IC 26

Internal Communication in Denmark

– where does the profession stand today, and where is it heading?

An analysis of the role, priorities and development of internal communication in larger Danish companies.

RESONANS PARTNERS

Foreword

When we published our previous analysis of internal communication in Denmark, IC13, in 2013, the field was in motion. The profession had just gained access to the executive suite and was being described as a business partner. At the time, that title carried more ambition than reality. Thirteen years on, the question is no longer whether internal communication has moved, but how far the profession has come and in which direction. That is what we set out to examine.

This analysis of internal communication in Denmark in 2026 - IC26 - is a sounding. It documents Danish internal communication at a time when several dynamics are challenging internal communication departments all at once. AI is changing ways of working, priorities and expectations. Hybrid working has become everyday life. Line managers are expected to communicate more, yet have less time for dialogue with individual employees. Geopolitical unrest and growing uncertainty have made internal communication a question of trust, and not just information. At the same time, the pace of change, transformation, strategy shifts and leadership changes keeps accelerating, which increases the need for internal communication, but also the challenges it faces.

To understand this development, we asked 40 communication professionals from some of Denmark's largest private and public organisations a series of questions about their internal communication practice. We have compared their answers with the results from 2013 and set them in perspective against international studies.

The result is this analysis, which offers a current picture of internal communication in Danish organisations. Here you can explore the development and gain insight into how communication professionals prioritise, organise and navigate today, and which trends are shaping the profession right now.

It is written for you who work in internal communication or lead a communication department and want an up-to-date perspective on the field. Use it as an occasion for reflection, discussion and action.

We would like to extend our warm thanks to the organisations that took part in the analysis.

Read it, use it. And let it challenge you.

Enjoy the read.

Resonans Partners
Copenhagen, August 2026

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Executive summary

For the busy reader. The headlines in brief.

Internal communication has gained a more strategic position in Danish organisations, but the potential is far from realised. Senior leadership communication stands strong, while line manager communication remains the open flank. AI has moved from experiment to an agenda in its own right. Strategy matters more than ever, while measurement and governance lag behind. The task portfolio is growing, but resources are not keeping pace.

1.1 What has changed over the past decade

The IC13 analysis drew a line in the sand. Thirteen years later, we can measure how far internal communication has moved in Danish organisations, and where it stands still.

The most important shift is that the role of strategic partner has been consolidated. In 2013 it was an ambition. Even then, organisations pointed to business understanding as the most important competency and to senior leadership as the most important collaboration partner. Both tendencies are stronger today. Business understanding is still rated among the most important competencies of all, with 74 per cent calling it very important. At the same time, no less than 98 per cent work with senior leadership daily or often. But beneath the surface, something has shifted. The advisory role today demands more competencies than before. Strategy and planning, advising leaders and change communication all now rank high on the competency list. Together, this paints a picture of a profession that has increasingly become part of the work of leadership and the business.

The second most important shift concerns the channel repertoire. In 2013, a multi-mix of channels was the big trend. The intranet and managers were the most important. In 2026, managers remain central: the line manager is rated an important channel by 89 per cent of organisations. The intranet, by contrast, has declined in importance. Only 21 per cent rate intranet news as very important. The written word on a platform carries less weight, while direct communication from a manager carries more.

The third shift is new since 2013. The pace of change, AI as an agenda in its own right and new ways of working built around hybrid work have changed the conditions of the profession and pushed competency requirements in a direction no one could have predicted back then.

What has not moved, however, is the weak communication position of line managers - the continued shadow status of measurement - and a certain inertia in how early internal communication is involved in business decisions..

1.2 Key trends

Six trends dominate the picture in 2026. Together they show a communication profession that has gained a stronger strategic role, but must now convert that position into real influence, better documentation and sharper prioritisation.

The role of strategic adviser has been won, but is still brought in too late
Internal communication has become a strategic advisory function, and is often in daily dialogue with senior leadership. Leaders frequently ask for advice on internal communication, and the advice given is listened to. At the same time, a picture emerges of advisers often stepping in only once decisions have been made, ending up advising on messages rather than helping to shape decisions.

The line manager is the profession's greatest untapped potential
Managers are the most important communication channel in any organisation, but this is precisely where the results reveal a weakness. Senior leadership is rated highly on credibility and the ability to set direction, while line managers score markedly lower, especially on their ability to communicate the overarching messages. If organisations want to strengthen their internal communication, the greatest untapped potential lies with the line managers who every day must turn company strategy into something employees can understand, relate to and act on.

AI is no longer an experiment – it is a new core competency
Generative AI has moved from experiment to priority. 47 per cent rate AI as a very important competency, and the technology is now among the areas organisations expect to focus on most in the coming years. The question is no longer whether AI will become part of internal communication, but how it should be governed, applied and integrated responsibly. That makes AI a communication task and not just a technology platform.

Measurement is widespread – but rarely shows whether communication works
Seven in ten organisations measure their internal communication. But most measure activity - readership, open rates and engagement – while understanding, behaviour and the link between communication and business results are rarely measured. At the same time, only 18 per cent rate measurement as a very important competency. The profession has become more strategic, but has yet to develop the same strength in documenting its business value.

Communication channels are less about platforms and more about people
The development in communication channels since 2013 is clear. Focus has shifted from platforms to people. The intranet has become infrastructure, while the line manager and senior leadership are the most important communication channels. Internal communication is increasingly about creating understanding through relationships rather than distributing content through digital channels.

More tasks and flat budgets make prioritisation a core discipline
Strategy implementation, change communication, AI and new demands on leadership keep growing. Yet almost half report unchanged staffing, and seven in ten have unchanged budgets. Internal communication is expected to solve more and more complex tasks without correspondingly more resources. The result is a profession at growing risk of being spread too thinly. Prioritisation therefore becomes a vital discipline, and a necessary act of leadership for the communication function.

1.3 Key conclusions and recommendations

We have distilled the analysis into five conclusions and recommendations. Together they describe a profession that has achieved greater strategic significance, but at the same time faces new demands for influence, documentation and prioritisation.

1 The communication function must step in earlier if it wants real influence

Internal communication has won the ear of senior leadership, but with the transformative challenges organisations face today, advising on strategic messages is not enough. One of internal communication's greatest opportunities lies not in communicating better decisions, but in contributing to better decisions – and thereby stepping into the process far earlier.

Recommendations
- Map when and where internal communication is involved in major decisions
- Prioritise access to the forums where decisions are shaped – not just communicated
- Use employee and organisational insights more actively in leadership's decision-making
- Let go of control and invite meaning-making conversations in which the whole organisation is a co-producer.

2 The greatest communication lift lies with line managers

Managers are the most important communication channel in any organisation, but line managers are rated markedly weaker than senior leadership on key communication parameters. Developing line managers' communication skills is probably the single investment that can lift the profession most, because this is where strategy meets everyday life.

Recommendations
- Reconsider the balance of resources between senior leader communication and line manager support
- Develop 360-degree concepts to secure managers' ability to create understanding, dialogue and direction in everyday work
- Tie leader communication closely to the organisation's leadership principles and make it a shared responsibility between communication and HR
- Create a regular meeting structure where line managers meet and can discuss strategic decisions before they are announced
- Measure leader communication systematically, including its effects on wellbeing, engagement and productivity.

3 AI requires communication leadership – not just technical implementation

AI is no longer a trend to read about. It is a strategic focus area that is already affecting core communication tasks. It is an important competency everyone should master. Internal communication functions that are not on board now will fall behind.

Recommendations
- Draw up clear principles for the use of AI
- Identify the processes where AI can free up time for better editorial, relevant and engaging content
- Establish closer collaboration with IT, HR and digitalisation functions
- Take responsibility and leadership on AI governance.

4 The profession must get better at documenting impact – not just activity

Internal communication is increasingly being measured, but the focus remains primarily on activity and reach rather than impact and business value. That creates a gap between the profession's strategic ambitions and its ability to document real results and its own value.

Recommendations
- Shift focus from activity and reach to understanding, attitudes, behaviour and embedding
- Define a few clear, impact-oriented goals for the most important initiatives
- Integrate measurement early in projects rather than after implementation
- Build competencies in data, analysis, evaluation and impact measurement.

5 Prioritisation is crucial if communication is not to drown

Internal communication is expected to take on more and more complex tasks without corresponding growth in budgets or staffing. The result is a profession at risk of being spread too thinly, where sharp prioritisation becomes a necessary discipline rather than a choice.

Recommendations
- Review the full communication portfolio annually, focusing on impact and deselection
- Consolidate and simplify channels, products and processes wherever possible
- Prioritise tasks with the greatest strategic value over the greatest visibility
- Use AI and automation to free up time for advice and change.

2

Results

Now we go deeper. In the following sections we unfold the results of the analysis theme by theme. The numbers do not speak alone, so we have made a point of reading them in the light of the profession's development, dilemmas and practice.

The structure follows the classic disciplines of the profession: organisation, responsibilities, activities, collaboration, channels, leadership communication and, finally, strategy, measurement and barriers. You can read the results from start to finish or go straight to the areas most relevant to you, your function and your organisation.

