

Journal of Internal Communication

April 2022

THINKING BIG...

How world-class communicators use their influence to make a real difference

CHAMPIONING
EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE





Welcome

**Siobhan
Hammond**

Communication and
Change Director

.....
Gallagher's Employee
Experience and
Communication Practice

As we reach the two-month anniversary of the launch of our State of the Sector report, sharing learnings from more than 1,300 internal communication professionals across the globe, we thought this was the perfect time to bring back the Journal of Internal Communication too. With so much happening in our industry, reflecting on our achievements and talking about our experiences is more important than ever right now.

In this issue, we hear from world-class communicators about the importance of connecting employees to organisational purpose, forging strong relationships with leadership teams that help foster positive

results, and instilling the value of workplace benefits to the busiest people on the planet – and the insights don't disappoint!

On top of that, three guiding lights in the IC community lend us their expert views on our State of the Sector report, dissecting the big talking points and sharing key takeaways – fascinating stuff.

We hope you enjoy the Journal – see you next issue!

PS. If you'd like to share your expertise with the IC community in future Journals, get in touch – we'd love to [hear from you](#).

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**‘The world continues to change fast
— we have to adapt with it’**

An interview with

Matt Jones
Schneider Electric

Engaging employees in your organisational purpose and culture is the ultimate internal communication headscratcher. And nailing this challenge is more important than ever when it comes to taking an agile approach to operating effectively in today's ever-changing world of work.

Schneider Electric's Director for Employer Branding and Global HR Communications, **Matt Jones**, has got a firm grip on this — and he's happy to share some insider knowledge...



Matt Jones
Director, Employer Branding and Global HR Communications

Schneider Electric
Energy & Sustainability Services

Thinking big

“Schneider is a big company, but it has a really well-balanced global presence. As part of that, we've got a naturally diverse cultural perspective. We're constantly trying to make it an inclusive place to work, but it's never about creating something that just looks good. We've always considered how we can embed our culture in the conversations we have to create a personal meaning that our people can attach themselves to, while helping us retain and attract talent at the same time.”





Promoting empowerment

“Our people are empowered to manage their own careers — not only from a skills perspective, but also when looking at how that translates to the role you’re in now and potentially where you go next. It really helps create more opportunities for people. In the last couple of years, we’ve introduced a new initiative called the Open Talent Market, which not only is a platform to recruit internally, but also to showcase skills and experiences. Using artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, it brings speed, transparency, and helps to de-bias career development with efficient matching of supply and demand of work needs within the company, across borders and entities. Since launching globally in mid-2020, in the midst of the pandemic, we’ve had nearly 70,000 employees register (of which 25% have taken action — a job, project, mentor), 11,000+ mutual mentorships (of whom 71% are cross-border, and 68% are cross-entity) and 5,000+ projects (of which 43% are cross-border, and 59% are cross-entity).”

High tech, high touch

“From a leadership standpoint, it’s all about creating an environment and culture that encourages collaboration, innovation and a little bit of disruption here at Schneider. We’re quite deliberate in not just the language we use, but how that translates to behaviours too. It’s not about dos and don’ts; it’s about trust, empowerment and honest conversation. In this hybrid world, we talk a lot about how leaders need to be more human and more digital. It’s a kind of ‘high tech, high touch’ way of working which points towards everything we do. Digital is massive — I’m not disputing that, it plays such an important role, but the human connection is just as important, if not more so.”

Open dialogue

“Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) has always been a key part of what we do, and we continue to be very open about it. We have committed externally, as part of our Schneider Sustainability Impact, to what we call ‘50/40/30’ by 2025. This means increasing the representation of women to 50% of new hires, 40% of frontline managers and 30% of senior leadership. Our DEI story and culture was already there, but having those kind of benchmarks keeps these important cultural drivers front of mind and makes us accountable too. One of the pillars of our employee value proposition (EVP) is ‘inclusive’ and it’s demonstrated through everything we do — right from the basics of our policies to the language that we use to communicate with each other every day.”

Great expectations

“The world continues to change fast — and we have to continue to adapt with it. The expectations of employees and external talent are changing too, which means we’re seeing far more emphasis on what it means to work and have a meaningful purpose. And throughout the challenges of the past couple of years, it’s our #SEGreatPeople that continue to make the difference. They have kept things going and our employee engagement results show that they are still proud to go to work for Schneider Electric and make a difference — internally and externally.”

