workers confirm that the 24/7 nature of messaging apps and social media sites is making it difficult to maintain a work/personal life balance.
- 12% are also concerned that sensitive data could be left exposed and become susceptible to data breaches
- Interestingly, 68% of frontline workers in the same study also go on to suggest they're keen to stop using these currently popular mechanisms if their companies provided an alternate, dedicated internal communications platform.





Takeaway:

A standard cookie-cutter approach to internal communications is the largely prevalent scenario. As leaders and internal communicators, it is time to realize the need for changing that. Frontline employees work in a deskless environment.

They may operate in the field or travel frequently to carry out their roles. Hence, internal communications such as emails that otherwise work in a typical corporate structure are not the ideal fit for them due to their nature of work. At the same time, ensuring smoother two-way communication with them is vital to organizational success - after all, they're closest to end customers.

Moreover, there's also a need to restructure the internal communication process and toolkit for frontline workers. Though widespread, their reliance on social media for work communications isn't ideal. It can compromise digital well-being, data security, and regulatory compliance. It may also lead to companies in regulated industries failing audits, even without breaches. Additionally, it impacts work-life balance, reducing overall output and job satisfaction. For these reasons, it's clear there is widespread disillusionment with the current frontline internal communication processes and a willingness to embrace a more intelligent alternative.

With these facts about the status quo, let's dive into the emerging trends and best practices to elevate frontline internal communication outcomes.



TRENDS THAT ARE SHAPING THE FUTURE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS FOR FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES

TREND 1

A preference for an asynchronous style of communication

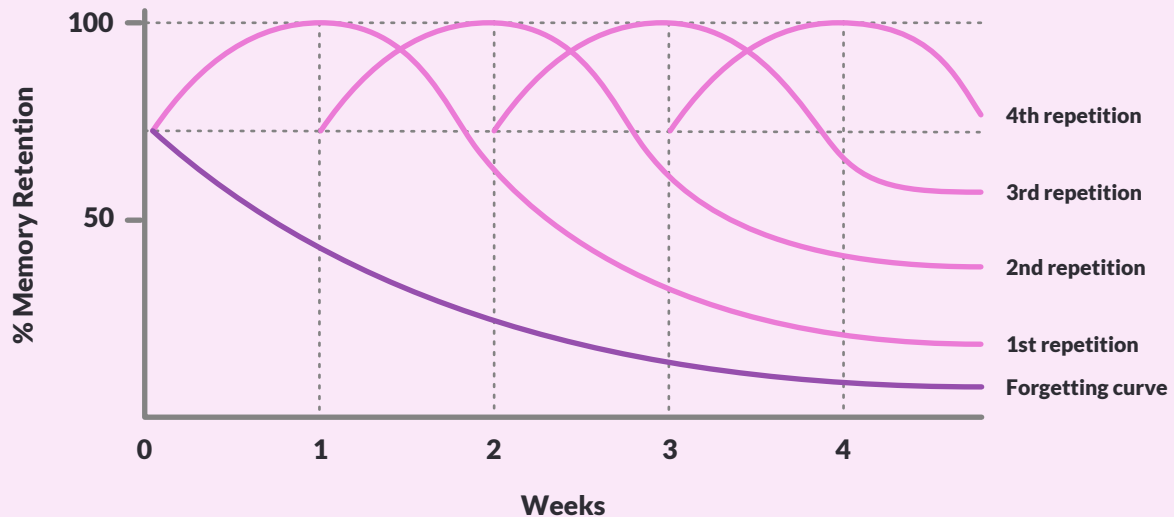
Of course many frontline workers consume information asynchronously given the 24/7 nature of their work. But we also know that frontline teams in particular still have regular stand ups with their teams ahead of a shift. For many, this is the only interaction they have with their leaders or to discuss items that don't necessarily impact their immediate to-dos. There is a challenge here of course with messaging becoming diluted over time – it's like taking a copy of a copy of a copy. Eventually the content begins to degrade.

We also know about the Curve of Forgetting, which is well established research from academia which describes the alarming rate at which we forget information in a short amount of time. Within 24 hours of hearing new information, if we don't review it or think about it again, we lose 50% - 80%. Within a month, we're lucky to remember 2% of the information.



Curve of Forgetting

For newly learned information



So a lot of companies are embracing asynchronous communication to reinforce key points from things like standups or company all-hands. Using Journeys within Speakap as an example, companies can send a specific Journey to team members an hour or two after the meeting and have them review, in step by step, digestible chunks, the key points. This is great for change management and general knowledge retention, but respects the fact that our frontline employees have other responsibilities and can take the time to review this information when it's most suitable for them.

