

**Cristina ACED-TOLEDANO**

UPF Barcelona School of Management, Spain. [cristina.aced@bsm.upf.edu](mailto:cristina.aced@bsm.upf.edu). <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2732-5708>

**Susana MIQUEL-SEGARRA**

Universitat Jaume I, Spain. [smiquel@uji.es](mailto:smiquel@uji.es). <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0337-7503>

## The internal communication of Spanish companies in a strategic key

### *La comunicación interna de las empresas españolas en clave estratégica*

**Dates** | Received: 13/01/2021 - Reviewed: 01/06/2021 - In press: 16/06/2021 - Published: 01/07/2021

#### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the objectives, tools and strategic axes proposed by Spanish companies in their internal communication (IC) plans. It also aims to understand the business context in which departments in charge of IC operate. All of this is analyzed by examining potential similarities and/or differences between companies according to the structural characteristics of the departments and companies, as well as based on the degree of self-perceived effectiveness of the participating professionals. To this end, a quantitative study was carried out on a sample of 118 IC managers belonging to the Association of Communication Managers (Dircom). The main results show that the IC departments of companies in Spain tend to have the support of senior management. However, despite the importance afforded by IC departments to strategy, the departments invest most of their resources in tactical and technical aspects. Finally, there is also a lack of integration of internal and external communication, as well as a short-fall in funding allocated to IC.

#### **Keywords**

Internal communication; strategy; internal public; objectives; channels; tools

#### **Resumen**

*El presente artículo se centra en conocer cuáles son los objetivos, las herramientas y los ejes estratégicos que plantean las empresas españolas en sus planes de comunicación interna (CI). Asimismo, se pretende conocer el contexto empresarial en el que se desenvuelven los departamentos encargados de la CI. Todo ello se analiza profundizando en la posible existencia de similitudes y/o diferencias entre las empresas según las características estructurales de los departamentos y empresas, y también a partir del grado de efectividad autopercibida por los profesionales participantes. Para ello se realiza un estudio cuantitativo sobre una muestra de 118 responsables de CI agrupados en la Asociación de Directivos de Comunicación (Dircom). Los principales resultados muestran que los departamentos de CI de las empresas en España suelen contar con el apoyo de la alta dirección. Sin embargo, pese a la importancia que le atribuyen a la estrategia, los departamentos invierten la mayor parte de sus recursos en aspectos tácticos y técnicos. Finalmente, también se advierte la falta de integración de la comunicación interna y externa, así como de la escasez de presupuesto destinado a CI.*

#### **Palabras clave**

Comunicación interna; estrategia; público interno; objetivos; canales; herramientas

## 1. Introduction

Internal communication (IC) is an increasingly important strategic value for organisations (Cuenca & Verazzi, 2020). This is a finding reflected by key national (Adecec, 2019; Dircom, 2018) and international studies (European Communication Monitor, 2020; Latin American Communication Monitor, 2019; North American Communication Monitor, 2018, ASCAI & FEIEA, 2018) that analyse the sector. COVID-19 has accelerated this change even more and, due to the pandemic, internal communication has undergone a true revolution and become a key element in state-of-the-art management (Aced, Arocas & Miquel, 2021; Berceruelo, 2020; Costa-Sánchez & López-García, 2020).

For a long time, companies focused on external communication and put aside communication aimed at the internal audience (Dolphin, 2005), a fact also reflected in the academic research in this field during the last 50 years (Lee & Yue, 2020). Despite the growing importance of IC, this context of imbalance has been present in the last decade (Omillion-Hodges & Baker, 2014; Hola, 2012) and the perception that communication directors underestimate IC in relation to other communication disciplines is still present (VMA Group, 2018).

As early as the last decade of the 20th century, Grunig (1992) pointed out that internal communication is both a component and a prerequisite for achieving excellent corporate communication and public relations. As Xifra (2017) says, good internal public relations will eventually emerge abroad. However, to ensure that internal communication contributes to the achievement of excellence, it is essential to address it strategically within the organisation.

Alberto Pérez (2001), a pioneer in defining strategy in the field of communication, states that strategic communication is a fundamental asset for organisations. Along these lines, numerous authors conceive strategy as the "heart of the communication process" (Madroñero & Capriotti, 2018: 4), although they also recognise that the term is sometimes defined imprecisely, ambiguously and even with certain dysfunctionalities (Matilla, 2007 & 2018; Pérez, 2012).

Other authors point out that communication is truly strategic when "it is aligned with the company's global strategy, to highlight and strengthen its strategic position" (Argenti, Howell & Beck, 2005), when an "intentional use of communication is made by part of the organisation to fulfil its mission" (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Verčič & Sriramesh, 2007) or when it is developed "through the implementation of integrated objectives that are consistent with the long-term needs of the company" (Garido, 2017: 17).

If we focus on internal communication, authors such as Villafañe (1999) and García-Jiménez (1998) declare it as a strategic function and an essential competence in company management. Along the same lines, for Álvarez-Marcos (2007: 3) IC is "a strategic need and a basic condition for the company or institution to be able to face its activity with security". Berceruelo (2020: 30) adds that "internal communication aims to stimulate the commitment of professionals with the achievement of the organisation's challenges."

Thus, one of the basic conditions of IC must be its alignment with the strategic intention of the organisation (Hume & Leonard, 2014). This requirement implies that IC must be part of the organisation's general communication strategy (Cuenca & Verazzi, 2018). Hence, the scientific literature indicates that, in order to be strategic, IC must meet a series of basic requirements detailed below.

In addition to being aligned with the organisation's strategy and vision (Apirian & Lepis, 2017), IC must ensure that the opinions of the interested parties (organisation and internal public) are integrated into the strategy. This approach requires dialogue to be maintained on strategic issues so that the organisation can constantly be corrected and aligned with its strategic intention and its environment (Hume & Leonard, 2014).

To be effective, IC must therefore be symmetrical (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006), but this implies an essential requirement: IC must have the involvement of the organisation's top management (Miquel-Segarra & Aced, 2019a; Cuenca & Verazzi, 2018; Ingelmo, Navarro & Sanz, 2018; Tkalac Verčič & Pološki Vokić, 2017; Walden, Jung & Westerman, 2017). It also requires a committed and inspiring leadership at all levels of the organisation. Authors such as Men (2015), Men and Stacks (2014) and Grunig, Grunig & Dozier (2002) go so far as to assert that internal communication efforts are affected by the effectiveness of management and leadership behaviour.

Another premise that must be met to be considered strategic is that the professional responsible for IC recognises the strategic function of internal communication and knows what role it should play in this regard (Volk, Berger, Zerfass, Bisswanger, Fetzer & Köhler 2017; CIPR Inside, 2017). The ASCAI & FEIEA report (2018: 5) indicates that IC professionals should act as "strategic facilitators" and, therefore, develop competences going beyond the tactical aspects (Verčič & Zerfass, 2016). Although, as the Latin American Communication Monitor (2019) points out, this demands for the communication department to have internal prestige and influence in the organisation.