2.1 Organisation, structure and budget

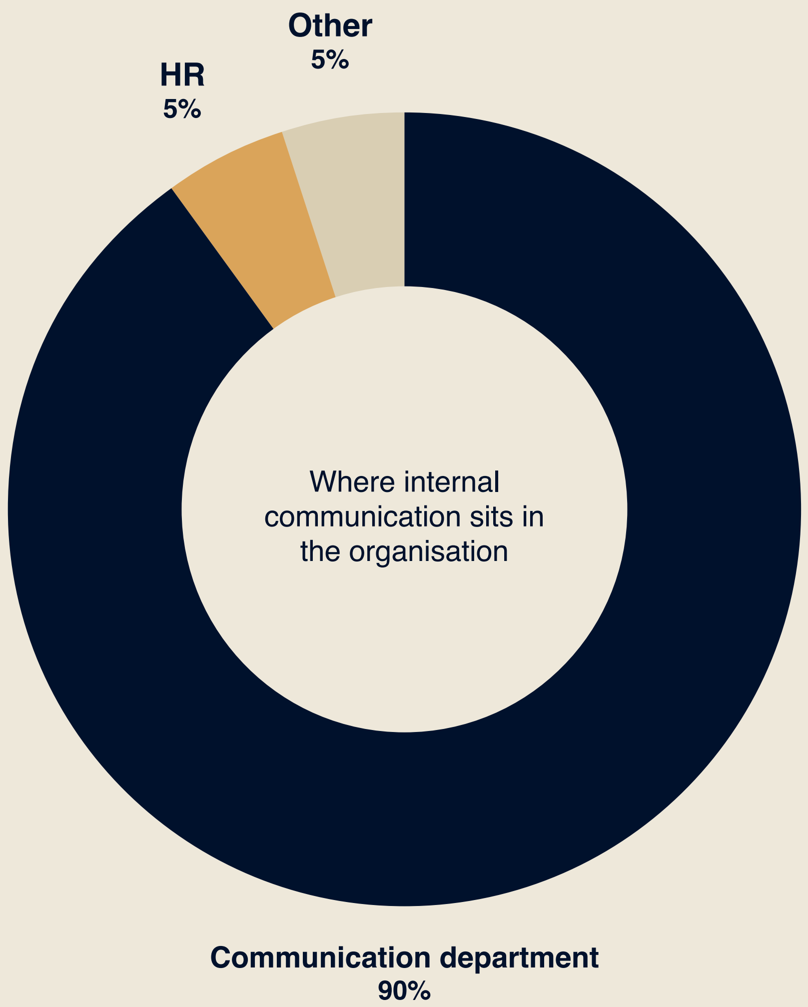
Where does internal communication sit in the organisation? How many people are there to do the work? And which way are budgets moving? Structure often says more about how the profession is prioritised than all the fine words in the strategy.

First, placement. For 90 per cent of the organisations surveyed, internal communication sits within the communication department. The picture is unambiguous. Internal communication is a communication discipline, not an HR function. In 2013 the picture was the same, but less clear-cut. Then too, responsibility for internal communication lay with the communication department in the majority of organisations, and only rarely with HR. The discussion about where the discipline really belongs has largely been laid to rest.

Then, size. Where the communication department as a whole averages 10 employees, internal communication holds an average of three of those seats.

Almost half of the organisations surveyed have one to three employees dedicated to internal communication. It is thus a small, specialised unit. And this picture is largely unchanged compared with our analysis back in 2013. Taken as a whole, the profession is not growing. That could prove a barrier in future. If staffing stands still while complexity and expectations grow, the pressure on productivity will keep mounting.

The budget picture continues this trend. 71 per cent report an unchanged budget in 2026 compared with 2025. 16 per cent have a larger budget. 13 per cent have a smaller one. Stability is the dominant pattern.



2.2 Responsibilities and competencies

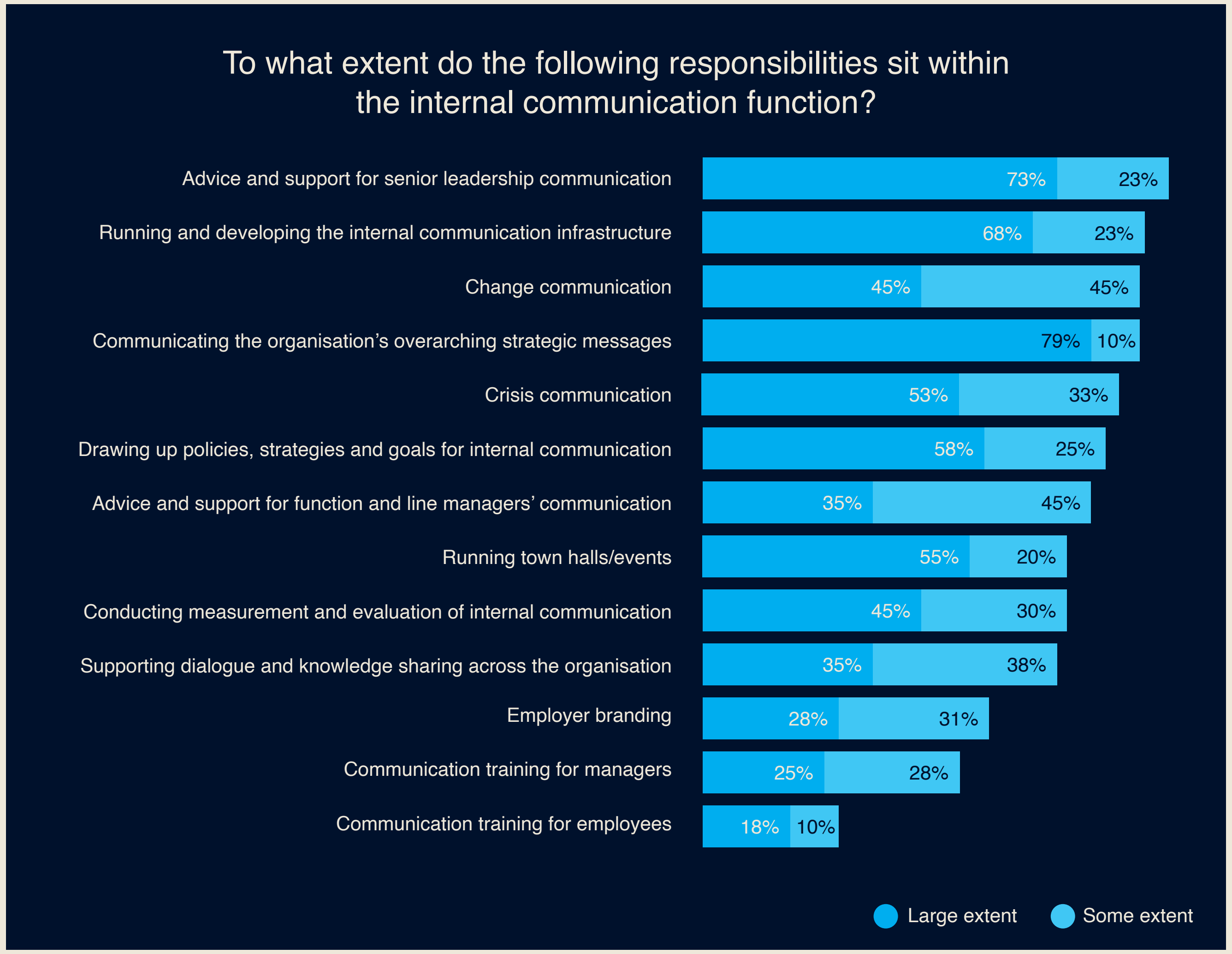
Which responsibilities belong to the internal communication function today? And which ompetencies does that require? The questions are connected, but they are worth examining separately first.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities form a clear hierarchy. The vast majority of organisations consider communicating the overarching strategic messages to sit firmly within internal communication. Close behind come advising senior leadership and running the internal communication infrastructure. This underlines that internal communication today is first and foremost a strategic discipline. Infrastructure and channels remain a large part of the responsibility, but increasingly as a foundation supporting business, leadership and change. The results suggest that internal communication has come a long way towards becoming an integrated part of the organisation's strategic engine room, and is no longer primarily a sender of information. It is an adviser, a sparring partner and a translator of the organisation's direction.

At the lower end of the list of responsibilities we find employer branding and the training of employees and managers. This is not necessarily because these tasks are considered less important, but perhaps rather because they sit with HR or other parts of the organisation.

That holds an interesting paradox. Line managers' communication and their ability to create understanding and direction turn out, later in this analysis, to be one of the profession's undeveloped levers. In other words, some of the greatest potential for improvement lies in a field that internal communication does not necessarily see as its responsibility – or only partly takes ownership of.



