

Tech Doesn’t Transform – People Do: The Power of Internal IT Communication

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As companies invest heavily in new digital tools, the success of these initiatives depends not only on technology itself, but on how well employees are informed about the tools, their use, and the changes they entail. Clear, user-friendly IT communication becomes essential – especially since end-users, regardless of industry or company, often lack technical backgrounds. This article is based on a Master’s thesis completed in the International Business Management programme at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences (Finland), in the context of a double degree with Ansbach University of Applied Sciences (Germany). It explores how internal IT communication can better support end-users and accelerate digital transformation in globally connected companies.



Internal IT_Digital Environment Still Needs People.

Behind every digital tool, there’s a person who has to use it

Digital transformation is a key driver of companies’ present and future success (Dörr, 2019, p. 133). It refers to the integration of digital technologies into all areas of a company (SAP, 2024), reshaping processes, structures, and ways of working. However, the mere implementation of new technologies does not ensure transformation success; it depends primarily on employees who must actively engage with these systems and integrate them into their everyday work. To support this, employees must be properly informed and supported throughout the transformation process (Kirf et al., 2020, p. 58). Otherwise, it’s like introducing a smart coffee machine that no one knows how to use – no app instructions, no setup guidance, just confusion and a return to instant coffee. The same applies to IT tools: without clear, user-friendly communication, even the smartest solution won’t get used.

From confusion to clarity: IT needs translation

This is where internal IT communication becomes critical – especially for end-users, defined as ‘the human user of a software product […] who makes use of a dialog system to perform specialist tasks at the workplace’ (Lackes & Siepermann, 2018). These users often lack technical expertise and rely on IT information being translated into accessible language that matches their knowledge level. Thus, communication must not only inform but enable – turning complexity into clarity.

Closing the gap: what IT must communicate – and how

This creates new communicative responsibilities for IT departments, who must ensure that employees – or more precisely end-users – are well-informed about IT-related developments and changes. To be effective, technical content needs to be broken down into concrete, actionable messages. This is especially important when introducing new digital tools – as clear, user-friendly IT communication directly influences user acceptance, satisfaction (Engelhardt, 2019, p. 6), and the overall success of digital transformation. While internal corporate communication and digital employee communication have been widely studied (Einwiller & Sackmann, 2021; Kirf et al., 2020; Mast, 2022), research specifically on end-user IT communication is scarce. This thesis addresses this gap by examining the characteristics, challenges, and success factors of internal IT communication targeted at end-users.

526 employee voices: the survey behind the thesis

An online survey among 526 employees of a German automotive company explored perceptions of IT communication, preferred communication channels and display formats, as well as expectations and needs regarding IT-related topics. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively, and qualitative responses were thematically coded to enrich findings. What employees (end-users) really need from IT communication:

- Understanding the why: contextual and timely IT communication: ~80 % perceive current IT communication helpful and easy to understand. However, only ~70 % feel fully informed about the reasons behind IT-related changes. This highlights a need for better communication of the ‘big picture’, e.g., by providing project plans.Employees also express a desire for early updates – even if not all details are finalized – as a way to enhance transparency.
- Preferred ways of receiving IT information: Email and the social intranet are the most preferred communication channels, even though information within the social intranet is often fragmented across various sub-pages.Employees prefer short, structured emails containing links to more detailed information. Also, many appreciate seeing IT topics presented in multimedia display formats – such as step-by-step guides, videos or infographics – to support different learning preferences.
- Inviting dialogue, not just delivery: ~78% wish to provide anonymous feedback on a regular basis – e.g., through short surveys – while ~70% are interested in participating as test users before IT tools are rolled out. These findings reflect a desire for greater involvement and early inclusion in IT-related processes. Real-time formats such as live FAQ sessions are also appreciated, as they enable direct interaction, clarify open questions, and strengthen mutual understanding.

How companies can strengthen IT communication with end-users:

1. Central information hub (‘Single Point of Truth’, SPOT): To reduce fragmented information across the social intranet, a central, clearly structured hub should be created. This SPOT should integrate existing sub-pages and serve as the starting point for all IT-related topics, with intuitive navigation tiles that guide users.
2. Diversify content with multimedia display formats: To meet different learning preferences, IT communication should make use of multimedia display formats. These enhance understanding and increase acceptance of complex IT topics. Although creating such content may require additional effort, the long-term benefits outweigh the investment. AI tools can help streamline content creation over time.
3. User-centric emails: Emails should be short and well-structured – using clear headings, bullet points, and distinct sections like ‘*What’s new’* and ‘*What you need to do’.* ks to further resources

(e.g., social intranet articles, LinkedIn Learning courses, relevant professional publications) should be included, allowing end-users to delve deeper into IT topics based on their individual needs.
4. Early involvement and feedback: Involving employees early in the rollout of new digital tools fosters transparency and strengthens acceptance. Pilot programs offer opportunities to gather feedback and identify potential issues at an early stage. Anonymous surveys are useful to collect input, and communicating the results along with follow-up actions helps build trust and show that feedback is taken seriously.

By implementing these strategies, companies can accelerate digital tool adoption, enhance employee engagement, and cultivate a culture of open, transparent IT communication that supports ongoing transformation. This doesn't just improve internal processes – it can, e.g., reduce the number of IT-related helpdesk tickets, free up valuable support resources, and allow employees to spend less time figuring out digital tools and more time focusing on meaningful work. Keywords: internal communication, IT communication, end-user, employee needs, multimedia Theseus: Analysis of Internal IT Communication at Mercedes-Benz: An Empirical Study on Employee Expectations, Preferred Communication Formats, and Optimization Methods: https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:amk-2025060420200. Authors: **Katharina Jasmina Kittelberger**, M.A. International Business Management. The author wrote her Master's thesis as part of her Double Degree studies in the International Business Management programme at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences and Ansbach University of Applied Sciences. She currently works in internal IT communications at a German automotive company, where she focuses on digital end-user communication and IT-related topics. **Elisa Kannasto**, PhD, Head of Degree Programme, Master School, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences. The author was the first supervisor in the thesis process.

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