Delving into the competencies that the professional responsible for IC must have, evaluation skills have become one of the main challenges to be overcome (Miquel-Segarra & Aced-Toledano, 2019b; ASCAI & FEIEA, 2018; VMAGroup, 2018; Zeffass Verhoeven, Moreno, Tench & Verčič, 2018; IC Kollektiv, 2017), as the assessment and measurement stage is an inherent part of the strategy, allowing the effectiveness of the messages, the media it uses and, above all, the contributions carried out to achieve the strategic objectives of the company (Zeffass, Verčič & Volk, 2017) to be gauged. However, very few companies evaluate IC results, and even fewer do so in accordance with strategic business objectives (Castillo-Esparcia & Villabona-Beltrán, 2018; Simancas-González & García-López, 2017; Castillo & Álvarez-Nobell, 2014; Álvarez-Nobell & Lesta, 2011).

Finally, the content of the IC must also focus on the strategic goal of the organisation. The purpose of internal communication processes should not be limited to the flow of information, they should also include improving its comprehension (Men & Stacks, 2014; Men, 2014; Ruck & Welch, 2012). Thus, communication should provide relevant information, but also opportunities to speak, become involved, be heard, and actively participate. IC must therefore use adequate tools so that communication flows in both directions (Puebla-Martínez & Farfán, 2018). It is essential to analyse audiences and adapt communications to their communication needs and expectations (Walden, et al., 2017). For this same reason "strategic IC requires a holistic infrastructure that identifies the appropriate communication tools to achieve a strategic alignment with the target audience" (Hume & Leonard, 2014: 10).

Academic research on internal communication carried out in Spain has analysed IC in areas such as the university (Simancas-González & García-López, 2017; Tapia, Herranz de la Casa & García-González, 2010; Herranz de la Casa, Tapia & Lázaro, 2009; Palencia Lefler, 2008), banking (Carretón, 2007) and the companies of the Ibex 35 (Sánchez-Gómez, 2016). Recently, bibliographic reviews have also been carried out to know the state of the question about the role of IC in the new scenarios (Pereira, Portilla & Rodríguez-Salcedo, 2019; Miquel-Segarra & Aced, 2018). However, little research has included the study and analysis of strategic aspects of IC (Sánchez-Gómez, 2016).

This research is part of the latest study carried out by Dircom (2018) on IC to provide a snapshot of the situation of internal communication in Spain. It is a descriptive cross-sectional study that aims to assess the implementation of internal communication in organisations and corroborate its strategic and managerial role. Moreover, it is intended to help to understand the impact of digitisation on the tools and channels used in internal communication.

The results that emerge from this study are useful in two ways. On the one hand, in the scientific field, they represent an advance in internal communication research from a strategic and organisational point of view. On the other hand, at a professional level, they allow communication directors and internal communication managers to obtain important contextual information that will allow them to benchmark and identify areas for improvement in carrying out their duties, so they can create strategic departments within the organisation.

## 2. Objectives

The purpose of this research is to get to know the most relevant strategic keys posed by Spanish companies in their internal communication plans. To do this, it delves into four aspects that focus the orientation of the research questions:

- RQ1. What are the characteristics of the departments in charge of managing internal communication? In what business context can these departments be found?
- RQ2. What are the main internal communication objectives currently being set in Spanish organisations?
- RQ3. What are the key strategic elements or focal points of internal communication?
- RQ4. What are the most commonly used tools in internal communication? What is their level of digitisation?

The following questions are also posed to complement the research questions.

- Are there similarities or differences depending on the types of company?
- Are there similarities or differences based on the structural characteristics of the departments that manage internal communication?
- Are there similarities or differences depending on the degree of self-perceived effectiveness?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Process

Based on the research carried out by Nelli (2018), and taking as a reference the survey used for the fieldwork, an instrument was developed based on 37 questions, and structured in five blocks (positioning of the IC team; strategies, objectives and activities; evaluation processes; business context; priorities, problems and challenges they face).

The type of sampling of the study was non-probabilistic by self-selection (Couper, 2000). The link of the online questionnaire was sent via e-mail to the members of Dircom (1,022) for them to be completed by the professionals who have responsibilities in the management of the IC of their company. It was sent out in two waves and the data collection took place between 22 February, 2018 and March 22 of the same year. The time required for completion was around 25 minutes.

11.5% of the professionals associated with Dircom answered the questionnaire (118), and a confidence level was obtained: 95%; sampling error 8.5%;  $p = q = 0.5$ .

#### 3.2. Participants

The sample is made up of 118 professionals responsible for IC management in their companies; 60.2% of them were women and 39.8% men. Regarding age, the majority (68.7%) are between 41 and 50, followed by 17% who are between 31 and 40 years old. Those over 60 represent 5.9% and those under 30, 5.9%.

All participants have a university degree, most commonly journalism (52.5%), advertising and public relations (22.9%), economics and business (10.2%) and law (6.8%). 84.7% of them completed their training with postgraduate studies in corporate communication (47.4%), marketing and business management (15.3%), social networks (8.5%), MBA (6.8%) and HR (6.8%).

The participants' companies were 45.8% multinational and 54.2% Spanish. 72% were large companies (more than 250 employees); 9.3% medium (from 51 to 250); 10.2% small (from 11 to 50) and 8.5% micro-enterprises (from 1 to 10). The main industries of the companies to which the participants belong are: consulting (11.9%), education (11%), health (8.5%), food (7.6%), public administrations (7.6%), financial services (6.8%), technology (5.9%), infrastructure, transport and logistics (5.1%), automotive (5.1%), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (4.2%), information and communication technologies (ICT) (4.2%), and other industries (22%).

#### 3.3. Variables

Of the 37 questions contained in the questionnaire filled out by the participants in this research, the following were considered:

a) Firstly, as dependent variables:

- Business context. This includes the evaluation the participants have made on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree) to the item "To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your company?" in which 12 statements about the company environment were presented.
- Objectives of the IC. It includes the evaluation that the participants have made on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 = low to 5 = high) to the item "In your company, what level of involvement does IC have with the following objectives?" in which 17 possible objectives of the company's IC are proposed.
- Key strategic elements and/or focal points of the IC. Collect the responses of the participants to the item "Which of the following words best represents the IC initiatives in your company?", in which they were presented with 16 terms and the participants had to indicate a maximum of five of them.
- IC tools. On the one hand, it includes the evaluation that the participants have carried out on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 = not important to 5 = very important) to the item "How important are these tools to achieving your IC objectives?" in which 12 tools available to the company were presented. On the other hand, the participants were also asked to answer "Which of the following definitions best describes your current use of your company's internal communication tools?", in which they had to choose one of the four levels of implementation of the IC tools.

b) Secondly, as independent variables:

- The structural characteristics of the companies. The following have been considered: the territorial establishment of the company (Spanish or multinational) and its size (microenterprise/small, medium and large).