Two-way engagement

“As well as our annual employee engagement survey, we run an upward feedback survey too. It’s a very straightforward concept where our managers rate their own performance against our core values and leadership expectations, and then their team rates them against the same criteria. It gives you a really good temperature check on not only where you think you are, but where your team thinks you are as well. When we talk about our culture, it’s this focus on behaviour that really continues to keep things as strong as they are. It’s about how we do things — not just the results we’re trying to get.”

“From a leadership standpoint, it’s all about creating an environment and culture that encourages collaboration, innovation and a little bit of disruption here at Schneider. It’s not about dos and don’ts; it’s about trust, empowerment and honest conversation.”





Managing up: leading from the front the Asahi Beverages way

An interview with

Kirstin Stapelberg

Asahi Beverages

When it comes to building your level of influence as an internal communicator, forging strong connections with the key players in your organisation is where it's at. That 'seat at the table' has to be earned — and it has to be earned through trust, understanding and support.

For Group Head of Internal Communications at Asahi Beverages **Kirstin Stapelberg**, getting to know what makes your executives tick is the secret to building the kind of relationships that foster positive results, great communications and inspirational leadership. And she's happy to share her seven steps to success...



Kirstin Stapelberg
Group Head of Internal
Communications

Asahi Beverages

1 Communicate their vision

“We communicate the strategic vision to employees at Asahi Beverages with consistency and repetition. It's a huge area of focus and it starts right at the beginning of every year. We host an all-employee broadcast from our CEO, who goes through the evolved strategy for the year and works through the strategic pillars for everyone. That's followed by a series of workshops across the entire organisation — all functions, all sites, all levels. Prior to the pandemic, the CEO and executive leadership team (ELT) were actually holding these workshops on-site with everyone in the organisation on a personal basis — that's how seriously this element of our communication and engagement strategy is taken. It's part of our DNA.”





2 Let them lead

“In the last 18 months, Asahi Beverages has experienced three major change interventions. They’ve been the biggest comms and change projects that I’ve ever been involved in, and all have taken place in the environment of lockdowns and remote working. The actions of our leaders have been the difference between these succeeding or not. Had our leaders not been as involved as they were, we would never have managed to achieve what we did. Because of COVID-19, we rely more on our leadership-led communications than we ever have in the past — and how wonderful, right? We’ve been encouraging this from leaders for so long. And now, all of a sudden, it feels like we’ve been really catapulted and propelled in that space, with leaders actively taking up this role and owning their role as the single most important communications channel in the business.”

3 Encourage collective ownership

“Who owns the employee experience at Asahi Beverages? Everyone. Definitely not Internal Communication and not even HR. We’re really clear on that. And, most particularly, this comes to bear in major communication and change programmes, where we’ll actively insist that the ownership of that experience is everyone’s responsibility: it’s the responsibility of the leadership team, it’s the responsibility of those running the programme. Of course, we’re there as Internal Communicators —

to assist, to curate, to fine tune, to finesse, to do the right things by the right channels; but the overall experience is the holistic output of everyone involved.”

4 Think ‘next level’

“We have become far more sophisticated in the way that we communicate at Asahi Beverages over the past two years. An example of that is the way we present our quarterly broadcasts — the town halls that are run by our CEO and the ELT. They used to be fairly standard affairs: great PowerPoint deck, awesome commentary from the CEO... Now they’ve become very sophisticated, virtual and digital affairs — lots of graphics, lots of digital engagement tools, lots of video, increasingly featuring more and more of our people so we can bring everyone together and create that two-way engagement. Our internal communication is now at a completely new level, and we’ll make sure we stay there. We will never go back to the way we were doing things before. It’s far more engaging now — and really fun to watch.”

5 Upskill and support

“We’ve placed a huge focus on giving our leaders enough support — and the right material — to make their job as easy as possible. And it’s tricky. Not everyone’s a natural communicator, we all appreciate that; but the accountability on leaders to be the primary communication channel in the business is more heightened than it’s ever been before. We place huge importance on that at Asahi. From an internal communication perspective, I spend a lot of time focusing on our executive team and our senior leaders — getting to know their idiosyncrasies, their nuances, what they’re passionate about. It’s that depth of knowledge that helps me effectively assist in their communications.”

