



# Internal Communications in Ireland Sector Audit Report 2022



# Foreword

---

It can often feel like the world is in a state of flux at the moment, and as internal communicators, we know that our employees do not operate in a vacuum. Now more than ever, we need to ensure that we have the resources we need to communicate effectively across our organisations, to be the reliable, credible source of the truth. But, do internal communicators have what they need in place?

Do you have the necessary tools and budgets in place? What are your primary concerns? What channels are working when it comes to delivering business-critical messages?

The Public Relations Institute of Ireland (PRII) in collaboration with Springboard Communications undertook this piece of research by polling over 50 of those working in the sector in Ireland to answer those questions and capture a snapshot of the internal communications sector in 2022. We know internal communications is a business critical function, but do others?

We hope this report gives you the insights to empower you as you plan your internal communications strategy for 2023 and beyond.

Frank Condon,  
PRII  
[frank@prii.ie](mailto:frank@prii.ie)

Sandy Boundy, Ciara Flaherty,  
Springboard Communications  
[theinternalwire@springboardcommunications.ie](mailto:theinternalwire@springboardcommunications.ie)

# Highlights



say their influence as a trusted advisor to the C-suite has increased over the last 2 years



work in teams of 5 people or less, with the majority working solo



of respondents feel their employer takes action on employee feedback



said their top objective for 2023 is to improve people leader communication



said inadequate human resources is their primary challenge for 2023



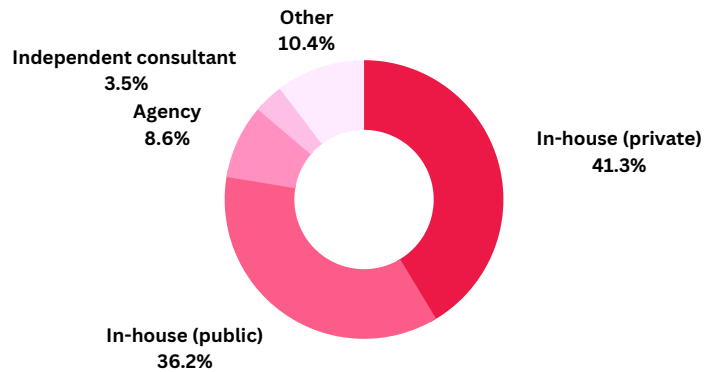
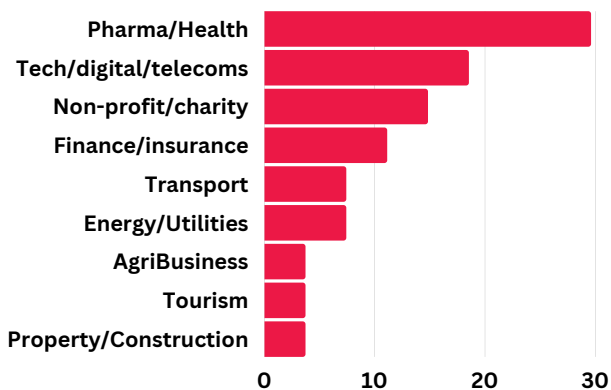
say that employee engagement is the primary way to convince the C-Suite of the value of internal communications

# Section 1 – Working in Internal Communications – A Snapshot



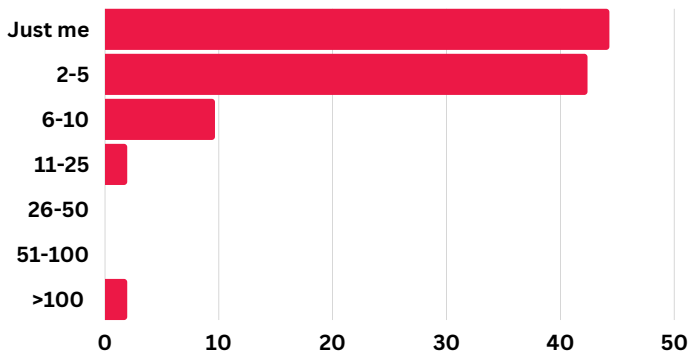
## What sectors

Of the survey respondents, most worked across pharma and health, followed by tech, digital and telecoms, and finance/insurance.