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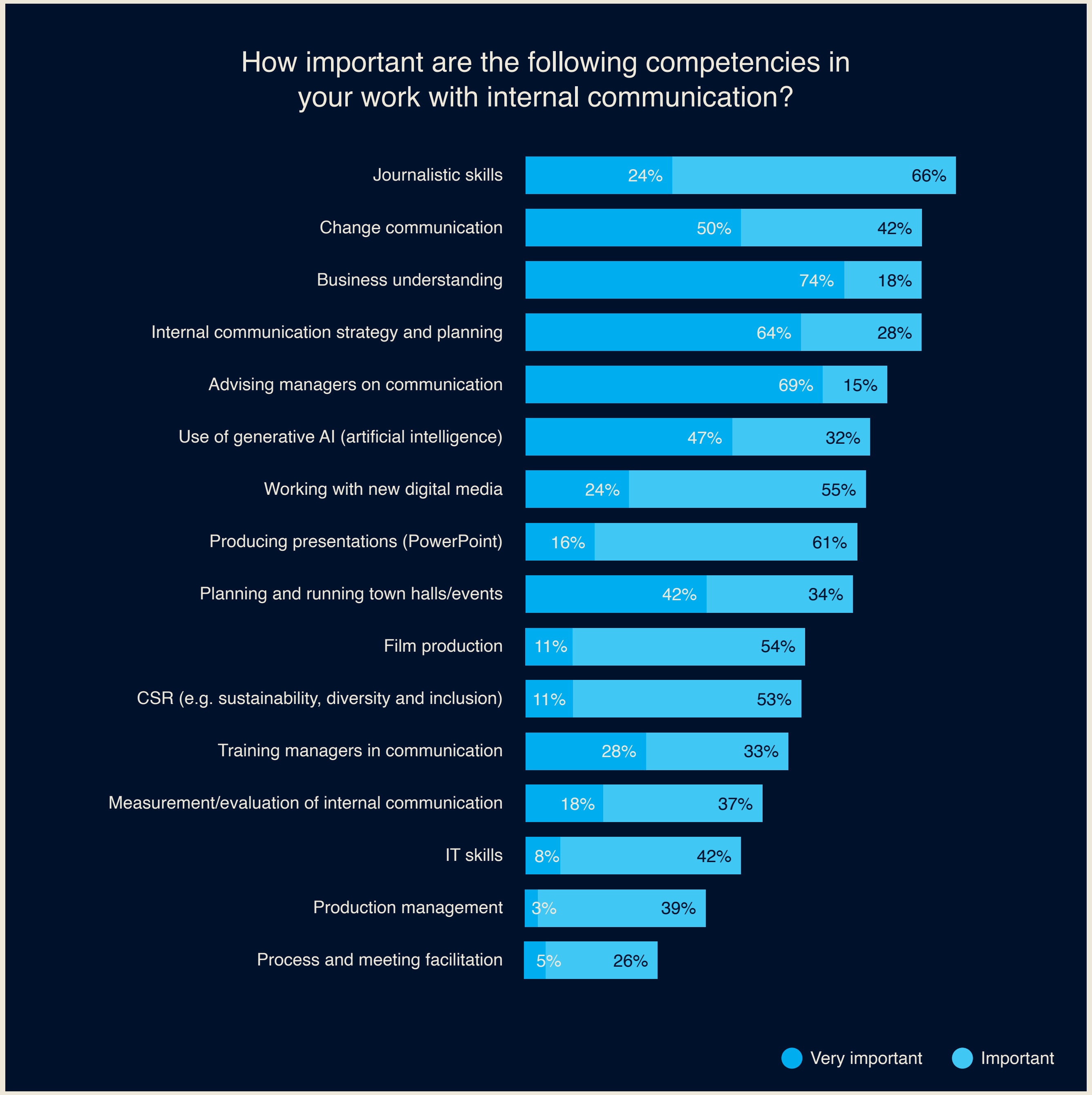
Compared with the IC13 analysis, the movement is clear. In 2013, the top-priority responsibility was writing and publishing news and supporting communication from senior leadership. The writing is still there, but it now appears as a sub-competency rather than the profession's main occupation. The centre of gravity has shifted from production to advice.

Competencies

The competency picture confirms the same movement, but draws it even more sharply. Internal communication today is a profession that first and foremost demands business understanding, strategic thinking and advisory skills. Classic communication disciplines such as content production, IT skills and facilitation take up relatively little space in the competency picture. That does not mean they have become redundant. But they are no longer what defines the profession's value. Value is increasingly created through the ability to understand the business, navigate organisational interests and turn strategy into action.



IC26

> If internal communication wants to be seen as a strategic function, it also requires the ability to document its impact.

Business understanding was the top competency in IC13 too, but what has changed around it is interesting. AI is the most visible newcomer. In 2013, AI was not a competency. It was not on the list. In 2026 it is near the top. Even more interesting is what that tells us about the profession's future. AI does not look set to replace the communication function. On the contrary, international studies show that it appears to reinforce the development already under way.

So what is AI used for? Across open answers and international benchmarks, a picture emerges. AI is used first and foremost in content production: research, drafts, translations, captions, summaries of long documents. Next in audience segmentation, where AI makes it possible to tailor the same message to different recipients. And finally in analysis of, for example, employee feedback, where far larger volumes of free text can be processed and structured in a minute.

The consequence is worth highlighting. When technology can take over large parts of production, the value of the human communicator moves up the value chain. What matters is not the ability to produce, but the ability to ask the right questions, understand the context, understand the business and judge the quality of what is produced. That is what will distinguish the skilled communication adviser from an AI agent. In short: the better AI gets at communicating, the more important the adviser's ability to think.

The sixth point in the competency picture (on the previous page) is perhaps the most worrying. Measurement and evaluation are rated very important by only 18 per cent. If the profession is to count as a strategic partner, that number does not match the ambition. The final point in the competency picture holds a challenge. If internal communication wants to be seen as a strategic function, it also requires the ability to document its impact. Here an imbalance arises, as measurement/evaluation of internal communication is rated less important in almost half of the organisations. We return to this in section 2.7.

2.3 Activities and priorities

Which activities did the internal communication function spend most resources on in 2025, and which themes will demand most attention in 2026? Time is usually a scarce resource in a communication department, so prioritisation says something important about the profession's role and organisations' needs.

Activities in 2025

When the organisations surveyed describe where they spent most resources in 2025, a clear pattern emerges. Strategy launch and strategy implementation take up most space, followed by change communication, town halls and events, development of digital platforms and leadership communication.

This points to a profession largely mobilised around the organisation's big movements. Internal communication is not just used to keep employees informed, but to help organisations move. New strategies must be understood and turned into concrete action, changes must be explained and accepted, and leadership must set the direction at internal leader meetings and town halls. That is where the resources are invested.

This matches the international movement, where analyses show that creating clarity about the organisation's purpose and direction has risen to become the top priority for internal communication globally.

Activities that consumed the most resources in 2025

1 Strategy (launch, roll-out, implementation, communicating the strategy)

2 Change communication (change, reorganisation, leadership communication, integration, M&A)

3 Events, town halls and leadership gatherings

4 Running and developing internal communication platforms

5 Campaigns, news and content production

6 CVI, brand and employer branding

Top priorities for 2026

When we turn to 2026 and ask which major themes will require most time in internal communication, it is clear that the strategic agenda continues. Strategy and strategy implementation remain the dominant area. This shows it is an enduring discipline in which internal communication is expected to create understanding, direction and embedding over time.

At the same time, a new development is emerging. AI is now an agenda in its own right. Several of the organisations surveyed name generative AI or AI implementation as one of the most important themes for 2026. For many, AI is no longer just a competency internal communication should focus on. It is an area to build a strategy for.

Change communication, leadership communication, sustainability and digital transformation also feature among the priorities. This signals that focus is directed at the organisation's strategic shifts rather than at driving communication initiatives of its own.

The comparison with the IC13 analysis makes this development particularly clear. Back then, developing internal media, communicating business strategy and senior leadership communication were the three dominant themes. Note that in 2013, communication channels were an activity area in their own right. Today they are largely absent from the answers. That does not mean they have become less important, but rather that attention has shifted from the channels themselves to the business challenges the channels must support. The profession today thinks less in terms of intranet, news and formats, and more in terms of strategy, change and leadership.

Top priorities 2026

1. Strategy & strategy implementation
2. AI & digital transformation
3. Change communication
4. Sustainability & CSR
5. Channels & communication infrastructure (intranet, podcasts, town halls)
6. Employee engagement, community & knowledge sharing
7. Leadership communication & leadership
8. Leadership change (new CEO)
9. Customer focus & sales
10. Positioning & visibility (branding, press)