6 Start them early

“A big shift that I’ve noticed in the last few years is not just our reliance on senior leaders to be brilliant and important communicators, but also the need to involve them in the process far earlier than we’ve ever done before. There’s usually a very logical marker in the timeline when we’d normally start engaging with leaders around communications, narratives, storytelling and key messages. We’ve massively moved that forward to a point where we’re now starting to co-create those narratives, to align on key messages, to get everyone’s input right at the start

of the change intervention. Our senior leaders have far more skin in the game now, because they are co-creating far more of the key messages, the narratives, the content... and they’re doing it earlier on in the process than ever before.”

7 Learn the language

“In order to gain that all-important ‘seat at the table’, as internal communicators, we need to be really solid in our business acumen and knowledge — that’s critically important. We need to speak the commercial language that our senior leaders, our sales teams and our supply chain speak. Every day, we find ourselves in this fantastic space where we have this wealth of information we need to communicate. But you can’t communicate it simply and authentically and in a way that people understand unless you have that view of the whole. Our role is to connect the dots — to be across the totality of what’s happening so that we can write that high-level story in a way that people understand.”

“I spend a lot of time focusing on our executive team and our senior leaders — getting to know what they’re passionate about. It’s that depth of knowledge that helps me effectively assist in their communications.”

To hear more of Kirstin’s thoughts, watch the replay of the ‘[Bunch presents Gallagher’s State of the Sector 2021/22](#)’ webinar - find out more on page 21





Smart thinking and self-care: Moderna's mission for its people — and the rest of the world

An interview with

Erin Sarin

Moderna

When your people are busy saving the world, how do you cut through the noise to help them understand the importance of self-care and the value of engaging with a workplace benefits package that can make a real difference to their lives?

As Senior Director of Global Benefits at COVID-19 vaccine pioneers Moderna **Erin Sarin** tells us, it's all about tapping into the needs of the individual and giving them the freedom to prioritise their own wellbeing...



Erin Sarin
Senior Director,
Global Benefits

.....
Moderna

Gallagher: The impact that what you do at Moderna is having on the world has caused significant employee growth in the last six months. How do you work with this level of scale when establishing a holistic communication strategy that works for everyone?

ES: “Moderna is on a path towards solving a very diverse set of health challenges that impact millions of people across the globe. Messenger RNA (mRNA) technology is about instructing a person’s own body to create the proteins that prevent and treat, and even cure, disease.

“Not unlike our science, it’s extremely important for us to understand — and provide scalable platforms for — employees and their families to connect with our benefits and wellbeing programmes.

“Our strategy is to understand our people’s fundamentals, and design programmes that enable access and personalisation, and empower engagement with what they need, while providing them with the ability to step away and take care of themselves and their families.

“Whether we’re talking to one employee in Germany, hundreds in Switzerland or thousands in the US, we make sure that we think about the whole person. Then we build culturally-relevant, impactful experiences and portfolios for our people — regardless of role or location. Cultivating a sense of belonging is the result of a really effective diversity and inclusion practice. Ensuring employees feel heard and understood is core.”



Gallagher: And what about helping your people find that all-important work-life balance they need? It must be so easy to absorb yourself in your career when you can see how much good the business you are part of is doing on such a global scale.

ES: “Moderna is in a unique space from a business perspective. We’re not going to be able to eliminate the amount of work that needs to get done, and the urgency in which we need to act.

“COVID-19 is just the beginning for us and, right now, it’s really important for us to continue delivering on our mission for the world. With that, each employee carries an incredible amount of individual responsibility, so a lot of our messaging focuses on the true importance of taking care of yourself so you can be the best version of yourself both at work and at home. Making sure our people understand that wellbeing is a priority is extremely important — not just for them as individuals, but for the organisation too.

“It’s about acknowledging that there’s no real work-life balance any more, it’s more of a work-life integration. We are responsible for managing our own lives, and have the power to shape our own unique life experiences each and every day. Everyone at Moderna plays a critical role in the success of the company.”

Gallagher: The whole world seems to be focusing on mental health at the moment — and rightly so. How does an organisation like yours drive the message of self-care home to such a dedicated workforce?

ES: “We were already on a collective path to reduce mental-health stigma at Moderna, but throughout COVID-19 we have realised that we really need to prioritise the programmes, communication and space for our people to care for themselves. This means something very different to each of our employees, so it’s important that our messages hit home and recognise the unique challenges that face us in both everyday life, and those monumental life-changing events.