## Where they work

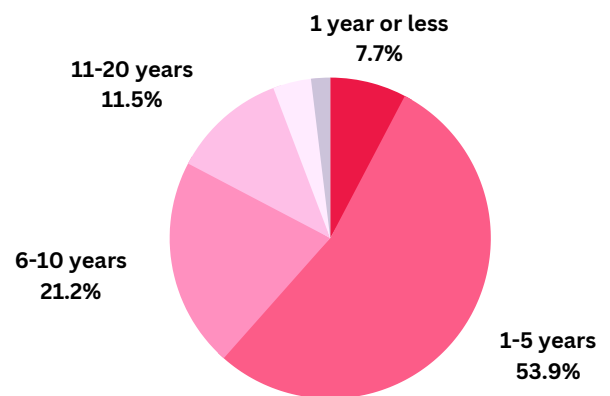
The vast majority of respondents to the survey work in-house (77.5%), with a fairly even distribution across the public and private sectors. Just 8.6% work in an agency setting, with the rest working independently or in an adjacent field.



## Team size

Communicators are used to achieving a lot with small teams, and that was confirmed by our findings.

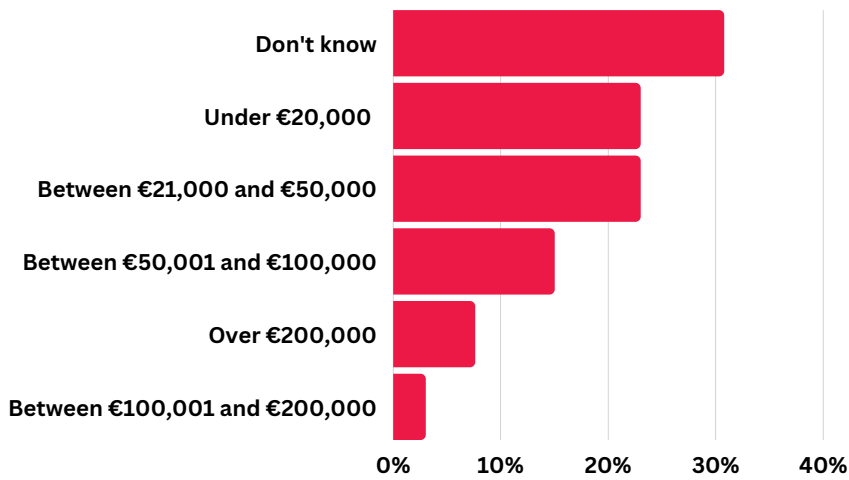
86% of respondents work in teams of 5 people or less, with the majority working solo.



## How long

The stats here reflect that IC is a relatively new but growing communications specialisation. Over half of those surveyed have been working in internal communications for between 1 and 5 years. Only 15% have worked in the sector for over ten years.





### Budget size

Of those that knew their overall IC budgets, many are working with relatively low budgets.

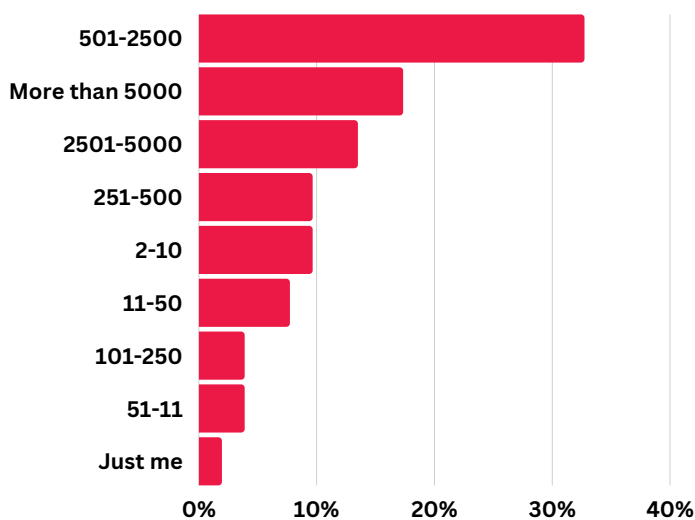
One thing to consider is if those budgets are enough to achieve an organisation's business objectives, and if not, how does one successfully advocate for a fit-for-purpose annual budget?