- The structural characteristics of IC departments. The following has been considered: the existence of a specific IC department (yes/no), whether the IC department relies on external consultants (yes/no).
- The self-perceived effectiveness of IC teams. This criterion has been defined from the item "How effective is your internal communication strategy in helping you achieve your business objectives?" which was evaluated in the questionnaire with a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 = not effective at all to 5 = Very effective). With the results, the participants' companies have been classified into two groups according to their level of self-perceived effectiveness: companies with highly effective IC teams (with values of 4 or 5) and companies with medium-low effectiveness IC teams (with values from 1 to 3). According to this criterion, 50% of the participants' companies are highly effective and the other 50% show medium-low effectiveness.

### 3.4. Data analysis

Firstly, to answer the research questions, a descriptive analysis of the characteristics of the companies and their business context has been carried out, together with the objectives, the key strategic elements and the tools used by the IC teams in the companies analysed.

Subsequently, and in order to delve deeper into the results, the data obtained has been worked on based on the structural characteristics and the effectiveness perceived by the teams. To study the differences between companies and departments depending on their structural characteristics in a cross-disciplinary way: the Student's t-test has been applied for independent samples, one-way ANOVAs or the chi-square test to the study variables depending on the type of measurement of the variable and the number of comparison groups. To analyse whether there are differences between the companies' IC teams depending on their level of effectiveness, the Student's t-test has been applied for independent samples and the chi-square test depending on the type of measurement of the variable.

The established significance value is  $<.05$ .

The data analysis was carried out with the SPSS statistical package, version 21.0.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Characteristics and business context of IC departments

The data reveal that 85.6% of the participating companies have a specific person or department dedicated to IC. In 62.7% of the companies, IC management is centralised (the central IC team defines corporate strategies and content and the local teams adapt them), in 25.4% coordinated (the central team acts as a reference for the local teams) and 11.9% decentralised (each local team has its own IC director who defines strategy and content).

Regarding membership of IC teams, 35.6% of the companies have one person, 42.4% have two to three and 22% have four or more. On the other hand, it is observed that in 39.0% of the cases the IC department is supported by external agencies and consultancy firms. It is also important to mention that 58.5% of the companies in the sample allocate their own budget to IC to manage its operation.

In 74.4% of cases, the determination of IC objectives in companies is a function assigned to a specific department and in 25.6% it is established between several of them. The department to which this duty is assigned is mostly, in 55.1% of cases, the corporate communication department. In 35.6% of the cases, the objectives are set by the general management and in 22.0% they depend on human resources. Specifically, 18.6% of the objectives are set by the internal communication departments, and only 6.8% of the objectives are set by the marketing department.

When analysing the business context in which the companies find themselves, the respondents show greater agreement and coincidence in affirming that IC is an important aspect in their companies. Despite this, the professionals believe that not enough is invested in this department (Table 1). On the other hand, although the participants in the research agree that internal and external communication are perfectly integrated, this is the aspect where the responses are most widely dispersed ( $SD=1.28$ ).

**Table 1. Assessment of the business context**

	Media	DT
IC channels are very important.	3.85	1.18
Employees feel proud to work for their company.	3.82	0.94
Internal and external communication is seamlessly integrated.	3.81	1.28
Employees have easy access to key information to be able to do their job properly.	3.80	1.10
Employees have every facility to communicate directly with their managers.	3.57	1.20
Employees have a good understanding of the company's goals and values.	3.47	1.15
Employees see the link between their jobs and the company's objectives.	3.45	1.08
The leaders of each team understand that communication is essential to their role.	3.35	1.18
Managers take the communication aspect into account in each of their decisions and actions.	2.99	1.16
Employees are involved in making decisions that directly affect them.	2.94	1.09
Employees actively participate in networks and are important watchdogs for the company.	2.56	1.15
The company invests sufficiently in IC.	2.41	1.13

Note: 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree.

Source: Own creation

Studying the business context in which the participants operate depending on the characteristics of their companies, the data indicates that multinationals are more in agreement in considering that "Internal and external communication are perfectly integrated" (4.33 vs. 3.38) ( $t(105.107) = -4.529$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $d = 0.80$ ), that "Employees fully understand the company's goals and values" (3.70 vs. 3.28) ( $t(116) = -2.009$ ;  $p = .009$ ;  $d = 0.47$ ) and that "Employees see the relationship between their jobs and the company's goals" (3.74 vs. 3.20) ( $t(110.328) = -2.877$ ;  $p = .005$ ;  $d = 0.52$ ).

Differences have been detected in the consideration that "IC channels are very important" ( $F(2,115) = 4.913$ ;  $p = .009$ ;  $\eta^2 = .08$ ); in particular, medium-sized firms agree less than large firms (2.82 vs. 3.95;  $p = .007$ ) and small firms (2.82 vs. 3.95;  $p = .025$ ).

According to the structural characteristics of their departments, entities with an IC department are more likely to agree that "Employees feel proud to work for their company" (3.92 vs. 3.24) ( $t(116) = -2.868$ ;  $p = .005$ ;  $d = 0.75$ ), that "Employees have easy access to key information to be able to do their job properly" (3.92 vs. 3.06) ( $t(116) = -3.102$ ;  $p = .002$ ;  $d = 0.81$ ), with "Internal and external communication are perfectly integrated" (4.06 vs. 2.35) ( $t(17.872) = -3.956$ ;  $p = .001$ ;  $d = 1.51$ ), with "The leaders of each team understand that communication is essential to perform their role" (3.45 vs. 2.76) ( $t(116) = -2.239$ ;  $p = .027$ ;  $d = 0.60$ ) and that "Employees fully understand the company's goals and values" (3.62 vs. 2.59) ( $t(116) = -3.598$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $d = 0.94$ ).

In terms of self-perceived effectiveness, the assessment of the business context is higher in all aspects evaluated in companies with high IC departmental effectiveness (Table 2).