“There’s no doubt that there is now a shared understanding around the importance of wellbeing as a whole, which is so much more than the four pillars of physical, mental, social and financial that make it up. People understand this because of the level of stress we’ve seen, and how that can impact your relationships, your productivity and your ability to perform at work.

“Wellbeing is at the centre of our benefits offering, it impacts how we experience life, and being well impacts our ability to excel, set boundaries and priorities, have productive relationships at work, and feel empowered to change science.”

Gallagher: That does sound empowering — it must feel great to work in an environment that values trust to that level. How else do you reach your people with the messages that matter?

ES: “Recognising who we are as a company, and what matters to our employees is key — sustainability, innovation and creativity. We strive to create messaging and creative content that our employees can relate to.

“Making it easy for employees to engage with that messaging is crucial. So, campaigns included QR codes that helped employees learn more about their benefits on the fly. Creating excitement around the programmes through visual cues in elevators and in common spaces got people talking, and relating, to the benefits too.

“Last year, our organisation released our Moderna Mindsets, which is a view into what it’s like to work, and succeed at Moderna. Linking our programmes back to how you can use them to build on the Mindsets has begun to create the continuum of how our benefits and wellbeing programmes relate to our values and culture.”

Gallagher: It sounds like you’ve got this nailed, Erin — but what does ‘really good’ look like when it comes to delivering the gold-standard benefits experience you want for your people?

ES: “My North Star is creating an experience that’s similar to what you get with Amazon, where people are provided with options and information on a single platform, like our mRNA technology. And if we are able to integrate Alexa or Google into our knowledge-sharing process, it would help us provide not just the best benefits experience but it would also allow us to up our game when it comes to understanding the needs of our employees.

“We need to get to a place where we’re really serving up a comprehensive experience that’s based on what our people need.

“Bringing in all of the different piece-parts can provide a truly hyper-personalised experience, which we believe can be accomplished through artificial intelligence. The information is out there, we just have to get to a place where what we have is smart enough to deliver this back to our people.”

“Making sure our people understand that wellbeing is a priority is extremely important — not just for the future of the organisation, but for the individual too.”



Ask the experts

The state of internal communication



The working world has never undergone so much change or moved so fast. And at this breakneck pace, strong internal communication has become more essential than ever before — a theme that was prominent in this year’s Gallagher State of the Sector report.

We caught up with three guiding lights in the industry — simplycommunicate’s **Marc Wright**, Inner Strength Communication Inc’s **Priya Bates** and the Institute of Internal Communication’s **Jennifer Sproul** — to get their take on today’s internal communication hot topics...



Marc Wright

Managing Director,
simplycommunicate

“Businesses are turning to internal communication to say: ‘How do we continue to drive culture?’ — particularly when it comes to new joiners and Gen Z.”

On hybrid working and culture

“With people going into the office at most three days a week, the ‘bricks and mortar’ structure of the space that determines how we work is getting weaker. This means that the digital platforms we use will have more of an impact on our culture.

“The problem is that we all use the same tools. The culture is currently Microsoft Teams v Zoom – it’s not BP v BT v GSK... Companies are facing a real struggle to engage people around their purpose, because the tools we are all using are vanilla, they’re all the same.

“And that’s why businesses are turning to internal communication to say: ‘How do we continue to drive culture?’ — particularly when it comes to new joiners and Gen Z.”

On the future of communication

“The area we’re coming across the most, which we think will be future facing, is hyper-personalisation. It’s transformed the internet, it’s killed television, it’s changed newspapers, and it’s affected democracy. The good news

about AI-created content is that it’s very personalised, so people will engage with it, they’ll read it; the bad news is that it’s bubble thinking.

“For internal communicators, it means channel management is going to become redundant. That’s tough, because we have all been trained in channel management, so that’ll all change. What these systems will do is see how people are consuming information at different times of the day, and then recommend content you can use to create communications to match how people consume it.

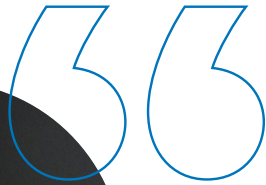
“Our job as communicators becomes one of curation. We take an issue, then we curate it into different packages and ‘the system’ will fire it off to people in different ways. We will lose the control of the portal, even the news carousel will become irrelevant. Instead, we will ask: ‘Where are people at this time of day? Let’s get that bit of news into that time slot.’”