### Reporting line

Often, internal communications can fall between two stools when it comes to what department to report into.

The research shows that the majority - over 50% - reports into Corporate Affairs/Communications, with almost 20% reporting directly to the Executive team and 13% reporting to HR.



### Organisation size

Internal communications is integral to the functioning of an organisation, no matter the size.

Of our respondents, a third works for an organisation with a workforce of between 501 and 2500 people.

# Section 2 – IC as a Business-Critical Function



**65% of respondents** say their influence as a trusted advisor to the C-suite has increased over the last 2 years

*Yet despite this, when asked if IC is viewed and resourced as a business-critical function – opinion was fairly evenly split.*

**No  
51%**



**Yes  
49%**

It's positive to see that internal communicators have increased their influence with the C-suite but, in general, there is more work to be done to ensure that it is seen as a vital function, with fairly allocated resources.

**Therefore, there is a need to consistently and definitively link internal communications results to the business strategy, with proven results.**

This is critical to demonstrate that the work is having a material positive impact on the business, retention, results and more.

## What the respondents said:

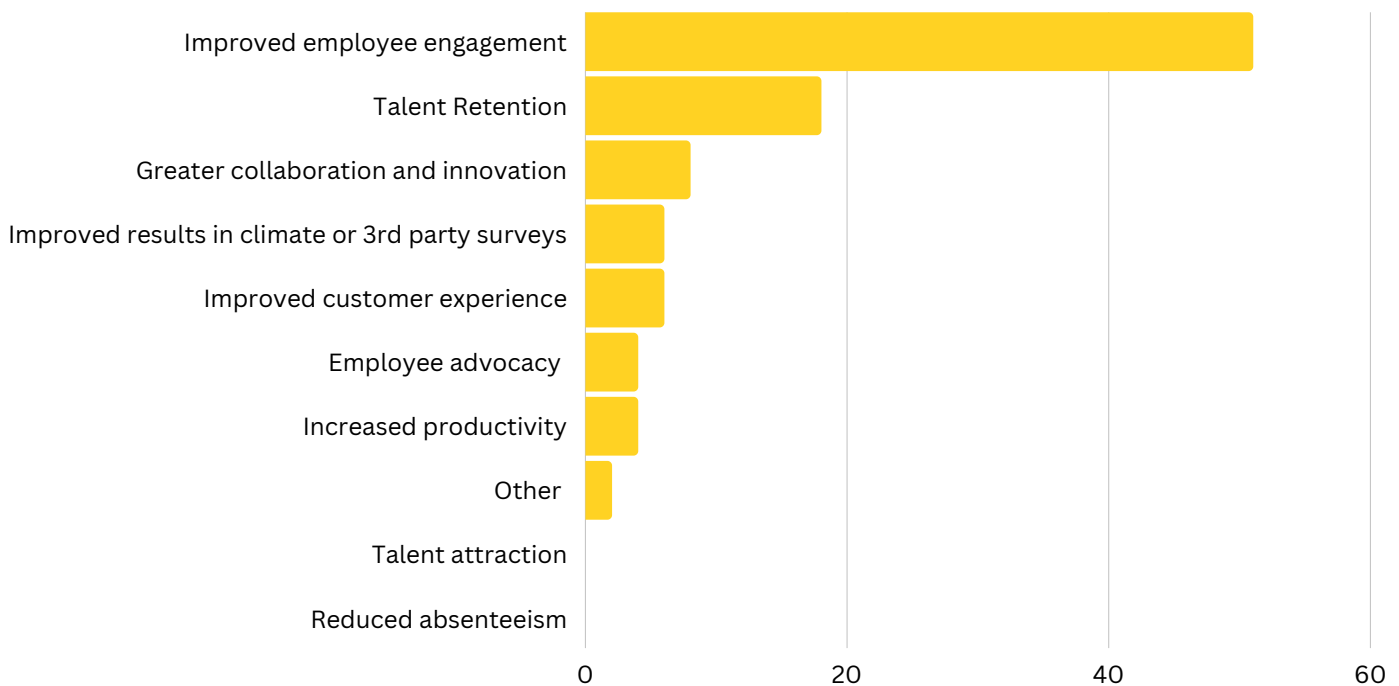
**"It is not viewed as business critical but more as a support function or a facilitating function. I think COVID supported its value, but as with all things we adapt and forget and it is seen again as 'emails' or 'cupcake' engagement versus a strategic conduit for organisations."**