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics and t-tests of the assessment of the business context according to the level of effectiveness\*\* achieved by IC departments.**

	High effectiveness		Medium-low effectiveness		t	p
	n	M (DT)	n	M (DT)		
Well-integrated internal and external communication	59	4.44 (0.79)	59	3.19 (1.37)	6.083	.000*
IC channels are very important	59	4.34 (0.76)	59	3.36 (1.32)	4.954	.000*
Employees with easy access to key information	59	4.19 (0.86)	59	3.41 (1.18)	4.109	.000*
Employees proud to work for their company.	59	4.17 (0.79)	59	3.47 (0.95)	4.309	.000*
Employees see the link between their work and the company's objectives.	59	4.05 (0.78)	59	2.85 (1.00)	7.320	.000*
Employees have every facility to communicate directly with their managers.	59	4.02 (0.90)	59	3.12 (1.30)	4.362	.000*
Employees have a good understanding of the company's goals and values.	59	3.95 (0.90)	59	3.00 (1.19)	4.891	.000*
Team leaders know that communication is essential to their role.	59	3.88 (0.95)	59	2.81 (1.15)	5.497	.000*
Managers take communication into account in each of their decisions and actions.	59	3.46 (0.95)	59	2.53 (1.17)	4.758	.000*
Employees are involved in making decisions that directly affect them.	59	3.44 (0.93)	59	2.44 (1.01)	5.601	.000*
The company invests sufficiently in IC.	59	2.92 (0.99)	59	1.90 (1.03)	5.477	.000*
Employees actively participate in networks and are relevant watchdogs for the company.	59	2.92 (1.10)	59	2.20 (1.10)	3.518	.001*

\*p < .05

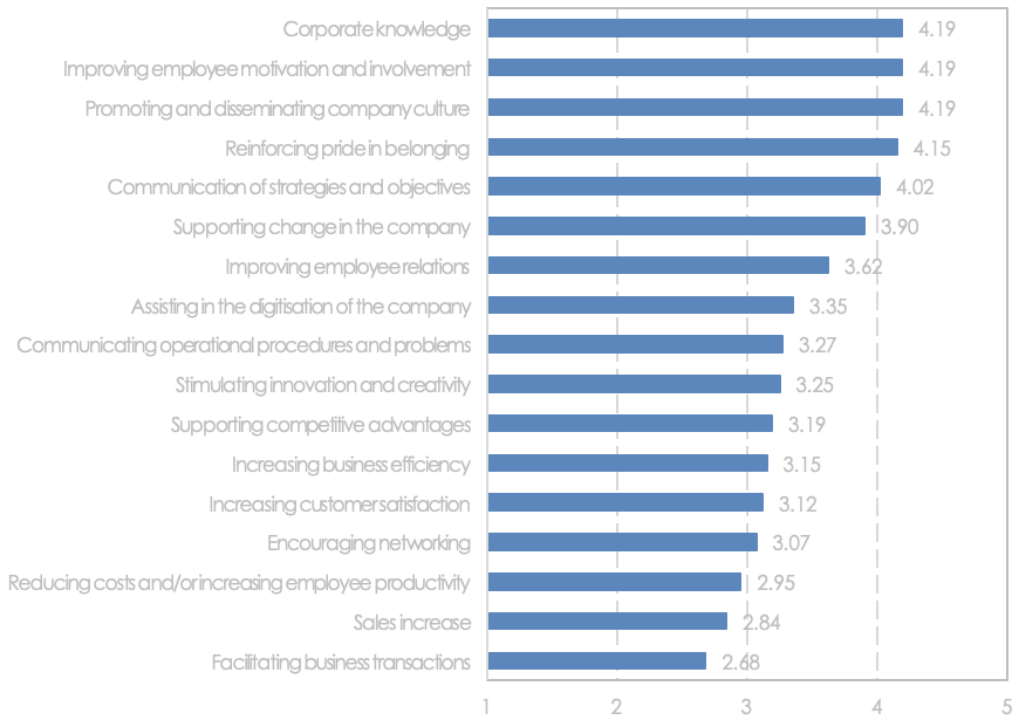
\*\*High effectiveness: companies whose assessment of the effectiveness of their IC strategy is between 4 and 5. Medium-low effectiveness: companies whose assessment of the effectiveness of their IC strategy is between 1 and 3.

#### 4.2 Identifying the IC objectives that organisations set for themselves

The objectives most frequently addressed by IC departments are those related to the dissemination of company idiosyncrasies and employee involvement. The objectives with the lowest priority are the economic ones (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Average level of involvement of the IC departments in the objectives.**



Note: 1 = low to 5 = high

Source: Own creation

Considering the structural characteristics of analysis, statistically significant differences have been detected depending on the territorial scope in which the company operates. Thus, multinational companies are more involved in "Promoting and disseminating company culture" (4.52 vs. 3.91) ( $t(101.418) = -3.123$ ;  $p = .002$ ;  $d = 0.55$ ), in "Improving employee motivation and involvement" (4.63 vs. 3.83) ( $t(96.920) = -4.381$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $d = 0.77$ ), in "Communicating strategies and objectives" (4.31 vs. 3.77) ( $t(105.902) = -2.709$ ;  $p = .008$ ;  $d = 0.47$ ), in "Supporting changes in the company" (4.24 vs. 3.61) ( $t(110.016) = -3.204$ ;  $p = .002$ ;  $d = 0.57$ ), in "Reinforcing pride in belonging" (4.59 vs. 3.78) ( $t(102.190) = -3.837$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $d = 0.68$ ) and in "Corporate knowledge" (4.52 vs. 3.91) ( $t(99.557) = -3.152$ ;  $p = .002$ ;  $d = 0.55$ ).

We also found statistically significant differences by firm size: small firms are more involved in increasing customer satisfaction (3.77 vs. 2.94;  $p = .032$ ) and sales (3.77 vs. 2.59;  $p = .032$ ).

On the other hand, companies that work with external agencies are more involved than those that fully manage their IC in "Promoting and disseminating company culture" (4.50 vs. 3.99) ( $t(115.706) = -2.688$ ;  $p = .008$ ;  $d = 0.45$ ), in "Improving employee motivation and involvement" (4.48 vs. 4.01) ( $t(115.965) = -2.483$ ;  $p = .014$ ;  $d = 0.43$ ), in "Helping the digitisation of the company" (3.72 vs. 3.11) ( $t(116) = -2.520$ ;  $p = .013$ ;  $d = 0.48$ ), and in "Reinforcing pride in belonging" (4.43 vs. 3.97) ( $t(115.984) = -2.162$ ;  $p = .033$ ;  $d = 0.37$ ).