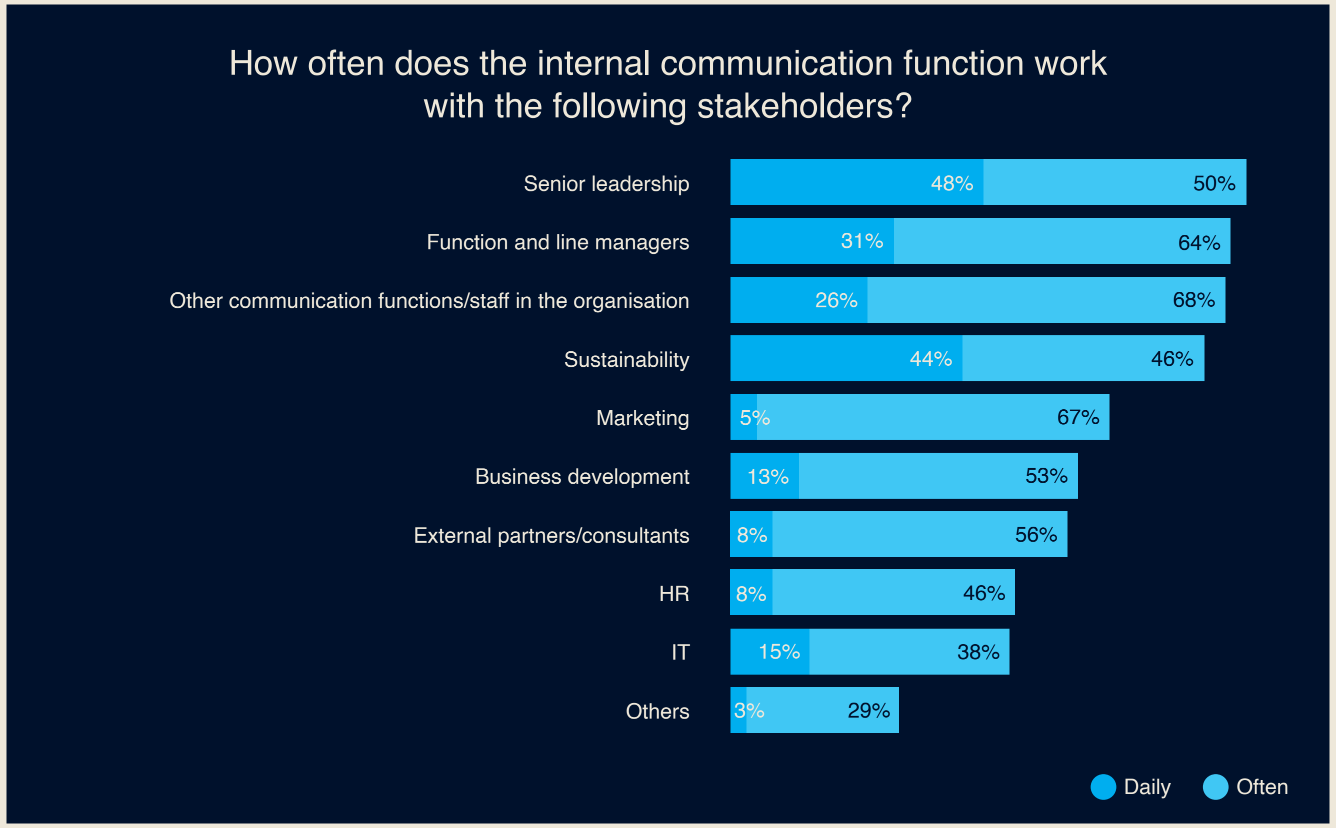
2.4 Collaboration and involvement

Who does the internal communication function work with most in everyday life? And to what extent is internal communication involved early in decision-making? Collaboration says something important about the profession's position, because the profession rarely creates value alone. It depends on a well-oiled interplay with leadership, HR, the business and employees.

Key collaboration partners

The most important collaboration partner is unambiguous: senior leadership. 48 per cent work with senior leadership daily, and in total 98 per cent do so daily or often. It is a strong connection, and it has remained strong since 2013, when senior leadership was also the most important collaboration partner. The difference is that today the bond is more daily and operational.

Next come other communication functions, HR and line and function managers. A result showing that collaboration is concentrated around the classic relationships. The link to areas such as business development, IT and sustainability is considerably weaker. That is interesting, as AI, digital transformation and sustainability are named as central themes and priorities, as we have just read above. For these business agendas, internal communication will increasingly need strong alliances beyond its traditional network.

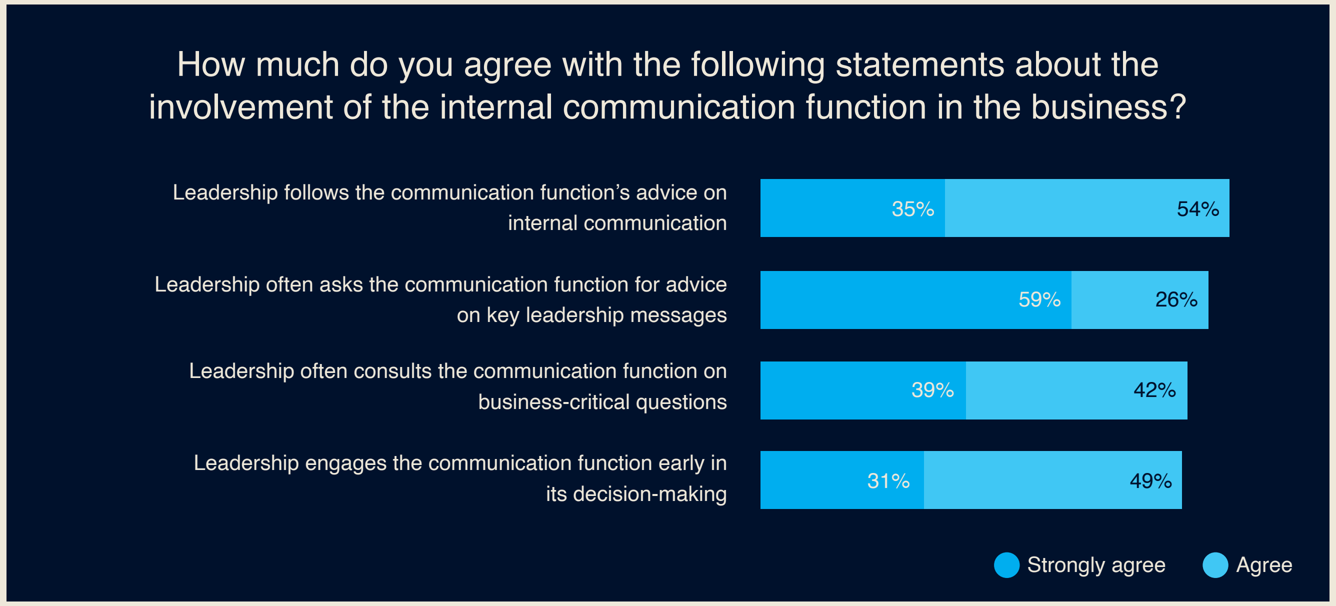


Involvement

When it comes to involvement in decision-making, the picture becomes more nuanced. Respondents feel used, to a high degree, as advisers on messages, leader communication and delivery. But markedly fewer report being involved early in the decisions the messages spring from.

This points to an important difference between access and influence. In many organisations, internal communication has gained close access to leadership, but access is not necessarily the same as strategic influence. Leadership reaches out when communication needs shaping. It reaches out more rarely before the decision is made.

This is probably one of the most important areas for development in the years ahead. The more organisations are marked by change, complexity and the need for employee backing, the harder it becomes to separate decision and communication. The organisations that succeed best will probably be those where communication is not bolted on at the end, but thought in from the start. One of internal communication's greatest opportunities may therefore lie not in communicating better decisions, but in contributing to better decisions.



2.5 Communication channels

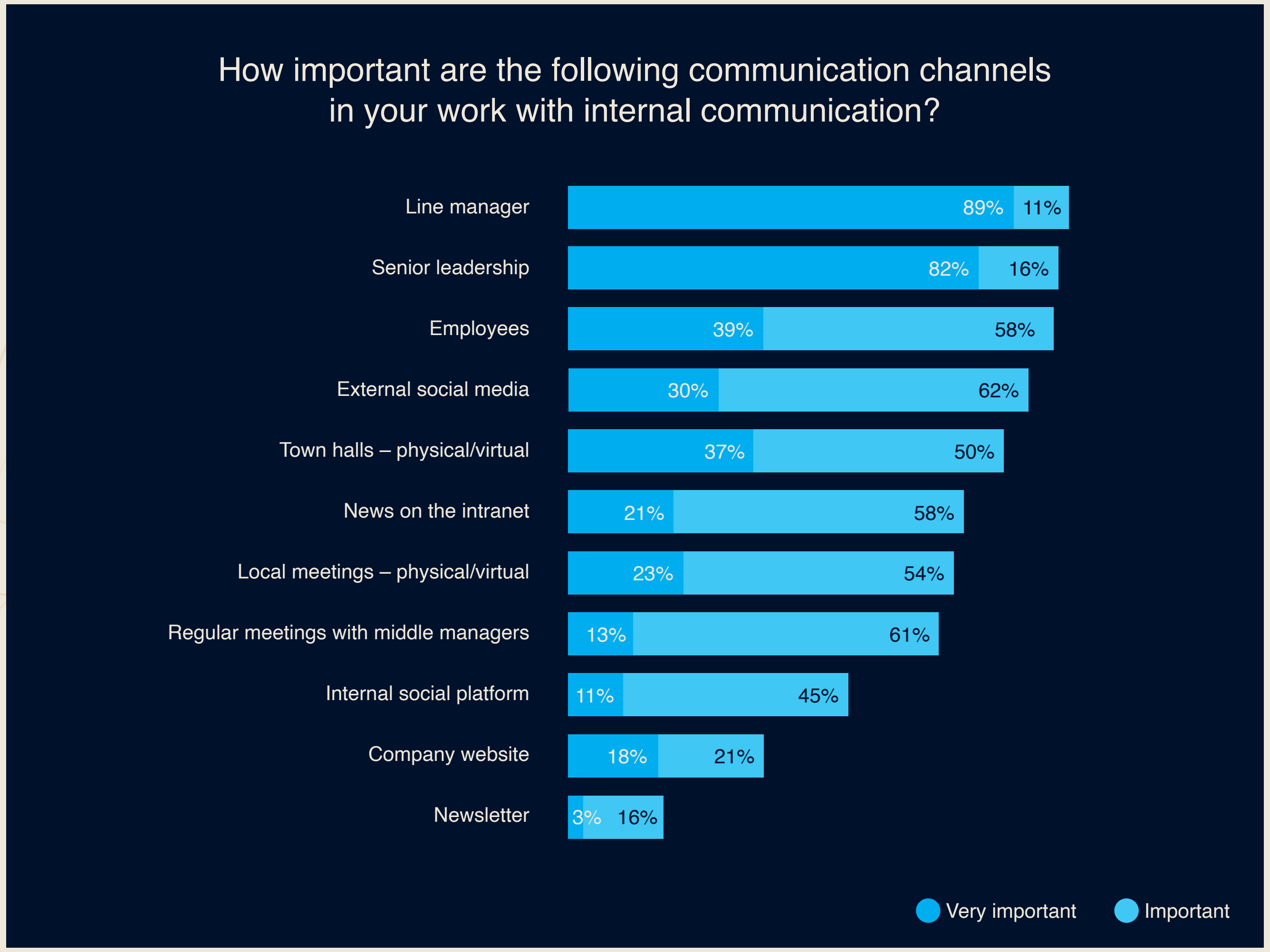
Which communication channels are considered most important today? And what do these choices tell us? This is not an innocent technical discussion. They are choices about where organisations believe their story should live.