Priya Bates

President,
Inner Strength Communication Inc

“You need to know what you’re doing and what you’re trying to change, or else measurements don’t matter. I think it is the most important thing that internal-communication professionals need to understand.”



On productive remote working

“From what I saw, organisations whose office staff worked virtually during the pandemic did not stop in terms of productivity. The productivity actually increased.

“I had managers tell me they were actually afraid that productivity would go down once people returned to the office. So for us to hear ‘we don’t trust employees’ and ‘we’re afraid that employees aren’t engaged’, while at the same time hearing that productivity and results are just as good... There’s a disconnect there for me.

“We now have an opportunity to define what engagement means to us. Every organisation that’s concerned about disengagement right now should be carrying out an audit. They should be asking employees: ‘What does engagement mean to you?’

“For me, engagement means:

- Performance — is the business performing well?
- Participation — are employees doing what they need to do?
- Promotion — are employees saying good things about the business?
- Pride — are people proud to work here?”

On purpose and strategy

“Only 30% of businesses have an internal communication strategy or plan. I think that’s because there is a little hesitancy for some companies to plan too far into the future. It used to be that we would talk about three- to five-year plans, but that’s kind of gone out the window because now you don’t know what’s happening. You’re kind of going month by month, day by day.

“But I think there’s an opportunity to define your purpose and your approach, from an internal communication perspective. And it’s making sure that that approach works as things change. It’s almost as if you have to create a strategy in order to be flexible.

“That’s the big opportunity for organisations. But you need to know what you’re doing and what you’re trying to change, or else measurements don’t matter. I think it is the most important thing that internal-communication professionals need to understand.”



Jennifer Sproul

Chief Executive,
Institute of Internal Communication

“There is a need to simplify; to lean into our audience preferences and meet them where they’re at. This is about asking: ‘How can we build communications into the flow of the day?’”

On changes in the workforce

“The future of work presents many challenges and opportunities for internal communication, playing an integral role in helping our organisations and people adapt to the changing environment. There are many big changes happening. For example, career customisation: we want careers that meet us where we are, not where the employer is.

“Our preferences are changing: where we work, how we want to engage, how we want to consume content, when we have the chance to consume content... We’re in what I would call an ‘attention-deficit crisis’, where we have probably about six seconds to create cut-through. We’re also moving towards becoming organisations that are significantly flatter in structure, with more distributed working.

“What does that mean for internal communicators? It means we need to keep our core role of driving purpose, vision and values. But we can only do that if businesses are set up behind good behaviours, values, integrity, leadership, and strong people managers.”

On going back to basics

“With burnout, attention deficit, critique, cut-through, engagement, and all the challenges we face — is there a need to go back to basics a bit? Do we need to start with a blank piece of paper and work consistently at driving those messages and those behaviours that are based on continuous feedback loops.

“The problem is we’re all trying to do too much. I think there is a need to simplify; to lean into our audience preferences, understand where they are and meet them where they’re at. This is about asking: ‘How can we build communications into the flow of the day?’”

The hot list

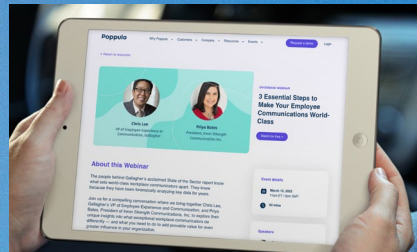
Useful resources to keep you inspired...



On changes in the workforce

Unily assembled the hottest panel of IC pros to rain fire on old ideas of corporate comms and help you be the comms pioneer your business needs.

[Catch the replay >](#)



Three essential steps to world-class employee communications

Join Chris Lee, Gallagher's VP of Employee Experience and Communication, and Priya Bates, President of Inner Strength Communications as they explore what exceptional internal communicators do different. Webinar hosted by Populo.

[Watch on demand >](#)



Discussing this year's State of the Sector findings

Led by Bunch, this launch event brings together internal communication strategists and, Kirstin Stapelberg, Asahi Beverages' Global Head of IC, to discuss the trends uncovered by our global annual report.

[Watch the show >](#)



A Leader Like Me podcast

Priya Bates and Advita Patel amplify the voices of inspirational guests to inspire others and bring change to biases many of us currently face.

[Listen to the podcast >](#)



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