Companies with a specific IC person or department are more involved in the objectives of "Promoting and disseminating company culture" (4.43 vs. 2.76) ( $t(17.336) = -4.000$ ;  $p = .001$ ;  $d = 1.69$ ), in "Improving employee motivation and involvement" (4.40 vs. 3.00) ( $t(17.337) = -3.327$ ;  $p = .004$ ;  $d = 1.40$ ), in "Communicating strategies and objectives" (4.24 vs. 2.71) ( $t(17.663) = -3.735$ ;  $p = .002$ ;  $d = 1.47$ ), in "Supporting changes in the company" (4.07 vs. 2.88) ( $t(17.912) = -2.944$ ;  $p = .009$ ;  $d = 1.12$ ), in "Facilitating business transactions" (2.80 vs. 1.94) ( $t(116) = -2.689$ ;  $p = .008$ ;  $d = 0.70$ ), in "Assisting in the digitalisation of the company" (3.52 vs. 2.29) ( $t(116) = -3.803$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $d = 1.00$ ), in "Stimulating and promoting creation and creativity" (3.40 vs. 2.35) ( $t(19.415) = -2.662$ ;  $p = .015$ ;  $d = 0.84$ ), in "Encouraging networking" (3.18 vs. 2.41) ( $t(116) = -2.316$ ;  $p = .022$ ;  $d = 0.61$ ), in "Reinforcing pride in belonging" (4.40 vs. 2.71) ( $t(17.479) = -3.726$ ;  $p = .002$ ;  $d = 0.87$ ), on "Corporate knowledge" (4.39 vs. 3.00) ( $t(17.295) = -3.170$ ;  $p = .005$ ;  $d = 1.35$ ), on "Supporting competitive advantages" (3.34 vs. 2.35) ( $t(116) = -2.813$ ;  $p = .006$ ;  $d = 0.74$ ) and in "Improving employee relations" (3.76 vs. 2.76) ( $t(116) = -3.227$ ;  $p = .002$ ;  $d = 0.85$ ).



The results in terms of self-perceived effectiveness indicate that IC departments that are more effective are more involved in all company objectives (Table 3).

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics and t-tests of the level of IC involvement in the objectives depending on the level of effectiveness\*\* achieved by IC departments.**

	Effectiveness high		Medium-low effectiveness		t	p
	n	M (DT)	n	M (DT)		
Strengthening pride in belonging	59	4.71 (0.70)	59	3.59 (1.44)	5.373	.000*
Promoting and disseminating company culture	59	4.69 (0.62)	59	3.68 (1.32)	5.355	.000*
Improving employee motivation and involvement	59	4.69 (0.62)	59	3.69 (1.26)	5.455	.000*
Communicating strategies and objectives	59	4.68 (0.65)	59	3.36 (1.20)	7.428	.000*
Corporate knowledge	59	4.64 (0.76)	59	3.73 (1.27)	5.474	.000*
Supporting change in the company	59	4.56 (0.65)	59	3.24 (1.15)	7.687	.000*
Improving employee relations	59	4.15 (0.89)	59	3.08 (1.29)	5.238	.000*
Supporting competitive advantages	59	3.95 (1.09)	59	2.44 (1.21)	7.125	.000*
Assisting in the digitisation of the company	59	3.92 (1.01)	59	2.78 (1.33)	5.240	.000*
Communicating operational procedures	59	3.81 (1.15)	59	2.73 (1.23)	4.946	.000*
Stimulating and promoting innovation and creativity	59	3.75 (1.17)	59	2.75 (1.24)	4.508	.000*
Increasing business efficiency	59	3.73 (1.14)	59	2.58 (1.28)	5.170	.000*
Encouraging networking	59	3.51 (1.09)	59	2.63 (1.33)	3.948	.000*
Increasing customer satisfaction	59	3.47 (1.26)	59	2.76 (1.38)	2.920	.004*
Reducing costs and increasing productivity	59	3.41 (1.21)	59	2.49 (1.22)	4.095	.000*
Increasing sales	59	3.22 (1.20)	59	2.46 (1.30)	3.300	.001*
Facilitating business transactions	59	3.22 (1.15)	59	2.14 (1.12)	5.198	.000*
Average	59	4.01 (.647)	59	2.95 (0.931)	7.174	.000*

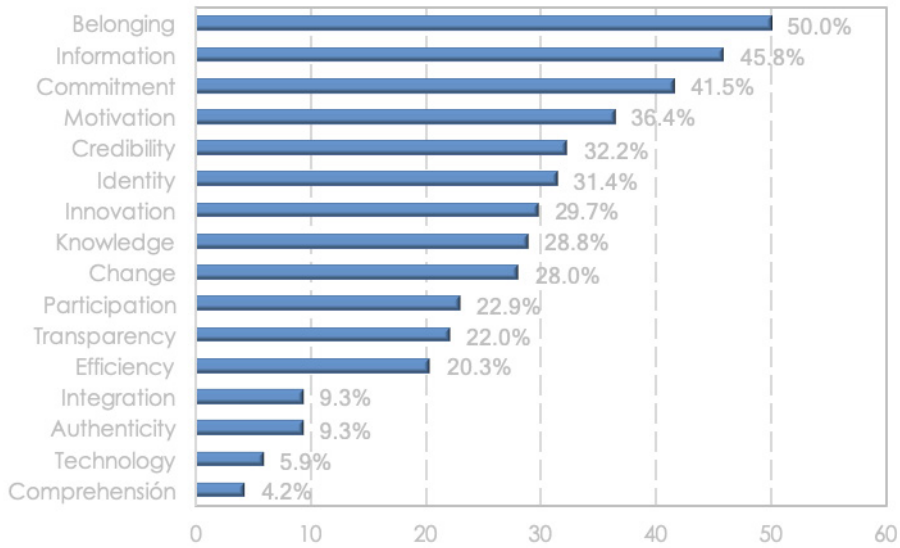
\*p < .05

\*\*High effectiveness: companies whose assessment of the effectiveness of their IC strategy is between 4 and 5. Medium-low effectiveness: companies whose assessment of the effectiveness of their IC strategy is between 1 and 3.

### 4.3. Key strategic elements on which the IC is focusing

In order to extract the values and concepts around which IC strategies are built, survey participants were asked to identify, from a list of 16 words, those (maximum five) that best represent the key strategic elements of the IC initiatives being developed in their companies. Of the terms proposed, 66.1% identified with five of them: "ownership", "information", "commitment", "motivation" and "credibility". On the other hand, the words with which they least identified the IC actions carried out in their companies are "integration", "authenticity", "technology" and "understanding" (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Terms identifying companies' IC initiatives.**



Source: Own creation

Considering the structural characteristics analysed, multinationals identify with the words "Change" (40.7% vs. 17.2%) ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 118) = 8.065; p = .005; \Phi = -.261$ ) and "Transparency" (33.3% vs. 12.5%) ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 118) = 7.400; p = .007; \Phi = -.250$ ).

On the other hand, the term "Information" is identified by 36.4% of small, 90.9% of medium and 42.4% of large companies ( $\chi^2 (2, N = 118) = 10.214; p = .005; VCramer = .294$ ). It is also observed that companies working with external consultants identify more with the word "Change" (43.5% vs. 18.1%) ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 118) = 9.005; p = .003; \Phi = .276$ ).

On the other hand, companies working with external agencies were found to identify more with the word "Change" (43.5% vs. 18.1%) ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 118) = 9.005; p = .003; \Phi = .276$ ).