The results point to one clear conclusion. Internal communication is less about digital platforms and far more about human relationships. The line manager is clearly the most important channel, rated very important by no less than 89 per cent. Senior leadership follows just behind at 82 per cent. No digital platform comes anywhere near the same significance.

This marks a clear development since 2013. Back then, the intranet, together with managers, was the most important channel. The intranet still exists, but its role has shifted from primary channel to infrastructure. It is a precondition for communication, and no longer its centre of gravity.

The results also point to a gradual dissolution of the boundary between internal and external communication. That external social media are rated relatively important in an internal communication context reflects a reality in which employees increasingly encounter the organisation's story in the same places as customers and the outside world.

The most important insight, however, is that even in a digital reality, managers are the most important message bearers. That makes leader communication one of the most strategic areas for internal communication. If the most important channel is the line manager, then managers' communication skills become decisive for whether strategies, changes and messages actually get through. And precisely here, the results show considerable untapped potential. We look closer at this in the next section.



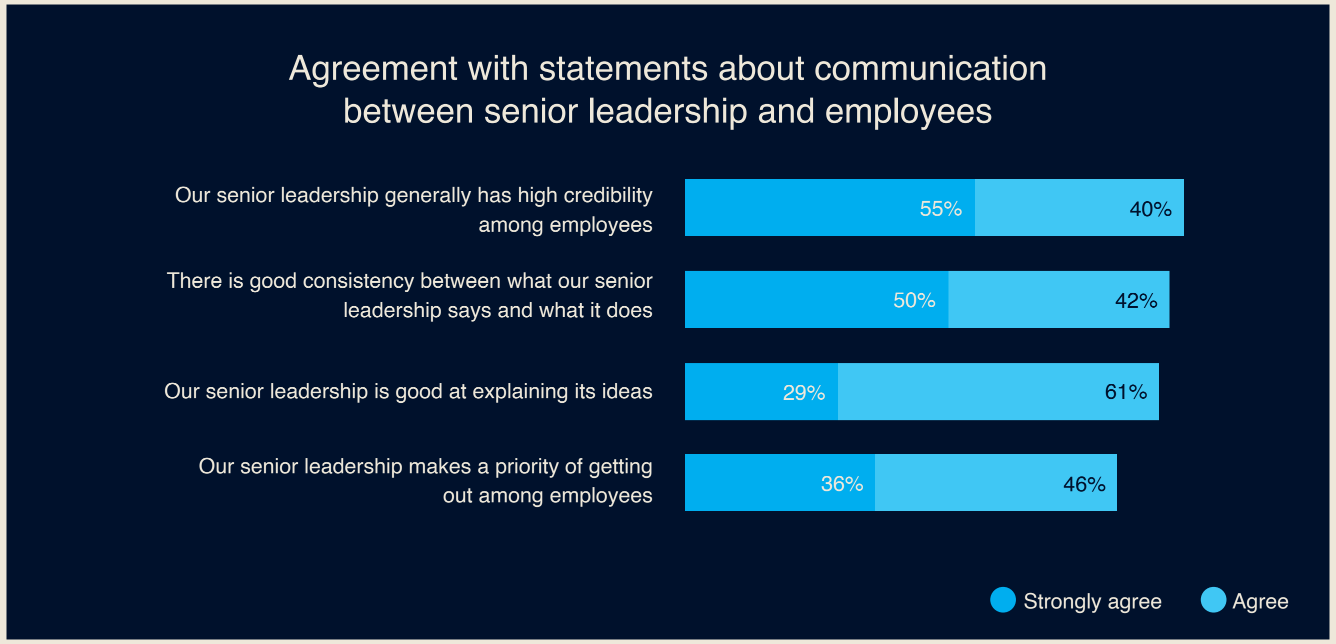
2.6 Leadership communication

How is communication between senior leadership and employees rated? And between line managers and employees? When managers are rated the most important channels for internal communication, the quality of their communication becomes decisive for whether strategies, changes and messages get through. Are they equipped to carry that role?

The results reveal a divide between senior leadership and the line managers.

Senior leadership stands strong. 95 per cent strongly agree or agree that senior leadership has high credibility among employees. 92 per cent strongly agree or agree that there is good consistency between what senior leadership says and what it does. 82 per cent find that senior leadership makes a priority of being visible among employees, and 90 per cent believe they are good at explaining their ideas.

Overall, a picture emerges of a senior leadership that is visible, credible and able to set direction. These are remarkably strong results at a time when many organisations are marked by change and uncertainty.



The picture changes, however, when focus shifts to the line managers.

Credibility remains relatively high, but the intensity of the ratings drops markedly. Only 19 per cent strongly agree that line managers have high credibility, against 55 per cent for senior leadership. The difference becomes even clearer when it comes to the ability to explain and create understanding. Here, 75 per cent do agree that line managers are good at explaining their ideas, but none strongly agree. By comparison, 29 per cent do so when the assessment concerns senior leadership.

The same pattern recurs in the assessment of line managers' ability to communicate the organisation's overarching messages. 62 per cent agree or strongly agree, while 35 per cent are less convinced. Not disastrous, but not convincing either. And that is precisely the point. If the line manager is the organisation's most important communication channel, it is not enough for communication to work reasonably well. It has to work really well.

Here an interesting paradox opens up. Trust in senior leadership appears stronger than the daily translation of its messages. The strategy is clear at the top, but less clear on its way through the organisation. And precisely that translation from overall direction to local meaning is one of the line manager's most important tasks.

The results therefore point to a clear conclusion. If organisations want to strengthen their internal communication, the greatest untapped potential lies with the line managers who every day must turn the organisation's strategy into something employees can understand, relate to and act on. Developing line managers' communication skills is probably the single investment that can lift the profession most.

2.7 Strategy and measurement

Are the ambitions for internal communication turned into strategies? And are the goals followed up? Internal communication has moved close to leadership and the business over the years, but is the ability to document its value keeping up?

The strategic anchoring is clear. 58 per cent of respondents say that policies, strategies and goals for internal communication are, to a high degree, part of their responsibilities, as we saw on page 10. It is consolidated practice. In 2013, written strategies and plans were widespread, and they still are. The difference is that strategy today more closely follows leadership's agenda, with strategy launch and implementation as the dominant activity in both 2025 and 2026.

Measurement is another matter. 70 per cent of organisations measure their internal communication, with employee satisfaction surveys, intranet and platform statistics, town hall evaluations and focus groups as the most common methods.

These are competent measurement practices, but they are largely aimed at usage and reach: readership, open rates and engagement. Far more rarely do they measure understanding, behavioural change or the link between communication and business value creation, such as engagement and productivity.

In many ways this is understandable. It is considerably easier to measure how many people opened an email or read an article on the intranet than to measure whether employees have understood a strategy or changed behaviour as a result of a communication effort.

Only 18 per cent rate measurement as a very important competency. It is the second-lowest ranked competency in the overview in section 2.2. In time, that could become a challenge. The more internal communication positions itself as a strategic discipline, the greater the need to work professionally with data and document its business value rather than its activity.

If you measure your internal communication - how do you do it?

Platform data and traffic

Most measure views, readership and traffic on the intranet and the internal communication platforms, primarily as a measure of reach.

Questionnaires and surveys

Engagement surveys, questionnaires and evaluations after town halls are a tool used by a smaller share of organisations.

Focus groups as a supplement

A secondary, qualitative layer on top of the quantitative data. Though only a few organisations use this.

3

Internal communication in an international context

How internal communication is managed and evolves does not stand alone. We lean on international currents and are influenced by them whether we want to be or not. The evidence base the profession rests on here in Denmark comes from abroad. In this chapter we lift our gaze and hold the Danish numbers up against the studies that measure the same development in other countries. We look at three things: where Denmark keeps pace, where we stand out, and what we can learn.

3.1 Where Denmark keeps pace

Denmark is in line with Europe when it comes to the weight of the strategic role. When the majority of respondents see themselves as strategic advisers, it mirrors the European pattern. ECM describes how the communication function has made the coach and adviser role its primary identity. In 2013 it was an ambition. In 2026 it is a reality, at home as well as abroad.

Nor do we hold a patent on weak measurement of communication efforts. The 70 per cent who measure here at home essentially measure activity. So does the rest of the world. Gallagher 2026 finds that 70 per cent of communicators globally are stuck in basic output numbers such as opens, clicks and views, that only 16 per cent measure real value creation, and that a mere 12 per cent link communication to business impact.