TREND 2

AI, AI and once again AI

-  **72% of decision-makers agree that AI can enable humans to focus on more meaningful work.**
-  **83% of companies consider using AI in their strategy to be a high priority.**
-  **More than 80% of employees say AI improves their productivity.**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a buzzword in recent years, and for good reason. It has the potential to revolutionize the way we create and communicate. With a focus on faster and more efficient creation of communications, AI can streamline the process and save valuable time and resources. Whether it's writing emails, drafting reports, or crafting social media posts, AI tools can generate content with remarkable speed and accuracy. This allows individuals and businesses to tackle more tasks in less time, ultimately increasing productivity and effectiveness.

Another benefit of AI in internal communication is personalized messaging. AI-powered platforms can analyze data and provide personalized messages to frontline workers based on their specific roles, responsibilities, and preferences. This not only helps in delivering targeted information but also creates a sense of belonging and importance among frontline employees.

In addition to text-based communications, AI can also play a role in enhancing visual content through the use of AI-generated images. These images can be created based on specific criteria or styles, allowing one to have access to a wide range of visuals without the need for extensive photo shoots or graphic design work. This not only saves time and resources but also opens up new creative possibilities by providing a vast library of AI-generated images that can be customized to suit specific communication needs.

While AI offers numerous benefits in the realm of communications, there are also ethical and compliance concerns that need to be considered.

As AI algorithms become more sophisticated, there is a risk that they may inadvertently produce biased or discriminatory content. It is crucial for developers and users of AI tools to ensure that these systems are trained on diverse datasets and regularly monitored to minimize any unintended biases. Additionally, privacy concerns must be addressed when using AI for communication purposes, as personal data may be collected or shared without proper consent.



↗ TREND 3

Rise of the FRONTLINE Employee Experience (EX) and Employee Experience Platforms

66

In today's world, the Employee Experience has ascended to unprecedented importance. This is especially true for our frontline employees - the heart and pulse of businesses. As our workplaces evolve, so does our recognition that our most valuable assets are the people who stand at the forefront, representing our values and delivering our promises to customers.

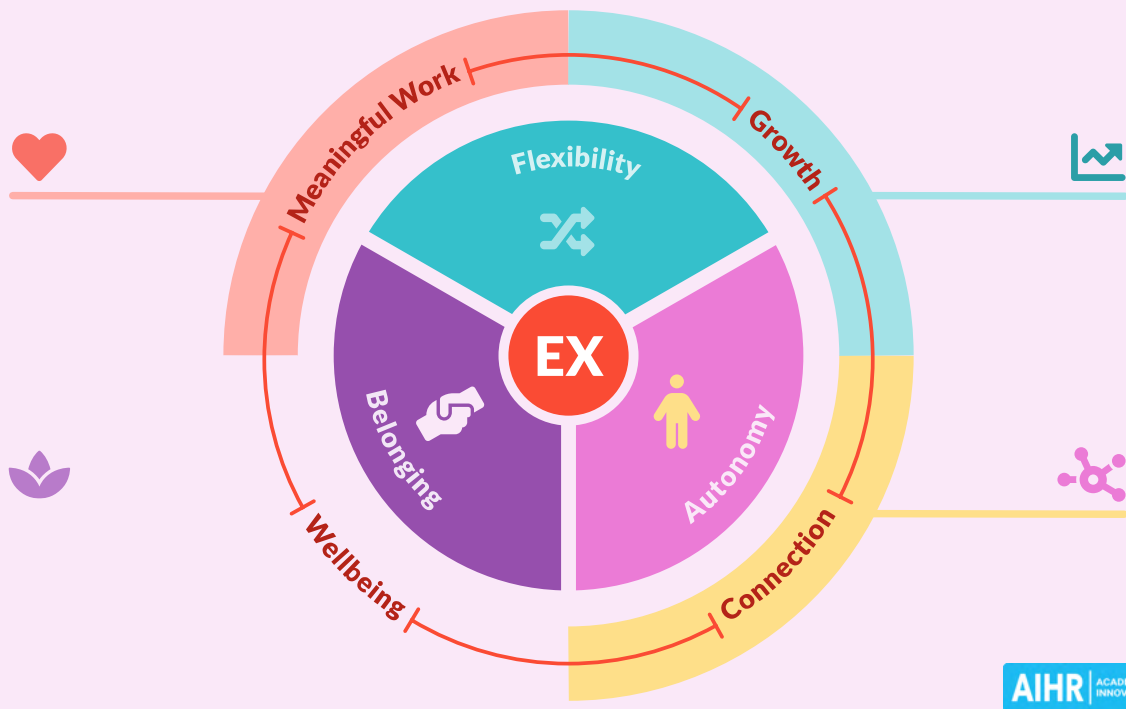


Patrick van der Mijl, CEO & Founder at Speakap

It is clear that the approach to employee experience especially for frontline employees demands urgent attention. Thus, the emergence of a new, more modern model of frontline employee experience at the core of which are three principles: autonomy, flexibility, and a sense of belonging.