**"There's some work to do to build more understanding amongst the C-suite level of the day-to-day volume of workload that's supported by IC and the positive impacts a well-established team can have on items such as engagement, brand pride, recognition and employee retention."**

**"Budget is directed toward income-generating teams and projects around products."**



# How to convince the C-Suite of the value of IC?



There was one overwhelming answer here – the value of improved employee engagement. It's important to track this but it's just as vital to effectively demonstrate the value of engaged teams, across productivity, retention, profit and more.

**This establishes the link between the business strategy objectives and the IC plan. It's important to focus our measurement and evaluation on outcomes not just the outputs of tactics.**

Another useful tool is to use external research, statistics and benchmarking to validate this to senior leaders. For example, employee productivity increases by 20 to 25% in organisations where employees are connected ([McKinsey](#)), while research from [Gallup](#) found that internal communications leads to an increase in employee engagement, retention and ultimately productivity.



# Section 3 - The IC Landscape

What are your top three objectives for 2023?



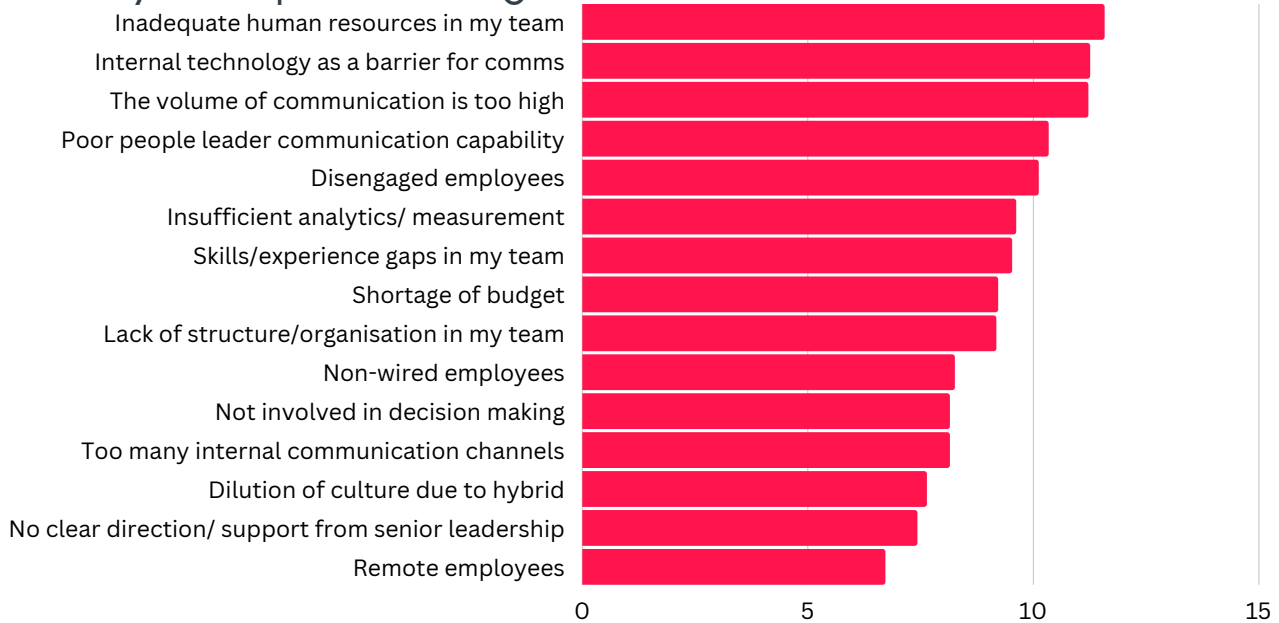
It's clear from the results that there is a lot that internal communicators want to get done in 2023! However, given what the findings suggest regarding budgets and resources, it's important to be discerning about what will add the most value next year. For example, the top objective for 2023 is to improve people leader communication. Ask critically, **is this for IC to lead** or could IC collaborate with other functions as part of broader leadership training?

