EBOOK

Six Ways to Improve Employee Communication

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Introduction

Communication

We can't get a thing done without it. Yet even after thousands upon thousands of interactions, many of us still find it challenging to get others to hear and act upon our messages.

Communicating one-on-one or with small groups is hard enough. But when you need to get a message across to a large group of employees, parents or a congregation, things get even tougher.

13%

Just 13 percent of employees **strongly agree** their leaders communicate effectively with the organization.

— Gallup, Use Internal Communications to Execute a Winning Strategy, July 9, 2020

Best Practices for Employee Communication

Before you can think about how to communicate, you must first understand the outcomes you want to achieve. Only then can you identify the most effective strategies and tactics to use.

Gallup advises asking yourself two questions:

1 What are the primary reasons for communication?

2 Are your reasons aligned with the key strategies for communication?

Your answers to these questions provide your framework.

— Gallup, Use Internal Communications to Execute a Winning Strategy, July 9, 2020

The following six tips will help you develop a communications plan to reach a large and diverse group of people and ensure everyone gets the message.

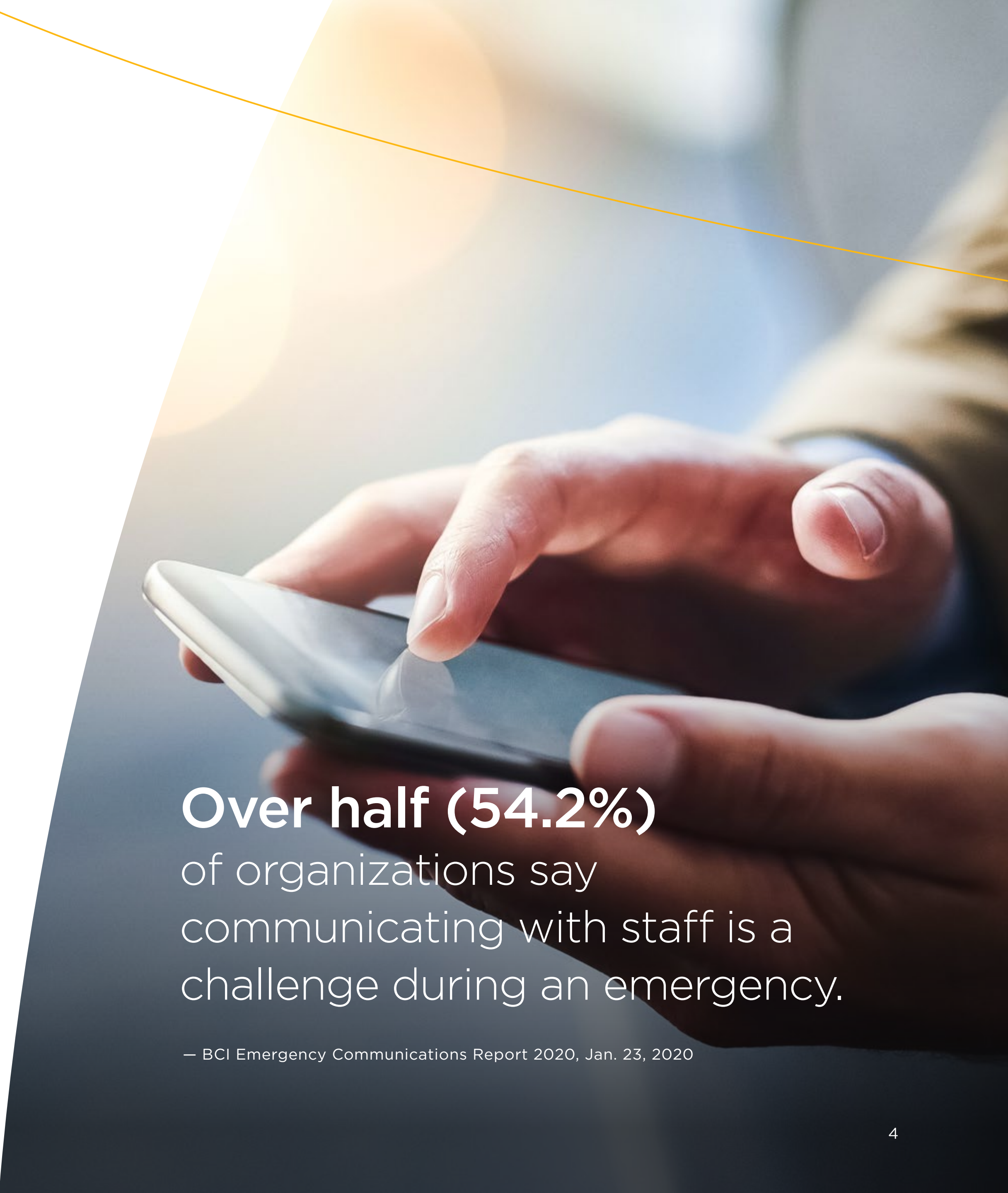# Communicate Across
Multiple Channels

You may think you have your bases covered if you send out a mass email announcing next week's meeting.