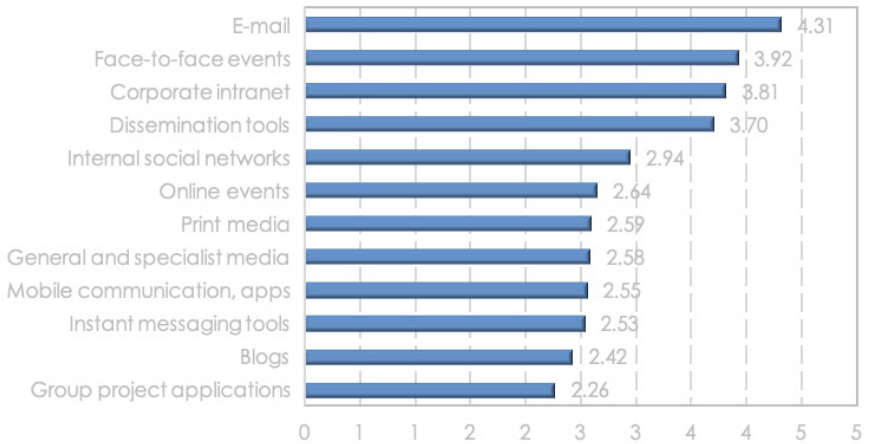
There is no difference in companies' identification with the terms depending on whether or not there is an IC department.

The results in terms of self-perceived effectiveness indicate that companies in which the department is highly effective identify more with the words "credibility" (42.4% vs. 22%) ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 118) = 5.589; p = .018; \Phi = -.218$ ) and "participation" (32.2% vs. 13.6%) ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 118) = 5.811; p = .016; \Phi = -.222$ ) than those where the effectiveness of the IC department is medium-low.

#### 4.4. Most commonly used tools in IC

It can be seen that the teams mainly use e-mail and ICT tools (corporate intranet, internal social networks, etc.) as the main tools to achieve their internal communication objectives. However, the data indicate that they also use other traditional tools, with face-to-face events featuring prominently (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Importance of tools used by the IC to achieve objectives**

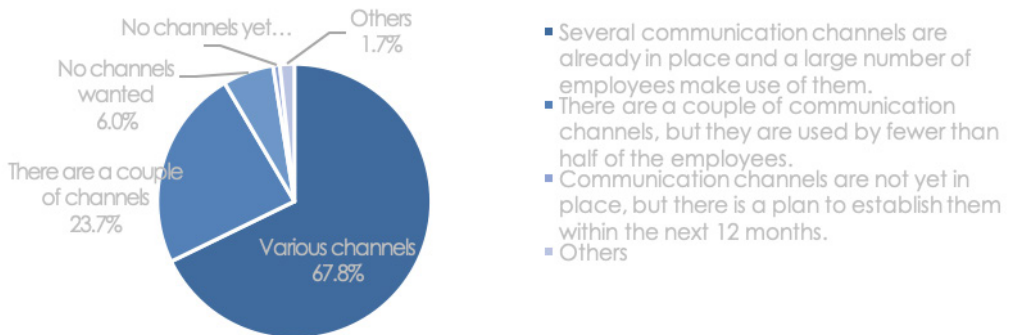


Note: 1 = Not at all important to 5 = Very important.

Source: Own creation

The integration of tools in companies as IC channels is being consolidated in most of them, although there are still some organisations that do not have any channels in place and do not plan to set them up (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Implementing communication tools in companies.**



Source: Own creation

Based on structural characteristics, the data reveal that domestic firms use apps more for projects (2.50 vs. 1.98) ( $t(115.773) = 2.382$ ;  $p = .019$ ;  $d = 0.43$ ) and instant messaging tools (2.84 vs. 2.17) ( $t(115.858) = 2.660$ ;  $p = .009$ ;  $d = 0.48$ ) and use broadcasting tools less (3.47 vs. 3.98) ( $t(115.119) = -2.123$ ;  $p = .036$ ;  $d = 0.38$ ). In addition, it was found that multinationals have more channels and employees use them more frequently (88.5% vs. 60.7%) ( $\chi^2(1, N = 108) = 10.810$ ;  $p = .001$ ;  $\Phi = -.316$ ).

On the other hand, the data indicate that large companies use the corporate intranet more (4.01 vs. 3.14;  $p = .003$ ) and small companies use group project applications more (3.00 vs. 2.11;  $p = .006$ ) and messaging tools (3.59 vs. 2.24;  $p < .001$ ). Furthermore, in companies that have communication channels, differences were detected in the existence and use of these channels. While 63.2% of small companies have and use them and 82.3% of large companies have and use them, 70% of medium-sized companies have some channels and make little use of them ( $\chi^2(2, N = 108) = 14.063$ ;  $p = .001$ ;  $V_{Cramer} = .361$ ).

Looking at the structural characteristics of the department, it is observed that companies with an IC department make more use of online events (2.72 vs. 2.12) ( $t(116) = -2.057$ ;  $p = .042$ ;  $d = 0.54$ ), the corporate intranet (3.94 vs. 3.00) ( $t(116) = -3.294$ ;  $p = .001$ ;  $d = 0.86$ ), internal social networks (3.06 vs. 2.24) ( $t(116) = -2.322$ ;  $p = .022$ ;  $d = 0.61$ ) and dissemination tools (3.84 vs. 2.88) ( $t(116) = -2.778$ ;  $p = .006$ ;  $d = 0.73$ ).

As shown in table 4, in companies with high effectiveness, more importance is given to the tools available to achieve their goals (except for applications for group projects and instant messaging tools). It has

also been detected in companies that have communication channels that when IC departments show high effectiveness it is more frequent to have more channels and employees make use of them (86% vs. 60.8%) ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 108) = 8.887; p = .003; \Phi = -.287$ ).

**Table 4. Descriptive statistics and t-tests of the level of the tools used in their activities according to the level of effectiveness\*\* achieved by IC departments**

	High effectiveness		Medium-low effectiveness		t	p
	n	M (DT)	n	M (DT)		
E-mail address	59	4.46 (0.70)	59	4.15 (0.93)	2.017	.046*
Dissemination tools (brochures, leaflets, leaflets...)	59	4.25 (1.03)	59	3.15 (1.42)	4.819	.000*
Face-to-face events	59	4.20 (0.85)	59	3.64 (1.13)	3.050	.003*
Corporate intranet	59	4.14 (0.92)	59	3.47 (1.24)	3.296	.001*
Internal social networks	59	3.24 (1.30)	59	2.64 (1.40)	2.382	.019*
Mobile communication, apps	59	3.03 (1.26)	59	2.07 (1.23)	4.216	.000*
Print media	59	2.92 (1.45)	59	2.27 (1.22)	2.611	.010*
Online events	59	2.86 (1.06)	59	2.41 (1.18)	2.222	.028*
General and specialised media	59	2.86 (1.18)	59	2.31 (1.24)	2.514	.013*
Blogs	59	2.76 (1.38)	59	2.07 (1.24)	2.872	.005*
Instant messaging tools	59	2.76 (1.41)	59	2.31 (1.44)	1.746	.084
Group project applications	59	2.39 (1.22)	59	2.14 (1.22)	1.131	.260
Average	59	3.32 (0.64)	59	2.72 (0.62)	5.199	.000*

\*p < .05High

\*\*effectiveness: companies whose assessment of the effectiveness of their IC strategy is between 4 and 5. Medium-low effectiveness: companies whose assessment of the effectiveness of their IC strategy is between 1 and 3.