Meanwhile, developing a strong purpose, values and culture has never been more important and is key for recruitment and retention, especially for younger generations. According to a [2018 LinkedIn Workplace Culture report](#), 86% of millennials would consider taking a pay cut to work at a company whose mission and values align with their own.

And don't make embedding the business strategy an afterthought – as discussed, it's vital for proving the business case for internal communications.

# Section 3 - The IC Landscape

Choose your top 3 challenges for 2023.



Again the data shows the concern around resourcing called out as a key challenge. To build these teams, it's fundamental to communicate the value internal communicators bring to the business.

This also ties in with making sure the internal technology is fit for purpose. There has been a real trend towards digitisation of the workplace. Understanding internal stakeholders and segments, and what channels may work for them is the first step. Engage IT colleagues - they are a valuable partner in bringing new tools into play.

That analysis of existing and required channels also links to the high volume of communication - how to refine communications so the important messages are getting through? It starts with the communication strategy and effectively listening to employee feedback.

# Section 4 - IC Tools & Tactics

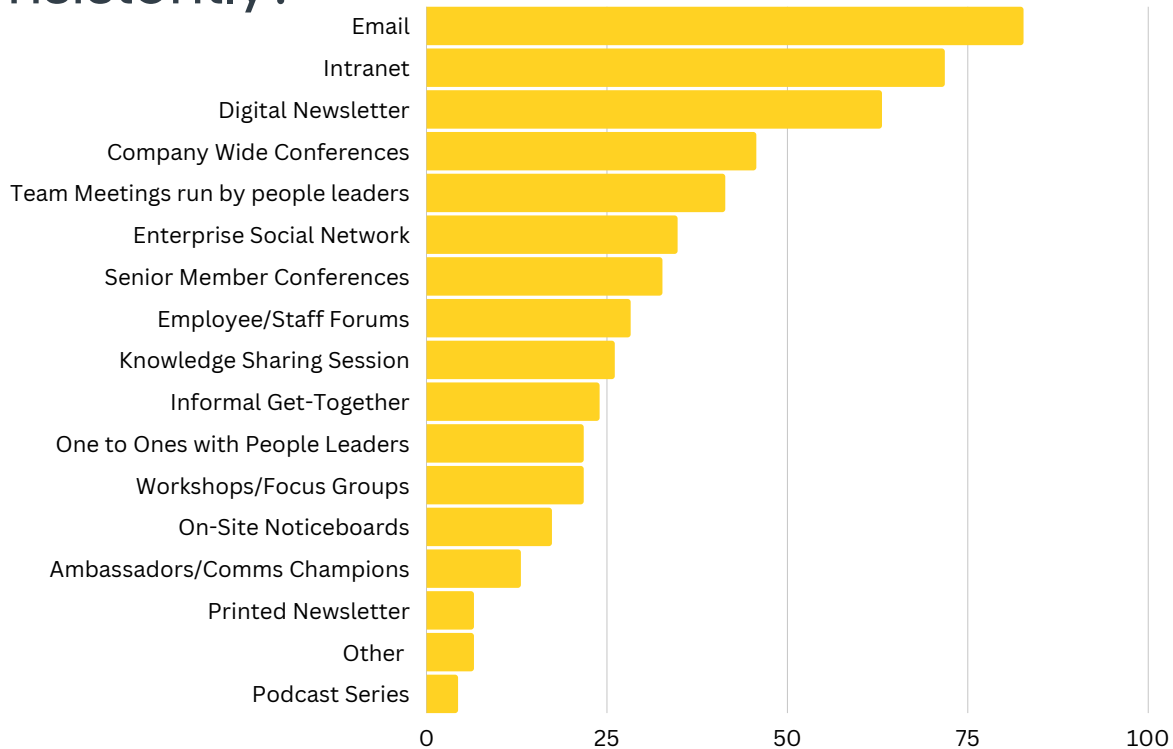
Which of the following tools do you currently have in place?