Simpplr's trend report points the same way: 63 per cent measure open and click rates, while only 22 per cent use actual business metrics, and one in four say they have no good way of measuring at all. The interesting thing is that the demand exists. Simpplr finds that 89 per cent of the senior leaders surveyed believe internal communication should be measured on business goals such as productivity or revenue. The capacity to deliver on that has simply not been built yet. IoIC puts it sharply in its report, where half of practitioners call measurement a challenge to be solved. The Danish figure of 18 per cent rating measurement a very important competency is thus not a Danish anomaly. It is an international blind spot.

> 70% of communicators globally are stuck in basic output numbers suchas opens, clicks and views

Other countries know the line manager problem too. Gallagher 2026 points to leadership communication as the dimension that most clearly separates the best performing functions from the rest. And those same functions often refrain from measuring it. 38 per cent do not measure at all whether managers' communication works, and 30 per cent do not measure trust in leadership, even though leadership trust is singled out this year as one of the biggest communication risks. The Danish picture fits right in: we have a gap at the line manager, and a gap in our knowledge about it.

The reference frame

The European Communication Monitor (ECM) remains the longest-running European mapping of strategic communication, built on answers from nearly 40,000 professionals in around 50 countries.

Gallagher's Employee Communications Report (Gallagher 2026) has followed the sector for 18 years and rests, in the 2026 round, on more than 1,300 responses from 40 countries.

The Internal Communication Index from the UK's IoIC and Ipsos Karian & Box asks fully 5,000 employees in 2026 how communication is actually experienced from the floor.

Simpplr's American State of Internal Communications and Workshops trend report measures practitioners' own reality.

Edelman's Trust Barometer keeps an eye on where trust in society is heading.

The British Employee Communication Impact Study 2025 was conducted by Staffbase and YouGov and builds on 529 responses from employees in the United Kingdom, collected via online interviews between 12 and 19 February 2025.

HarrisX and Ragan asked 437 CEOs and communication professionals how they see each other's roles (2024).

3.2 Where Denmark stands out

In three places the Danish picture deviates from the international studies.

1. The first is the weight of managers in channel choice. 89 per cent rate the line manager a very important channel, and 82 per cent say the same of senior leadership. That the manager is an important channel is not in itself Danish. The British Employee Communication Impact Study finds that the immediate manager is the most trusted source of information for employees, with 55 per cent placing great trust in them. What is distinctive is the weighting. Where ECM describes an omnichannel reality in which channels level out in importance, Danish organisations hold on to the manager as first choice, far above the written platforms. That is probably a genuine cultural difference. The Danish leadership tradition is flat and dialogue-oriented, which gives the line manager a larger role than in more hierarchical cultures. It also explains why the weakness among line managers hits harder precisely here.
2. The second is AI. 47 per cent of Danish organisations rate generative AI a very important competency, and that is higher than we had expected. So the ambition is out in front. The practical shift is not. Gallagher finds that 75 per cent of functions globally remain in an early, ad hoc stage in their use of AI, and that only 36 per cent feel equipped to use the technology effectively. Simpplr offers a clue as to why. AI is used busily for research, meeting notes and content production, but only 35 per cent use it for strategy work and 28 per cent for communication planning. It is not a competency gap, Simpplr concludes, but a habit gap. The Danish ambition is real. But the distance from ambition to governance is wide.
3. The third is placement. When 90 per cent of the Danish functions sit in the communication department, the picture is unambiguous. Internationally the field is more divided, and the question of where the profession belongs is still debated. A study by HarrisX and Ragan illustrates the dispute: 74 per cent of the CEOs surveyed believe communication should report directly to them, while only 31 per cent of communication chiefs agree. The Danish consolidation is a strength because it gives the profession a clear home ground. It is also a vulnerability if it shields the profession from how communication lives beyond its own department.

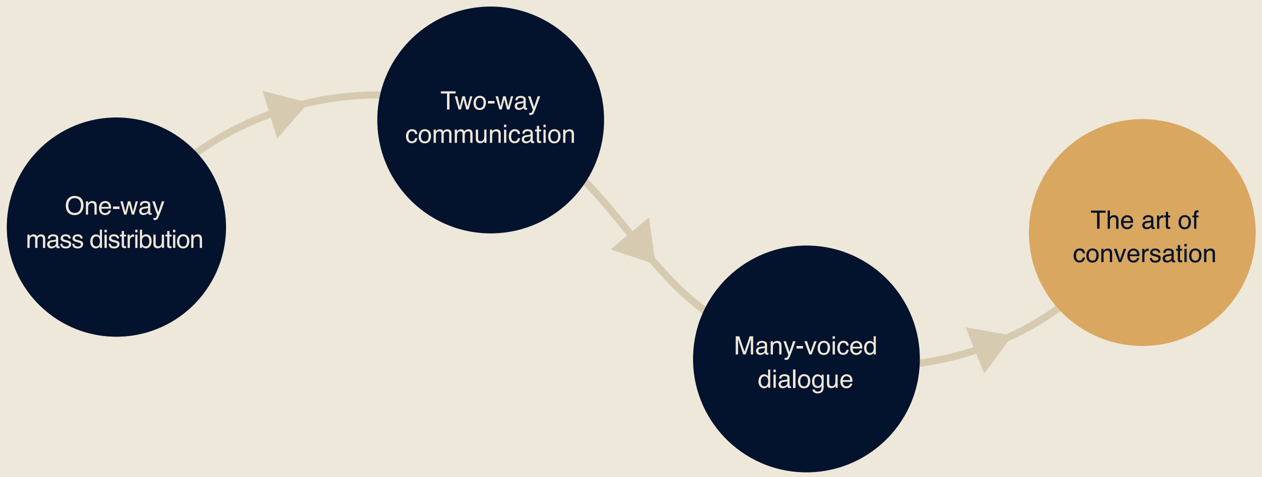
> The Danish leadership tradition is flat anddialogue-oriented, which gives line managers a larger role than in more hierarchical cultures

3.3 What the international studies can teach us

Four pointers are worth taking away.

1. The first concerns AI. Gallagher's most important point is not that AI is coming. It is that AI does not create strategic maturity by itself. Functions that work with clear governance, dedicated training and appointed front-runners are ten times more likely to reach a mature stage than those that let usage grow organically. AI magnifies the difference that is already there. Whoever uses it without a strategic framework delivers faster mediocrity.
2. The second concerns measurement. IoIC offers a useful model distinguishing between output (what we produce), outcome (what employees do) and impact (what happens in the business as a result). The point is that value only becomes visible when measurement moves up that chain. It is hard, and that is precisely why most refrain. But the demand from leadership is already there, and the function that dares to measure what is difficult gains an argument no output table can give it.
3. The third concerns listening to your organisation. Here Gallagher 2026's observation is worth pausing at. When trust is under pressure, human listening matters more than ever, and listening sessions rank as the most valuable channel precisely in the organisations struggling with low trust in leadership. The IC Index adds a concrete number: when an organisation both invites feedback and shows what it uses it for, nine in ten employees will recommend the workplace. When it does neither, the number falls to below one in four. Listening is not a soft add-on. It is a measurable driver. That is the insight we unfold in chapter 4.
4. The fourth concerns trust, and here the picture is more complex than one might expect. Edelman's Trust Barometer still places the employer high as society's most trusted institution, and that is a mandate for the profession. But trust in the employer as an abstract entity is not the same as trust in one's own manager. Here the British longitudinal data serve as a warning. The IC Index 2026 shows a trust index of 58 per cent, a drop of seven points in a year. Trust in the CEO and the leadership team has fallen nine points, and among employees without regular computer access, only 35 per cent trust senior leadership. So the mandate is still there. But it is shrinking, and it shrinks fastest where communication is hardest to get out. The Danish industry should read the 55 per cent who rate senior leadership's credibility as high in that light. Trust must be nurtured and is not something leaders can take for granted.

What we take away from this is a movement. IoIC's own account of the profession's history captures it well: from one-way mass distribution, through two-way communication, towards a future built on many-voiced dialogue, active listening and what they call the art of conversation. That movement ties into the shift we unfold in the next chapter.



4

Identity – three roles for the internal communication function

How do communication professionals see the primary task of internal communication - at the highest level? Some define themselves primarily as channel owners, others as strategic advisers or as relationship and transformation builders. In this chapter we unfold the three roles as layers of a single pyramid. We look at four things: what each role involves, how they build on one another, their strengths and challenges, and where the development opportunities lie.

At the end of our analysis, we asked the communication professionals about internal communication's primary responsibility. The answers point to three different roles that can work together.