Frontline Employee Experience Model



READ MORE: **THE RISE OF EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE FOR FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES: WHY & WHAT'S NEXT**

Solution? Employee Experience Platforms

It's important to remember the history of all the internal communications tools and employee engagement initiatives that really started picking up steam in the last 10-15 years. The benefits of having an informed and engaged workforce are so well documented that it's hardly worth mentioning any longer.

But neither companies themselves nor the employee engagement industry – talking about software vendors and consultants here – have really managed to truly focus on moving the engagement needle at scale.

Sure you hear about success stories here and there but the reality is that having an engaged workforce takes a lot of work, and yes, money. And if you consider the landscape of tech startups since the 2000s and 2010s, it was so easy for founders to create companies and get funding for them that did just one thing well (or good enough). This era is the age of “best in breed” software. Best in breed chat tool, best in breed recognition tool, best in breed communications tool, best in breed survey tool and so on.

While this wasn’t a bad thing - at least to start - it never was able to fully address the issue of employee engagement because best in breed meant that companies had to buy lots of software. That’s lots of vendors to assess, set up accounts payable systems, just generally manage the relationship. And that’s not saying anything about the change management required to introduce yet another tool with the ostensible goal of improving the experience for employees.

So the fundamental failure of all these best in breed solutions is that no single solution (or very small group) could realistically address the holistic nature of actually engaging one’s workforce. Companies didn’t have the time or budget to get all the tools in place, employees couldn’t possibly be expected to use 12, 15, 20 tools, and software itself isn’t a panacea – it just can’t solve this problem without true partnership by the people who purchased it in the first place. Which is why we haven’t seen a dramatic improvement in engagement numbers since it started being tracked by Gallup and others. Employee Experience Platforms is the industry’s response to this dilemma.