As can be seen from these findings, the majority of internal communicators employ content calendars but **over 60% don't have a strategy**. This is a missed opportunity - a clear IC strategy will reinforce the link to delivering an organisation's business objectives and make the case for additional resources to implement the strategy (the number 1 challenge for internal communicators in 2022).

While of course, it would be great to see more strategy-first content development, from an Irish perspective, we are doing better than our global counterparts. The 2022 Global State of the Sector research found that only 31% of respondents had an overarching strategy.

# Which channels of communication do you use consistently?



There are now more options than ever when it comes to selecting channels to reach populations. In the end, it doesn't matter which ones are used – as long as they work for the specific organisation.

Regular analysis of cut-through, comfort levels and usage rates is needed to make informed decisions.

Define the role of each channel and inform everyone of that role. If one new channel is added, consider taking one away in order to reduce noise.

One thing to note is that blanket comms can mask urgency. For example, if email is used a lot, but there is a need to communicate something business-critical, it can get drowned out. Use all-employees email sparingly and when most needed for impact.

# When it comes to managing employee feedback, how active is your employer?

75%

of respondents feel their employer values employee feedback



75%

of respondents feel their employer takes action on employee feedback

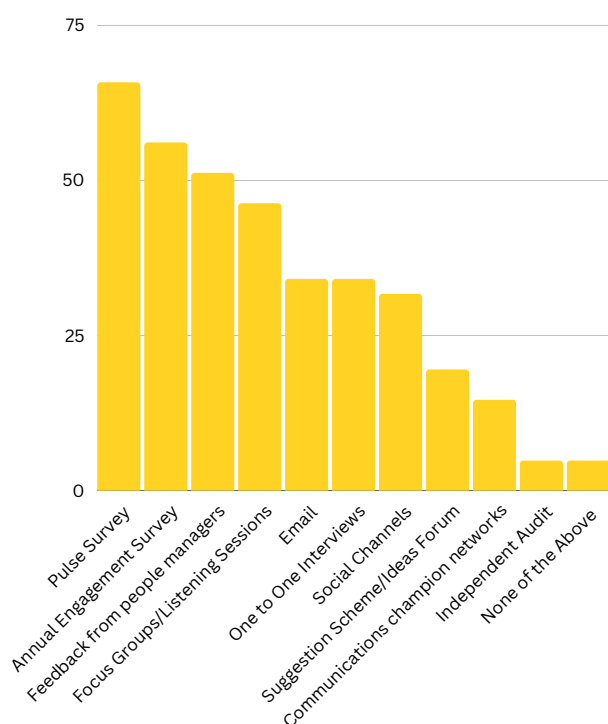


65%

of respondents feel their employer has clear mechanisms for capturing employee feedback



## What are the defined mechanisms in place for gathering employee feedback?



There were some positive findings when it came to employee feedback, with the majority saying that their employer has clear mechanisms in place and values and takes action on feedback given.

That's the vital element - capturing feedback is one thing but the most important thing is to disseminate the feedback results and the actions that will be taken as a result of the feedback. Otherwise, it becomes lip service and employees become less likely to participate in the future.

To take this to the next level in an organisation, concentrate on engaging team leaders to funnel information up and down the chain - they are potent links between senior management and the larger employee base.