## 5. Discussion

This research corroborates the importance that companies attribute to internal communication (Adecec, 2019; Dircom, 2018; ASCAI & FEIEA, 2018), which they consider to be an important aspect for them. However, despite these figures, the study provides inconsistent results between these perceptions and the actions carried out by companies. The professionals participating in the survey consider the role of IC to be very important in their companies, although they believe that they do not invest enough (M= 2.41; SD= 1.13) and that internal and external communication are not always integrated (M= 3.81; SD= 1.28). On the other hand, the data also confirms that, despite being considered a priority, IC departments are very small and only 61% of the companies surveyed draw up a specific strategic plan for managing IC. Furthermore, it is more common for multinationals, larger companies, those that rely on external consultants and those that have a specific budget for this activity to have an IC strategic plan.

The results also show that Spanish companies, like European companies (ASCAI & FEIEA, 2018) tend to attribute the setting of IC objectives to departments in which top management is involved. This condition, is considered indispensable for effective IC (Aced et al., 2021; Miquel-Segarra & Aced, 2019; Cuenca & Verazzi, 2018; Ingelmo, et al., 2018; Tkalac Verčić & Pološki Vokić, 2017; Walden et al., 2017). However, the results also reveal that in communication departments there is a priority focus on tactical and technical aspects, such as content development rather than strategic planning, although the high SD=19.2 indicates a clear dispersal of data across companies. On the other hand, less time is devoted to strategic definition, understood in this study as the identification of objectives, the monitoring of problems and employee expectations, and analysis with management and other departments. This data supports previous research and studies that question the strategic nature of communication (Volk, et al., 2017; CIPR Inside, 2017).

The results also reveal that the main objectives that Spanish companies set for themselves in their IC plans are to transmit the company's idiosyncrasies and to encourage employee engagement. The main objectives do not include those directly aligned with business strategy, as European companies' IC plans do, with objectives including "promoting and sharing the company's culture and identity and communicating business strategy, objectives and performance" (ASCAI & FEIEA, 2018). Similar results are found in the case of the multinational companies analysed, in those that rely on consultancies and in those that have their own IC department. Nor is there a very high level of involvement of IC departments in collaborating in the digitisation of companies. In line with their objectives, the IC managers in this study mainly identify their key strategic elements with the terms "ownership", "information", "commitment", "motivation" and "credibility". The use of terms such as "technology" and "understanding" are the least used.

Another contribution of the study refers to the tools used by IC departments to achieve their objectives. As in the research carried out by Sánchez-Gómez (2016), the most frequently used tool is e-mail, considered to be a tool that, despite its two-way possibilities, is often used as a one-way channel that does not favour dialogue, thus failing to comply with the first condition of effective IC (Grunig, 1992; Grunig, et al., 2002). They also use ICT tools (corporate intranet, internal social networks, etc.) alongside traditional means such as face-to-face events. It should be noted that it is common for companies to have their own internal communication channels in place, but this is particularly true of the multinationals and large companies analysed.

Finally, it is observed that the departments that perceive themselves as more effective have a better assessment of all aspects of their business context and are more involved in all the company's objectives. Furthermore, it is more frequent for the most effective companies in the sample to have an IC department that defines its objectives together with the corporate communication department or general management, and to have defined a strategic plan for IC.

The main limitation of this study lies in the quantitative nature of the results, as they do not allow us to analyse the motivations or the specific context that led to strategic decisions. Therefore, for future research, it would be interesting to consider a qualitative analysis based on interviews or focus groups that would allow us to understand in greater detail aspects such as the linkage and alignment of IC objectives with corporate objectives, the justification for the choice of selected channels, the relationship of the departments with external consultants and agencies, or the main shortcomings detected by the professionals who work in the IC environment. On the other hand, in order to have a global and representative approximation of the situation in Spain, it would be advisable to extend the study to a broader sample that reflects the real situation of the business fabric and not limit the study to companies belonging to Dircom and/or which have a communication department.

Finally, it should be noted that this research was conducted before the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis. This health pandemic has had an impact on society at all levels, and has marked a before and after for internal communication (Costa-Sánchez & López-García, 2020). However, knowing the results of this pre-pandemic study is also important because it opens the door to making comparisons with the practice and approach of internal communication in a post-COVID context, in order to analyse its development from a strategic point of view.

## **6. Conclusions**

The main conclusions provided by this research revolve around the differences between the professional positioning attributed to internal communication and the reality in companies. Despite the fact that the scientific literature and professional reports consider internal communication as a strategic element, globally, the Spanish companies taking part in the research do not always make strategic use of it.

At the Spanish companies analysed, internal and external communication are not integrated synergistically into strategic planning, and greater resources are devoted to communication with external stakeholders. Likewise, the internal communication departments and staff responsible for this area tend to prioritise tactical tasks. Curiously, the companies in the sample working with external consultants are those considering strategic planning to be most important and devoting the greatest efforts to it. This data shows the lack of personal resources at the organisations that have taken part in the study, at the same time as valuing the work carried out by the consultancy firms at a strategic level.

Furthermore, despite the importance and support that the surveyed professionals acknowledge having from senior management when setting objectives, the budgets and resources assigned to IC are insufficient and show a lack of real commitment from the organisations.

Another conclusion refers to the tools used by companies. Although it is true that there is evidence that digitisation has promoted the use of ICT tools, the organisations in the sample do not consider their use as a priority and continue to mostly use others (mail, brochures and events) are not characterised by the

possibility of promoting dialogue and interaction. This data reveals the absence of objectives linked to active listening and the generation of dialogue between the members of the organisation.

Finally, it should be noted that there is a clear difference between the results obtained from the Spanish companies and the multinationals that have been part of the sample. The latter are self-assessed as more efficient and both their objectives and the tools or the context in which they are developed are clearly different. Spanish and/or smaller companies in the sample – representing a high percentage of companies in the business sector in Spain – prioritise the need to satisfy the customer. Likewise, they show a lack of integration of internal and external communication and are aware of the low budget assigned to IC.