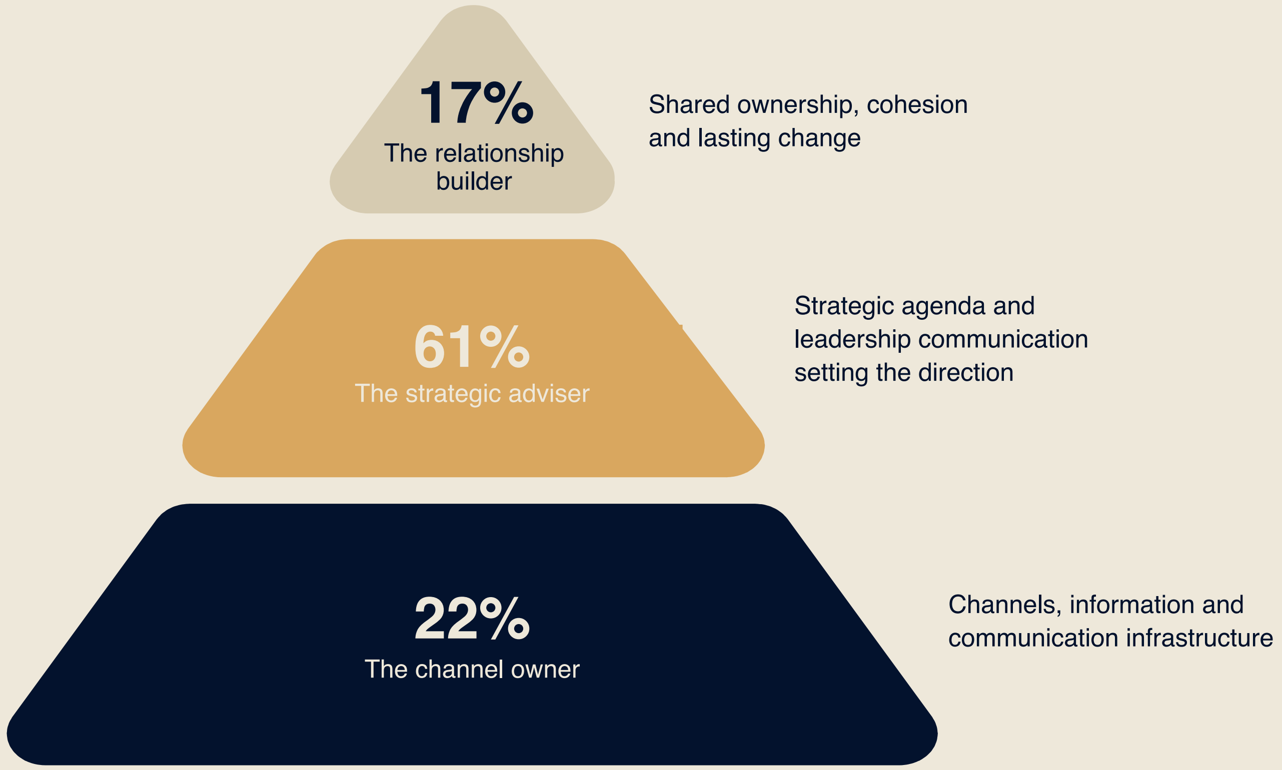
1. **The channel owner:** 22 per cent identify primarily with the role of channel owner, where the task is to run the organisation's internal communication channels and keep employees continuously informed.
2. **The strategic adviser:** 61 per cent see themselves as strategic advisers who help leadership set a clear agenda, so that all employees contribute to executing the strategy and creating business results.
3. **Relationsbyggeren:** 17 per cent identify primarily as relationship and transformation builders who build trusting relationships, facilitate meaningful conversations and strengthen leaders' and employees' ability to adapt in a changing world.

Several communication professionals place the internal communication function between two roles – typically the operational role and the advisory role. This underlines that the roles do not exclude one another, but rather build on top of one another.

We therefore see the roles as a kind of pyramid. The foundation is channels, information and communication infrastructure. On top of this sit the strategic agenda and leadership communication, which set the direction. At the top we find the relationship and transformation role, where internal communication creates shared ownership, cohesion and lasting change.

The pyramid is not a ranking of quality. All roles create value, and none can do without the foundation. It is a ranking of how far a function has come in its own development – a development from distribution to advice and on to creating momentum, as we have also seen recur in this analysis. At the same time, the roles point to where the opportunities for further value creation lie.

In the following sections we look closer at the three roles, their characteristics, strengths, challenges and development opportunities.



4.1 Channel and information focus – the foundation

In this role, the internal communication function delivers channels, content and service to the organisation. It runs the intranet, hosts town halls, edits newsletters, plans launches and makes sure internal information gets through. It is operations-heavy and skilled at the craft. It rarely has a fixed seat at the leadership table, and its success is most often measured in output: readership, open rates, attendance rates.

It is a bounded but fundamental role. Without the channels, the platforms and the daily flow of information, the other roles have no infrastructure to build on. 68 per cent of the organisations surveyed have running and developing infrastructure as a central responsibility to a high degree, and 22 per cent identify primarily with the role of channel owner. It is still a living role, and it must remain one.

But it is also a role whose centre of gravity has shifted. In 2013, developing internal mass media was the top-priority activity. In 2026 it is strategy and change. That does not mean channel work has disappeared. It means the channels have increasingly become a precondition rather than a strategic focus area.

Strengths
- Builds the infrastructure the profession rests on
- Clear deliverables and well-defined tasks
- Good scope for ongoing measurement and optimisation

Challenges
- Risk of being seen as an operational function
- Hard to make the business value of the work visible
- Often involved late in major decisions and initiatives

Development opportunities
- Use AI to create insight from complex data and personalise information relevant to specific employees
- Extend the channels' ability to support dialogue and engagement
- Take an active part in strategic and change-driven initiatives where leadership can see real business value in the work

4.2 Strategic agenda and leadership focus – the established partner

This is the role with access to the top. It works closely with leadership, sets agendas, helps shape the big narratives and advises on messages and positioning. It is the role that dominates the 2026 picture. 61 per cent name it as their primary self-image. 73 per cent have advising senior leadership as a responsibility to a high degree. 98 per cent work with senior leadership daily or often. This is the profession's breakthrough, and it is the role IC13 predicted would come. It has come.

But the role has its limitations too. Its strength is proximity to senior leadership and understanding of the direction of the business. It prioritises clarity, direction and execution and can translate business strategy into communication. But precisely that emphasis can widen the distance to employees' everyday lives. If you know the boardroom better than the floor, the risk is that focus lands on the clarity of the message rather than on how it lands or creates action.

That is precisely one of the patterns this analysis reveals. Senior leadership's messages are clear, but when they must pass through the line managers and out to the employee, clarity falls away. The strategic adviser may have solved half of the problem, the sender side, and left the other half to a channel not equipped to solve it.

Strengths
- Close access to leadership and the strategic agendas
- High business understanding and advisory power
- The chance to influence direction and priorities

Challenges
- Not always involved early enough in decision-making
- Risk of focusing more on sender than receiver
- Hard to secure embedding and action all the way out in the organisation

Development opportunities
- Invest more systematically in leader communication
- Add decentralised communication partners who can help leadership decisions and changes reach further out
- Use AI to free up time from production for advice
- Develop competencies in dialogue, involvement and change management for greater impact

4.3 Relationship and transformation focus – the next development

The third role – the top of the pyramid – is still under construction. It is not yet established practice, but it is the direction both our data and global trends point towards.

Here, focus shifts from channels and strategic advice to relationships, dialogue, culture and organisational change. The task is not to inform employees or support leadership's messages, but to strengthen the organisation's ability to understand, navigate, learn and act. The goal is faster embedding of decisions, stronger local ownership and better organisational capacity to act.

In this role, the communication function facilitates dialogue, builds trusting relationships and helps the organisation turn strategy into real action. Communication thus becomes a question of listening, creating involvement and understanding. Of creating the conditions for employees to thrive and to adapt as the world around them changes and business success depends on leaders' and employees' ability to make decisions locally.

This role is resource-intensive, and it requires a broad mandate. 17 per cent of respondents identify primarily with this role. That makes it the least widespread, but also the one pointing furthest ahead.

> Communication becomes a question of creating the conditions for employees to thrive and to adapt

classic understanding of communication lives off a control metaphor, in which the internal communication function shapes the message, chooses the channel, controls the narrative and measures whether the messages were read. It is an understanding that has served the profession well. But when employees have their own channels and a growing expectation of being heard, it no longer works.

In the relational role there is far less focus on controlling the narrative. Here communication is seen not as a transmission the communication department can control, but as co-creation. It is therefore about meeting employees openly and credibly through dialogue and involvement, with a desire to listen and understand.

It may sound abstract, so let us make it more concrete. If, as a leader, you speak of the company as having one voice, while 100 employees simultaneously experience being voices in the same company, communication is no longer a question of distributing leadership's voice. It is a question of facilitating the meeting of voices, where meaning is created and action arises, based on the understanding that people are more willing to back decisions where they feel heard.

Our data shows the scale of the development potential. Only 28 per cent find that employees, to a high degree, can ask questions and give input. This shows that dialogue remains more ambition than practice in most places.

The 17 per cent in the analysis who identify with this role are not merely a minority. They are pathfinders. The question for each function (and for the profession as a whole) is whether it dares to shift its own practice in that direction. It requires letting go of some control and daring to trust that what arises from dialogue is stronger than what leadership alone could have devised.

Strengths
- The chance to create value in organisations marked by constant change
- Greater backing, engagement and contribution from employees and leaders who experience real dialogue and influence on their daily lives

Challenges
- Requires new competencies and a broader mandate
- Often more resource-intensive than classic communication
- Moves into areas where HR, leadership development and the business also operate

Development opportunities
- Strengthen collaboration with HR and other transformation functions
- Choose a few strategic areas and document the impact
- Use AI and digital tools to support dialogue and listening at scale
- Measure understanding, behaviour and embedding – not just activity

5 Conclusion and perspectives

What do we take away from this analysis – and where does the profession go from here? Throughout the report we have followed internal communication from a profession with a well-established foundation to a function that has won its strategic role, but not yet fulfilled its full potential. In this final chapter we sum up the key trends shaping the profession right now, the analysis's main conclusions and our recommendations for moving forward, along with a reflection on the questions the next analysis should ask to give us more answers.