# Section 5 - IC Upskilling & Training

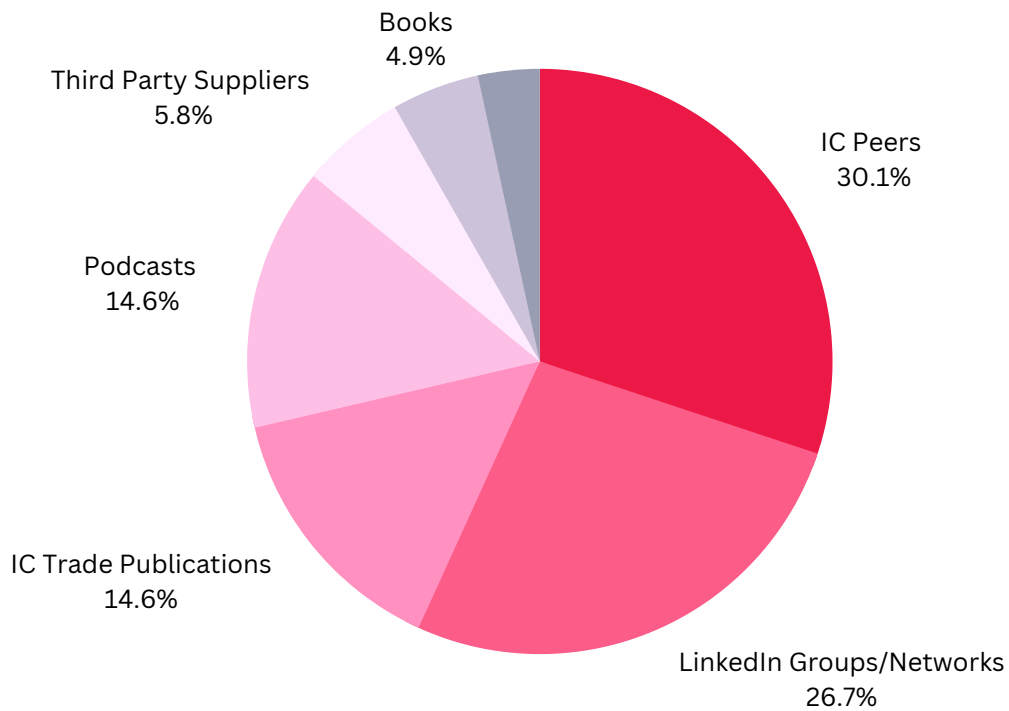
## What additional resources/training/tools do you require to improve your Internal Communications?



Training is key! That was the message that came through from respondents when asked what additional resources they needed. Primarily, training for people leaders – something that is key to cascading business strategy and critical actions – but also for communications champions.

There is also a clear desire for story-telling development – telling effective narratives ensures messaging cuts through and empowers people as ambassadors. Also making the top five are two sides of the same coin – strategic planning and measurement & analytics.

# What are your go-to sources of information for Internal Communications?



As we know, our networks are powerful.

That was borne out by this research with over 50% saying that peers and LinkedIn networks are their go-to sources for information on internal communications.

Sharing knowledge, solving problems and making connections in what is a small but powerful community will enhance the sector and enhance collective expertise.

## Anything else you would like to share about the Internal Communications Sector in Ireland currently?



"As Internal Comms is only one part of my role I feel there is never enough time to devote to it; though I see (and my leader sees) its importance and value."

"We need to focus on measuring impact and outcomes and return on investment. If there were supports/training available I would be very interested."

"I feel there could be more communication (ironically) among members, and the network could be more proactive at setting up knowledge-sharing sub-groups, mentoring groups etc."



# Conclusion

---

We hope you have found the Internal Communications in Ireland Sector Audit Report 2022 informative.

We look forward to keeping the conversation around enhancing this valuable and vibrant sector going throughout 2023. Please share your feedback and thoughts with us at the email addresses below

With thanks,

Frank Condon,  
PRII  
[frank@prii.ie](mailto:frank@prii.ie)

Sandy Boundy, Ciara Flaherty,  
Springboard Communications  
[theinternalwire@springboardcommunications.ie](mailto:theinternalwire@springboardcommunications.ie)

