

# Beyond The Bulletin Transcript

A video blog by Cameron Wood

## Episode #06

**Title:** Data-driven communication strategies

If you're holding the pen for internal communications in your organization, there's a good chance you're leading the charge on employee engagement — and let's be honest, that's no small feat.

Engagement isn't just about good vibes, pizza parties and happy hours. It's about connection, retention, and productivity. And if you want to drive real results, you need a strategy that's built on data, not just gut feelings.

So today, we're going to break down how to create and implement a data-driven communication strategy that actually moves the needle on engagement.

We'll cover what data to track, how to interpret it, and—most importantly—how to turn all of that into action.

### [Section 1: Start with the Right Data]

Now, before you can improve engagement, you need to measure it.

But here's the thing—not all data is created equal. You don't want to waste time drowning in reports that don't tell you anything useful.

So, what should you focus on?

**Engagement Surveys** are your bread and butter. Regular pulse surveys can give you a snapshot of how people are feeling, what they're thinking ... overall employee sentiment.

But here's the key—don't just look at the scores. You have to look closely at the open-text responses.

For example, let's say your latest survey shows a drop in engagement among mid-level managers. If you just look at the numbers, you might assume they're burned out.

But the open responses might tell a different story—maybe they feel in the dark about company strategy or a transformation change initiative. That's a communication issue, not just a workload issue.

**And what about your comms metrics?** If nobody is opening your CEO's all-staff emails, that's a problem.

One organization I worked with saw a 60% drop in quarterly town hall attendance over a 12-month period. Leadership assumed it was a scheduling issue—but if they listened and did some investigation, they would have learned that employees just felt the meetings were scripted and didn't give them an opportunity for two-way engagement.

So what did we do in comms? We told them the truth - if you want people to hear what you're saying then you have to be ready to hear them. Thankfully, leadership did listen and started incorporating live Q&A sessions.

**How is your turnover and retention data?** Do you know where are you losing people, and why?

If top talent keeps leaving after only a short time, your engagement problem might start way earlier—like in onboarding.

**And then there are performance and productivity trends to be explored.** Highly engaged employees tend to perform better. But what if your top performers aren't the most engaged? That's a red flag.

If your highest-performing team is also the least engaged, you need to find out why. Are they overburdened with unrealistic deadlines, or constantly shifting targets, or coping with an untenable workload.

The fix isn't just "improve engagement"—it requires a commitment to reasonable expectations and a manageable workload.

## **[Section 2: The Challenge of Measuring Internal Communications]**

If you've done this gig for any amount of time, you know that Internal communications is one of the most difficult sectors to gain clear metrics on.

Unlike external marketing with all its flash and splash - where you can track clicks, conversions, and revenue impact - internal messaging doesn't always come with obvious numerical success markers.

Open rates on emails don't necessarily mean the message was read or understood. Attendance at town halls doesn't mean employees are actually engaged.

So how do you overcome this challenge? Here are some key strategies:

- **Use Multiple Data Points** – Instead of relying solely on email open rates, combine them with qualitative data like focus groups, pulse surveys, or direct feedback in one-on-one meetings. If an email gets a high open rate but employees still express confusion in surveys, you know the messaging needs improvement.

- **Leverage Engagement Heatmaps** – Some companies track which sections of their intranet or employee portal get the most traffic. If critical information isn't being accessed, you may need to rethink where and how it's shared.
- **Implement Sentiment Analysis** – AI tools can analyze employee survey responses, Slack messages, or even meeting transcripts to detect tone and sentiment. If employees are consistently using words like "frustrated" or "disconnected," you have a deeper issue to address.
- **Look at Actionable Outcomes** – Do employees take action after receiving a communication? For example, if HR sends a message about a new benefits package, does enrollment increase? If not, the messaging may need to be clearer or more compelling.

### [Section 3: Turn Insights into Action]

So now you've got the data. What do you do with it? Data without action is just noise.

Start by **segmenting your audience**. Different groups within your company engage in different ways.

Let's say you notice that senior employees love long-form company updates, but newer hires ignore them. Instead of blasting out the same content to everyone, create shorter, more interactive updates for new hires.

Maybe a quick video update from leadership instead of a five-paragraph email.

**Identify Pain Points:** Patterns in your data can reveal real problems.

If remote employees are consistently rating engagement lower than in-office employees, that tells you something. Maybe they feel isolated, maybe they're missing out on key conversations.

During COVID, the department I was working in used technology to recreate the "watercooler" chats. Weekly informal chats allowed people to connect without an agenda, share non-work news and even address the challenges of working in a remote and isolated reality.

It was a critical way to maintain contact and engagement - so much so that it continued after the pandemic.

**Align with Business Goals:** First thing first - as internal comms, you need to have a very clear understanding of the organization's goals and objectives.

And you also know that in order for employees to feel engaged and passionate about what they're doing, they need to feel heard and valued. If they don't, that's an engagement gap.

You can overcome this by bringing ways to encourage two-way communication - something like using the company intranet to launch something like an internal idea board—employees could

submit ideas, maybe even participate in an innovation dragon's den or concept pitch to leadership, and the best ones get funding. Simple, but effective.

#### **[Section 4: Build a Smarter Communication Plan]**

Execution. Your insights should guide how you communicate.

**Match Content to Your Audience:** Maybe your finance team prefers bullet-pointed emails while your creative team engages better with video. Everyone learns differently, and everyone engages with information differently.

You have to know your audiences - and in many cases, you have to possess the courage to press for what you know is the best approach for engaging them.

**Optimize Your Channels:** If your employees aren't engaging with content on the intranet, stop forcing it. At one organization I was with, we were struggling with employee engagement across a very broad geography. The monthly internal newsletter had grown stale - and frankly, the content didn't really capture what mattered to most people.

We had somewhere in the range of a 20% open rate. So explored a different strategy by breaking this content into more digestible information bits, and instead of monthly emails, we created relevant Slack channels. Engagement doubled - and so did the sharing of things the newsletter was missing - celebrations of milestones and divisional wins.

**Test & Iterate:** A/B testing isn't just for marketing—it works internally, too. You really have to ask yourself “are we doing this out of routine, or do we have the courage to break away from the mentality of ‘we’ve always done it this way’.” Especially if “this way” barely hits double-digits on open rates.

Shake up your subject lines in your internal emails. See if a weekly leadership video gets more engagement than a written update. With mobile technology today, you don't need to call in the production and makeup team. Those videos will come across as far more authentic than anything heavily edited, scripted and over-produced.

The key is to keep tweaking until you find what works.

Data isn't just a reporting tool. It's your secret weapon. When you use it right, you don't just guess at engagement—you create it.

So, what's one metric you're tracking right now? Shoot me a message, or better yet, let's connect on LinkedIn—I'd love to hear what's working (or not working) in your organization.

And hey, if you found this useful, hit follow and stay tuned for more insights on making workplace communication work for you. Until next time!

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*Cameron is an award-winning communications strategist with a remarkable career spanning over three decades. His expertise covers internal and external communications, crisis management, branding, and change communications. He has worked in corporate, academic, and media environments, shaping narratives, driving engagement, and navigating organizations through change with strategic precision.*

*\*\*Want more insights on internal comms? Follow for expert strategies, or connect on LinkedIn to discuss what's working in your organization.\*\**

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