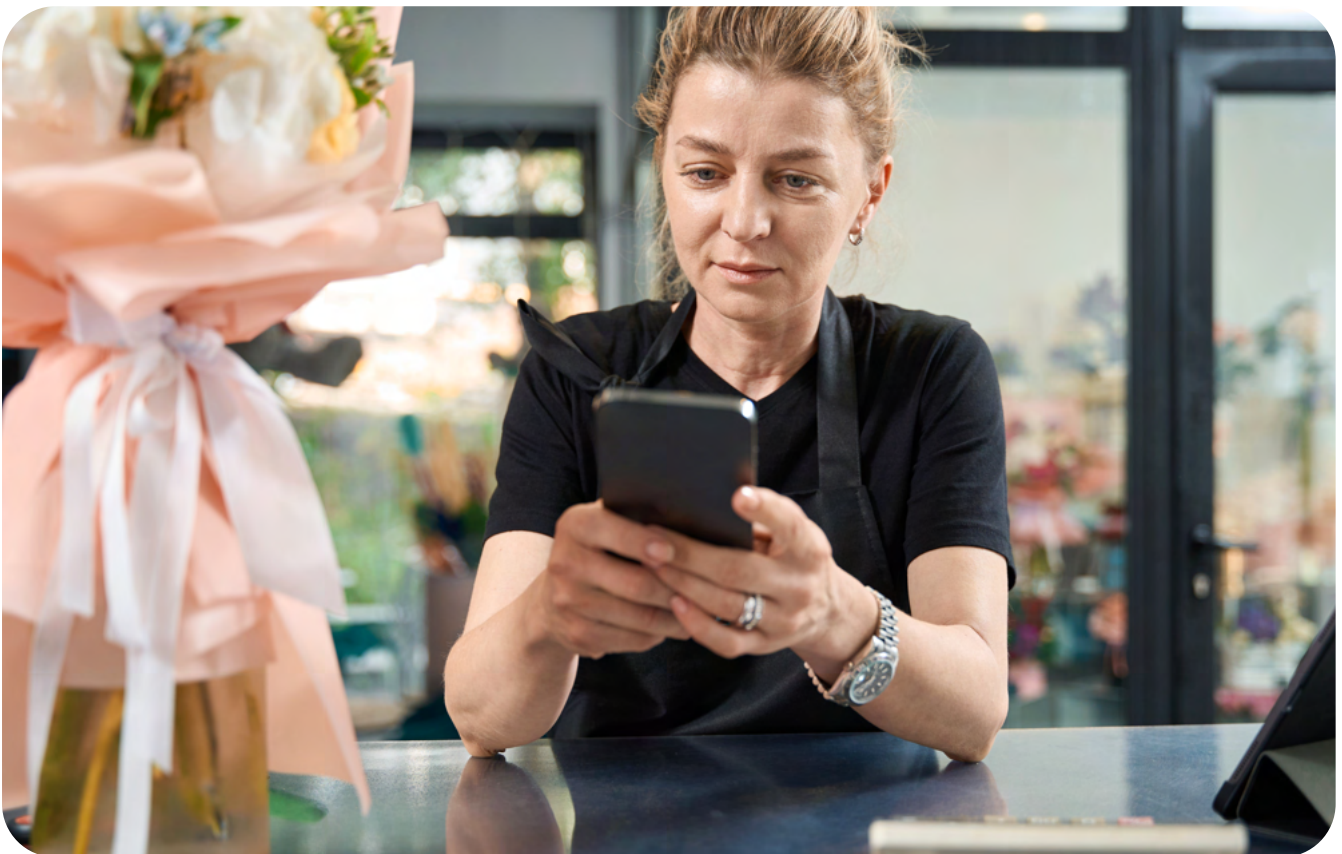
66

The market demand is shifting from best in breed to end-to-end solutions. Companies simply don't want a tool that does one thing really well, especially in a challenge as complex as employee engagement.



Daren Jennings, CCO & Managing Director at Speakap

They're looking for a solution that has end-to-end support for their employees' experience from hiring, onboarding, daily communications, operational work like managing tasks and shifts, supporting transition on things like career growth and organizational change, supporting learning & development, pulse metrics and surveys, and even offboarding.



TREND 4

Emphasis on employee self-service

Internal communicators are increasingly championing a shift towards greater self-service technology adoption among frontline employees, recognizing the potential for efficiency gains in various communication needs. This includes leveraging tools rich in information to enable workers to swiftly access necessary information with minimal time and effort.

This trend finds meaningful applications in streamlining and expediting processes such as leave applications, updating/changing employee information, viewing pay stubs, and granting permissions/approvals for on-the-job tasks. The integration of automated chat for addressing commonly asked employee queries not only accelerates communication but also provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by frontline workers.

However...

Within the context of EXP, while the notion of a single, all-encompassing solution remains the ultimate goal, it's essential to acknowledge the current reality — the journey toward this nirvana is ongoing and may prove elusive. Realistically, achieving a one-size-fits-all solution is improbable (if not entirely impossible), making integrations a crucial component of any organizational communication strategy for the foreseeable future, ensuring adaptability and efficiency in the evolving landscape of communication technologies.



BEST PRACTICES GOING FORWARD

To thrive in the evolving landscape of communication trends, it's imperative to recognize the necessity of frequent and varied posts. As demographic shifts unfold, from the dread of Millennials to the rise of Gen Z, and the anticipation of future generations, the common thread is their tech-native status and affinity for consuming substantial amounts of short-form content. A 2-page newsletter or infrequent long articles risk losing the audience's attention. Embracing the democratization of posting is key; relying solely on the internal communication (IC) department, no matter how beloved, lacks the impact of a diverse range of contributors. Therefore, expanding governance to empower more individuals, even at the team level, fosters authenticity and trust.

Aligning with emerging trends, implementing best practices amplifies accessibility and results:

- Creating distinct channels for different types of communication, such as urgent updates, general information, or social interactions, to strike a balance between asynchronous and immediate communication.
- Implementing realistic response-time related principles. This ensures frontline workers can schedule their responses conveniently within a stipulated time. Alerts can be sent if they miss responding in time.
- Scheduling internal communication at times when it is most likely to be read.



- Leveraging visual communication wherever applicable for quicker understanding and higher engagement.
- Encouraging DEI vocabulary and using inclusive language to build a close-knit community among frontline workers, enhancing their sense of belongingness.
- Establishing a culture of open and bi-directional communication to maximize employee satisfaction and productivity.
- Integrating multiple tools that frontline workers use with a unified employee communication app to avoid overload and fatigue from juggling between apps and notifications.
- Identifying key metrics to track and monitor communication engagement. This unfolds valuable insights regarding employee experience, engagement, and satisfaction.
- Using a unified employee communication app to have a single source of truth for all internal communication



Ensuring effective frontline internal communication is a success strategy

Effective internal communication for frontline workers introduces not just convenience but also unfolds overall organizational success. A well-connected and engaged frontline workforce improves productivity, satisfaction, and better customer experiences. Some trending ways to ensure this in an organizational setup include:

- Enabling a mobile-first approach for communication.
- Encouraging employee self-service wherever applicable.
- Being open to asynchronous communication for non-urgent correspondences.
- Prioritizing frontline employee experience.

These interventions help to build a community with more robust engagement and improved productivity among frontline workers. Using a dedicated mobile app for employee communications can simplify embracing these trends and elevating frontline worker productivity and experience.





speakap

WWW.SPEAKAP.COM