5.1 Key trends

Six trends dominate the picture in 2026. Together they show a communication profession that has gained a stronger strategic role, but must now convert that position into real influence, better documentation and sharper prioritisation.

The role of strategic adviser has been won – but is still brought in too late

Internal communication has become a strategic advisory function and is often in daily dialogue with senior leadership. Leaders frequently ask for advice on internal communication, and the advice given is listened to.
At the same time, a picture emerges of advisers often stepping in only once decisions have been made, ending up advising on messages rather than helping to shape decisions.

The line manager is the profession's greatest untapped potential

Managers are the most important communication channel in any organisation, but this is precisely where the results reveal a weakness. Senior leadership is rated highly on credibility and the ability to set direction, while line managers score markedly lower - especially on their ability to communicate the overarching messages. If organisations want to strengthen their internal communication, the greatest untapped potential lies with the line managers who every day must turn the organisation's strategy into something employees can understand, relate to and act on.

AI is no longer an experiment, but a new core competency

Generative AI has moved from experiment to priority. 47 per cent rate AI as a very important competency, and the technology is now among the areas organisations expect to focus on most in the coming years. The question is no longer whether AI will become part of internal communication, but how it should be governed, applied and integrated responsibly. That makes AI a communication task, not just a technology platform.

Measurement is widespread – but rarely shows whether communication works

Seven in ten organisations measure their internal communication. But most measure activity – readership, open rates and engagement – while understanding, behaviour and the link between communication and business results are measured far more rarely. At the same time, only 18 per cent rate measurement as a very important competency. The profession has become more strategic, but has yet to develop the same strength in documenting its business value.

Communication channels are less about platforms and more about people

The development in communication channels since 2013 is clear. Focus has shifted from platforms to people. The intranet has become infrastructure, while the line manager and senior leadership are the most important communication channels. Internal communication is increasingly about creating understanding through relationships rather than distributing content through digital channels.

More tasks and flat budgets make prioritisation a core discipline

Strategy implementation, change communication, AI and new demands on leadership keep growing. Yet almost half report unchanged staffing, and seven in ten have unchanged budgets. Internal communication is expected to solve more and more complex tasks without correspondingly more resources. The result is a profession at growing risk of being spread too thinly. Prioritisation therefore becomes a vital discipline, and a necessary act of leadership for the communication function.

5.2 Key conclusions and recommendations

We have distilled the analysis into five conclusions and recommendations. Together they describe a profession that has achieved greater strategic significance, but at the same time faces new demands for influence, documentation and prioritisation.

1

The communication function must step in earlier if it wants real influence

Internal communication has won the ear of senior leadership, but with the transformative challenges organisations face today, advising on strategic messages is not enough. One of internal communication's greatest opportunities lies not in communicating better decisions, but in contributing to better decisions – and thereby stepping into the process far earlier.

Recommendations

- Map when and where internal communication is involved in major decisions
- Prioritise access to the forums where decisions are shaped – not just communicated
- Use employee and organisational insights more actively in leadership's decision-making
- Let go of control and invite meaning-making conversations in which the whole organisation is a co-producer.

2

The greatest communication lift lies with line managers

Managers are the most important communication channel in any organisation, but line managers are rated markedly weaker than senior leadership on key communication parameters. Developing line managers' communication skills is probably the single investment that can lift the profession most, because this is where strategy meets everyday life.

Recommendations

- Reconsider the balance of resources between senior leader communication and line manager support
- Develop 360-degree concepts to secure managers' ability to create understanding, dialogue and direction in everyday work
- Tie leader communication closely to the organisation's leadership principles and make it a shared responsibility between communication and HR
- Create a regular meeting structure where line managers meet and can discuss strategic decisions before they are announced
- Measure leader communication systematically, including its effects on wellbeing, engagement and productivity.

3 AI requires communication leadership – not just technical implementation

AI is no longer a trend to read about. It is a strategic focus area that is already affecting core communication tasks. It is an important competency everyone should master. Internal communication functions that are not on board now will fall behind.

Recommendations

- Draw up clear principles for the use of AI
- Identify the processes where AI can free up time for better editorial, relevant and engaging content
- Establish closer collaboration with IT, HR and digitalisation functions
- Take responsibility and leadership on AI governance.

4 The profession must get better at documenting impact – not just activity

Internal communication is increasingly being measured, but the focus remains primarily on activity and reach rather than impact and business value. That creates a gap between the profession's strategic ambitions and its ability to document real results and its own value.

Recommendations

- Shift focus from activity and reach to understanding, attitudes, behaviour and embedding
- Define a few clear, impact-oriented goals for the most important initiatives
- Integrate measurement early in projects rather than after implementation
- Build competencies in data, analysis, evaluation and impact measurement.

5 Prioritisation is crucial if communication is not to drown in tasks

Internal communication is expected to take on more and more complex tasks without corresponding growth in budgets or staffing. The result is a profession at risk of being spread too thinly, where sharp prioritisation becomes a necessary discipline rather than a choice.

Recommendations

- Review the full communication portfolio annually, focusing on impact and deselection
- Consolidate and simplify channels, products and processes wherever possible
- Prioritise tasks with the greatest strategic value over the greatest visibility
- Use AI and automation to free up time for advice and change.

5.3 What should the next survey answer?

Every analysis leaves questions for the next one to answer. Four areas stand out particularly sharply for us.

1 How do the most mature organisations work with dialogue and involvement?

We have asked about channels and competencies, but less about the concrete mechanisms and tools that give employees the chance to contribute and ask questions, and about which listening practices are in operation. Which formats work? Where is investment going? And what value do organisations find the dialogue creates?

2 How do organisations handle a working life marked by constant change?

Change and strategy are top priorities in both 2025 and 2026, but we have not asked about the consequences. Are employees experiencing change fatigue or signs of exhaustion? How do organisations work to create meaning, prioritisation and headroom in an everyday life of many simultaneous initiatives? And what role does internal communication play in that task?

3 What characterises the organisations that succeed with leader communication?

The analysis clearly points to the line manager as the profession's greatest untapped potential. But we do not yet know enough about what separates the organisations where leader communication works well from those where it falters. What training are managers offered? Which tools and processes support them? How are they involved in strategic decisions? And how is responsibility divided between communication, HR and the business? These are questions that can take us from describing the problem to understanding the solutions.

4 How are segmentation and personalisation being used?

New technologies make it possible to tailor messages to different audiences, functions and needs. But how far have communication functions actually come? How is the desire for relevance balanced against the need for shared direction and cohesion? And what are the most mature organisations learning?

IC26 does not close discussions - it opens new ones. It is part of a conversation that continues between professionals, leaderships, the industry and its critics. We look forward to the next one.

6

About the report: methodology and data

IC26 is a quantitative analysis of those responsible for internal communication in Danish and Denmark-based companies and organisations. It was conducted by Resonans Partners between March and May 2026.

A total of 40 organisations took part in the analysis: 29 private and 11 public. Where IC13 spoke with the 50 largest companies, this analysis invited a broader cross-section. That gives a different benchmark than back then. The results should therefore be read as a cross-section of the Danish field, not as a mapping of the biggest players alone.

A majority of respondents hold titles such as head of communications, communications director, Head of Internal Communication or VP. A few are internal consultants or advisers in the organisations where they work. They typically hold leadership or functional responsibility.

The mix of industries is broad and includes finance and insurance, life science, industry and B2B, public and semi-public organisations, and retail. The analysis is therefore not a statistically representative sample of all Danish internal communication functions. When we write, say, 40 per cent or 89 per cent, this should be read as shares of those surveyed, not as claims about the communication profession as a whole. The numbers paint a picture. They are not a census.

Data was collected via SurveyMonkey and conducted in Danish with an English version for international readers.

Where IC13 was based on telephone interviews (only 5 per cent completed a digital questionnaire themselves), IC26 is fully digital. This is a methodological difference that may affect response patterns marginally. Telephone interviews give fuller answers; digital questionnaires give faster and more uniform ones.

7

Participating organisations

IC26 rests on responses from 40 private and public organisations from across Danish business and public life. We thank them all for their time and their candid answers.

The following organisations have consented to be named in the report:

Aarsleff
Alfa Laval
Alm. Brand
Arla Foods
Bavarian Nordic
Dagrofa
Danmarks Nationalbank
Danske Bank
Demant
DSV
DTU
HOFOR
Copenhagen Airport
Københavns Universitet
Lundbeck
Maersk
Metroselskabet
Molslinjen
Naviair
Nexi/Nets
Nordea
Novonesis
Nuuday
OK
Pandora
PFA
REMA 1000
Central Denmark Region
North Denmark Region
Rådet for Socialt Udsatte
STARK
Stryhns Gruppen
Teknik og Miljø
Danish Technological Institute
Tryg
VELUX
VisitDenmark
Wienerberger

Resonans Partners

Resonans Partners advises companies and organisations at the intersection of leadership, strategy and communication. We have ourselves carried the responsibility for making strategies set direction, communication create action and change work in practice. It has taught us that good advice begins with deep insight into the organisation, the situation and the people who need to move.

We work closely with our clients and bring different perspectives and competencies into play when the task calls for it. For us, resonance arises when there is coherence between what an organisation says and what it does. That is where we advise – and where we leave our mark.

We publish IC26 as part of our contribution to the development of internal communication in Denmark.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed their time, experience and perspectives.

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