Don't be surprised if some people fail to show.

Why?

Research shows people process information differently. That means some members of your team may respond to the email blast, while others may need a text message, a phone call or an in-person reminder for a message to stick.

Use this information to your advantage: the more channels you use to communicate, the more people you're likely to reach.

Over half (54.2%)
of organizations say communicating with staff is a challenge during an emergency.

— BCI Emergency Communications Report 2020, Jan. 23, 2020

Make Your Message Consistent

Ever play the game "Telephone"?

Players sit in a row or a circle, while a secret message is whispered from one person to the next. When the message reaches the last person, they reveal the message received.

What makes the game fun is that the message, without fail, gets distorted along the way. Players accidentally omit or change words. Listeners mishear speakers' whispers. Often, the final "message" has no resemblance to the original at all. When communicating within organizations, be sure messages are standardized.

That could mean distributing a written memo instead of relying on word-of-mouth communication to pass on details or implementing automated phone calls rather than using a manual phone tree.

When everyone gets the same message, you won't have a "Telephone" situation on your hands.

"Telephone" is all fun and games, but it illustrates the need for consistent communication.

Organizations with crisis plans in place are **nearly twice as likely** to say they fared better post-crisis than those without a plan.

Testing and **retesting** your plan ensures you make the **right decisions** when a crisis happens.

— PwC, Global Crisis Survey 2019

Know What to Do in an Emergency

An everyday communications plan is great. You have time to carefully plan messages, notify people of upcoming events and check in to ensure messages are received.

But what will you do in times of crisis?

Being prepared makes a difference.

A crisis communications plan provides you with a roadmap for navigating an emergency.

How to Plan and Test
for an Emergency

01. **Develop** a communications strategy your organization can use in an emergency.

02. **Determine** who will be responsible for sending messages, and how they will be transmitted.

03. **Create** a backup plan in case certain methods become unavailable — a loss of Internet access, for example.

04. **Hold** "drills" to ensure others know what to expect.

How to Conduct a Drill — An Example

Send a test text message to all parents of children at your school, the kind of message that could be sent in the event of a school lockdown. Make it clear that it's a test.

These preparatory drills are a great opportunity to ensure:

• You have the correct contact information

• Everyone involved knows how to use your chosen system

• Recipients learn what to expect and trust the source information.
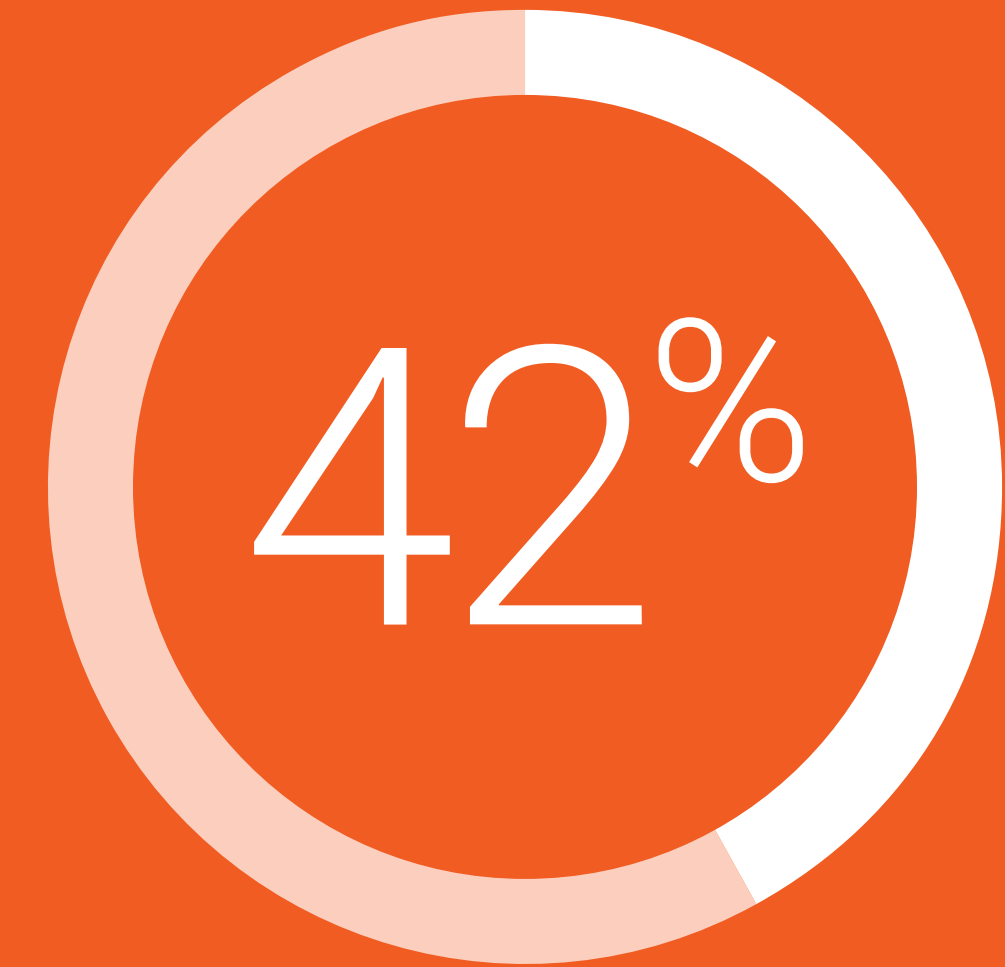
Communicate Regularly

Don't communicate only in times of emergency.

A best practice is to **develop a regular schedule.**

When people get in the habit of hearing from you, they'll always know where to turn for the latest updates.

- Check in monthly, weekly or even daily to ensure everyone is on track.

- Develop a communications calendar to automate delivery.

For example, if you coach a soccer team, you could schedule an automated phone call the night before practices, an email message with time and location information before games and a variety of check-in methods to remind players of big tournaments.

42%

of CEOs worldwide say communicating regularly is the **most important** thing they can do to build and maintain trust within their business.

— eMarketer, How Companies Can Set Employees Up
   for Success When Working from Home, March 27, 2020

Ask for and Respond to Feedback

If you want people to listen to — and possibly act on — the messages you're sending, you need to keep their preferences in mind.

- **Ask for their feedback** on channels, frequency and content.

- **Ask teammates what works** — and what doesn't — with your communications strategy.

- **Make it easy** for recipients to select the communications method (and if possible, the language) they prefer.

If users have control over the communications they receive, they'll be much more likely to listen to what you have to say.

How to Gather Feedback

- In-person meetings

- Surveys

- Online profiles or mobile apps where users can modify their preferences

- Send a notification with polling options

Ensure People Know Where to Turn for Help

You try your best to include all important information in each message you send — but sometimes, things fall through the cracks.

- Provide a clear point of contact for recipients, so they know who to call if they have questions, need clarification or want to confirm their attendance at an event.

- Don't forget to include a contact name, email address or phone number at the end of each message.

- If you're sending emails, ask recipients to add your address to their accounts' "safe senders" lists.

Make it as easy for people to reach you as it is for you to reach them — and close the communications loop.

Helpful Hint

Give your alerts a familiar voice and have **all communications originate from a single sender**, say, your church's associate pastor or a company's communication VP.

Keep Everyone in the Know

Implementing one or all of these tips will improve the way your team communicates with the people it needs to reach.

When everyone feels informed, they're more likely to stay involved — in your school, church, business or anywhere else people come together.

Simplify Your Communications

If you want to further streamline communications within your organization, consider a mass notification solution, such as One Call Now from OnSolve.

One Call Now offers routine and emergency messaging services to businesses, property managers, healthcare providers, religious organizations, schools and more.
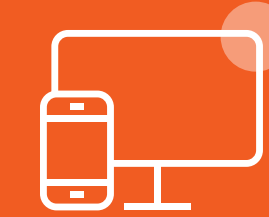
Automated voice, text and email messages can be recorded and released at any time, reaching listeners within minutes.

Integration tools make it easy to import contact data or supplement an information management system.

Real-time reporting lets you track who's received your messages, ensuring everyone in your organization stays safe and informed.

Learn how One Call Now from OnSolve can help your organization.

Visit onsolve.com/one-call-now

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