GoldinKollar

Internal Communication

In-house or agency for internal communication: pros, cons and how to split the work

Keep the daily, sensitive work inside and use an agency for the peaks. A comparison, the conditions for each choice, and how to split the work when you use both.



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The short answer: keep internal communication in-house when the work is daily, sensitive and depends on knowing the business from the inside. Use an agency for campaigns, design, film and the peaks your team cannot staff. Most organisations with more than a few hundred people need both: an owner inside who decides, and a partner outside who makes.

In-house, agency or both: how do they compare?

Option	Pros	Cons	Best when
In-house team	Knows the people, the history and the politics. Fast on sensitive news. There every day	Usually small. Pulled into publishing and requests. Cannot hold every craft (film, design, events). No outside view	News, change and leadership messages flow every week, and much of it is sensitive
Agency	A full bench of crafts. Capacity when you need it. An outside view, and ideas tested with other employers	Needs a brief and access. Learns your context slowly. Produces polished work that says nothing if nobody inside owns the message	The work comes in peaks: a launch, an anniversary, a values rollout, a magazine, an event
Both, with a clear split	Decisions stay close to leadership. Production scales up and down	Needs one named owner inside and time to coordinate	You have several hundred employees or more, several sites, or a year with real change in it

The question is rarely which one. It is which work sits where.

When should you choose an in-house team?

Choose in-house when most of these are true:

- Messages go out every week, and many are sensitive: restructuring, pay, incidents, leadership changes.
- Approvals need someone who can walk into the chief executive's office the same day.
- There is enough steady work to fill at least one full-time role all year.
- Your channels are few, simple and already reach people.

When should you choose an agency?

Choose an agency when most of these are true:

- The work comes in peaks, and between peaks there is little to do.
- You need crafts you cannot hire full-time: campaign ideas, film, 3D and set design, a magazine, app content.
- Your team is one or two people, and planning is being squeezed out by publishing.

- You want an outside read on whether your messages land, before you spend more on sending them.

What should stay inside when you use both?

Stays inside	Goes to the partner
Priorities for the year and what they mean for employees	Campaign ideas, names and key visuals
The voice of the leadership team	Films, sets, magazines and event production
Approvals and sensitive news	Templates your team can then run alone
The daily and weekly news flow	An audit of whether messages are reaching people
Deciding what not to send	Extra hands in the peak weeks

The split fails when nobody inside owns the message: the partner fills the gap with something pleasant and empty. One named owner prevents that.

What does the research say?

We found no study that compares the results of in-house and agency-run internal communication. Anyone who quotes one figure for "which works better" is guessing. Two sources help with the decision.

In-house teams are small almost everywhere. Gallagher's Employee Communications Report 2026 surveyed more than 1,300 communication and HR professionals in 40 countries, most of them in North America, the UK and Europe. It found that 69% of organisations have fewer than six people in a communication role, whether they support 500 employees or 50,000, and that one in three has no dedicated communication budget. The report's own reading is that teams this small drift toward transactional work: publishing, distributing, responding. Nearly three-quarters aim for a strategic model, and only 18% believe they have reached one.

What to outsource depends on the activity. A study of HR executives in 432 organisations found that how much a company relied on outsourcing HR work varied with its own characteristics, such as how particular its practices were and how uncertain demand was, and that the pattern differed from one kind of HR activity to another (Klaas, McClendon and Gainey, 2001). That study is about HR work, not communication. Its lesson still holds: decide activity by activity, not once for the whole function.

What does each option cost in effort?

We do not publish prices, and the fee is rarely the real cost.

- **In-house** costs a hire, tools, and cover when that person is on leave. One person cannot be strategist, writer, designer, film-maker and analyst at once.

- **An agency** costs your time: a clear brief, access to leaders, one person who can approve, and review rounds that end. Without access, an agency produces generic work.
- **Both** costs coordination: a planning meeting each quarter, a shared calendar, and an agreement on who writes what.

A useful test before deciding: list every piece of communication your team produced in the last three months and mark each one as steady or peak, sensitive or not. The list usually makes the split obvious. Our internal communication plan template gives you the columns.

How do you brief an agency so the work lands?

Six lines are enough to start:

1. What people should know or do afterwards that they do not know or do now.
2. Which groups, and what each one already believes.
3. What is true and can be said, including what is not decided yet.
4. Which channels reach those groups today.
5. Who approves, and by when.
6. How you will check that it worked.

If you cannot fill in line one, you do not have a production problem. You have a strategy problem, and an internal communication strategy comes first, wherever the function sits.

Our view

We are an agency, so weigh this page with that in mind.

We do our best work for clients who have a named owner inside. We design and produce the peaks: values programmes, town halls, internal magazines and newsletters, office branding, and campaigns for anniversaries and Ramadan. Published examples include etisalat Egypt's values activation and the work around Saudi German Hospital Egypt's Top Employer certification.

We advise against handing us the daily news or the voice of your leaders. Those belong inside. If you are not sure whether your problem is capacity or clarity, measure before you hire anyone: the internal communication quality check and the internal communication templates are free, with or without us.

Frequently asked questions

Is it cheaper to hire an internal communication specialist or to use an agency?

It depends on how steady the work is. Steady weekly work favours a hire. A few peaks a year favour an agency, because you pay only for the peaks. Compare a salaried year with the projects you ran last year.

Can an agency run internal communication without an in-house team?

It can produce the work. It cannot decide your priorities or approve your messages. Someone inside, even part-time, must own those. Without that owner, projects stall at the first approval.

What should never be outsourced in internal communication?

Sensitive announcements, the leadership team's own voice, and the decision about what employees need to hear first. A partner can draft and advise. The words and the timing must be owned inside.

How do you choose an internal communication agency?

Ask to see work made for employees, not advertising. Ask who writes the Arabic and who writes the English. Ask how they check that a message was understood. Meet the people who will do the work, and start with one small project before a yearly contract.

How big should an internal communication team be?

There is no agreed ratio. In Gallagher's 2026 survey, 69% of organisations had fewer than six communicators whatever their size. Decide from the volume and sensitivity of your own messages.

Sources

- Gallagher (2026), *Employee Communications Report 2026, Global Edition* (survey, roundtables and focus groups, September to November 2025; more than 1,300 communication and HR professionals in 40 countries). ajg.com
- Klaas, B. S., McClendon, J. A. and Gainey, T. W. (2001), "Outsourcing HR: the impact of organizational characteristics", *Human Resource Management* 40(2), 125–138. doi.org

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