## 7. Specific contributions of each author

Contributions	Author
Research design	Cristina Aced-Toledano and Susana Miquel-Segarra
Documentary search	Cristina Aced-Toledano and Susana Miquel-Segarra
Data collection	Cristina Aced-Toledano and Susana Miquel-Segarra
Critical data analysis and interpretation	Cristina Aced-Toledano and Susana Miquel-Segarra
Review and approval of versions	Cristina Aced-Toledano and Susana Miquel-Segarra

## 8. Acknowledgement

Translator: Simon Berrill.

## 9. References

- [1] Aced, C.; Arocas, M. y Miquel, S. (2021). Manual de comunicación interna. Madrid, España: Dircom, Asociación de Directivos de Comunicación.
- [2] Asociación de Empresas Consultoras en Relaciones Públicas y Comunicación, Adecec. (2019). La Comunicación Interna, gran aliada en los nuevos modelos de negocio. <https://bit.ly/3pCsksk>
- [3] Álvarez-Marcos, J. (2007). Comunicación interna, la estrategia del éxito. *Razón y Palabra*, 56, 1-8. <https://bit.ly/3fXTzf2>
- [4] Álvarez-Nobell, A. y Lesta, L. (2011). Medición de los aportes de la gestión estratégica de CI a los objetivos de la organización. *Palabra clave*, 14(1), 11-30. <https://bit.ly/3fWXLf0>
- [5] Apirian, G. & Lepis, M. (2017). The Ultimate Guide to Internal Communications Strategy. Irlanda: Poppulo. <https://bit.ly/35anlY1>
- [6] Argenti, P. A.; Howell, R. A. & Beck, K. A. (2005). The strategic communication imperative. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 46(3), 83-89. <https://bit.ly/3puCAUG>
- [7] ASCAI & FEIEA (2018). On the Wings of Corporate Strategy Current status and trends in internal communication in European companies. *European Internal Communication Research*. <https://bit.ly/3fzGP7A>
- [8] Berceruelo, B. (2020). Empleados comprometidos, empresas eficaces. Madrid, España: Estudio de Comunicación.
- [9] Carretón, M. C. (2007). Las relaciones públicas en la comunicación interna de la banca española. A coruña: Netbiblo.
- [10] Castillo-Esparcia, A. y Álvarez-Nobell, A. (2014). Evaluación en comunicación estratégica. London: McGraw Hill Education.
- [11] Castillo-Esparcia, A. y Villabona-Beltrán, D. (2018). Evaluación para demostrar la efectividad en comunicación y relaciones públicas. Una mirada a las prácticas profesionales desde los *Communication Monitor*. *Communication Papers*, 7(15), 137-153. <https://doi.org/ggzw>
- [12] CIPR Inside (2017). Making it count. The strategic value and effectiveness of internal communication. <https://bit.ly/34VLCk6>

- [13] Costa-Sánchez, C. y López-García, X. (2020). Comunicación y crisis del coronavirus en España. Primeras lecciones. *El profesional de la información*, 29(3), 1-14. <https://doi.org/d96m>
- [14] Couper, M. P. (2000). Web surveys: The questionnaire Design Challenge. In Proceedings of the 53rd session of the International Statistical Institute (ISI). <https://bit.ly/3w3C02J>
- [15] Cuenca, J. y Verazzi, L. (2018). *Guía fundamental de la comunicación interna*. Barcelona, España: Editorial UOC.
- [16] Cuenca, J. y Verazzi, L. (2020). *Comunicación interna total. Estrategia, prácticas y casos*. Barcelona, España: Editorial UOC.
- [17] Dircom (2018). *El Estado de la Comunicación en España 2018*. <https://bit.ly/3we1SL5>
- [18] Dolphin R. R. (2005). Internal Communications: Today's Strategic Imperative. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 11(3), 171-190. <https://doi.org/c27psh>
- [19] European Communication Monitor (2019). *Trends in Communication Management and Public Relations – Results and Implications*. <https://bit.ly/3zbUbFy>
- [20] García-Jiménez, J. (1998). *La Comunicación Interna*. Madrid, España: Díaz de Santos.
- [21] Garrido, F.J. (2017). *Comunicación Estratégica. Un Puente significativo para la creación de valor empresarial. Proyecto Comunicación Estratégica para el Siglo XXI*. <https://bit.ly/357rbkA>
- [22] Grunig, J. E. (1992). *Excellence in PR and Communication Management*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- [23] Grunig, L. A.; Grunig, J. E. & Dozier, D. (2002). Excellent public relations and effective organizations: A study of communication management in three countries. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- [24] Grunig, J. E.; Grunig, L. A. & Dozier, D. M. (2006). The excellence theory. *Public relations theory II*, 21-62.
- [25] Hallahan, K.; Holtzhausen, D.; Van Ruler, B.; Verčič, D. & Sriramesh, K. (2007). Defining strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 1(1), 3-35. <https://doi.org/dgc74g>
- [26] Herranz de la Casa, J. M.; Tapia, A. y Lázaro, V. A. (2009). La comunicación interna en la universidad. *Investigar para conocer a nuestros públicos. Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 12(64). <https://doi.org/b2n8z3>
- [27] Holá, J. (2012). Internal Communication in The Small and Medium Sized Enterprises. *Ekonomika a management*, 1, 32-45. <https://bit.ly/353Vttd>
- [28] Hume, J. & Leonard, A. (2014). Exploring the strategic potential of internal communication in international non-governmental organisations. *Public relations review*, 40(2), 294-304. <https://doi.org/gg4z>
- [29] IC Kolektif (2017). *Disrupting the Function of IC. A Global Perspective*. <https://bit.ly/3503BpP>
- [30] Ingelmo, M.; Navarro, C. & Sanz, J. Á. (2018). Determining factors of success in internal communication management in Spanish companies: The influence of social media. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 23(3), 405-422. <https://doi.org/fphs>
- [31] Latin American Communication Monitor (2019) *Comunicación estratégica y sus retos: fake news, confianza, información para la toma de decisiones, liderazgo, satisfacción, estrés y compromiso laboral*. <https://bit.ly/3wawj3l>
- [32] Lee, Y. & Yue, C.A. (2020). Status of internal communication research in public relations: An analysis of published articles in nine scholarly journals from 1970 to 2019. *Public Relations Review*, 46, 3. <https://doi.org/ghkn5q>
- [33] Madroñero, G. y Capriotti, P. (2018). La etapa de la Estrategia de Comunicación en el proceso de planificación de la comunicación y las relaciones públicas. *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas*, 8(16), 171-186. <https://doi.org/gg42>
- [34] Matilla, K. (2007). *Los Modelos de Planificación Estratégica en la Teoría de las Relaciones Públicas*. Barcelona, España: UOC.



- [35] Matilla, K. (2017). *Cómo hacer un Plan Estratégico de Comunicación (vol. I): Un modelo de planificación estratégica, paso a paso*. Barcelona, España: UOC.
- [36] Men, L. R. (2014). Strategic employee communication: transformational leadership, communication channels, and employee satisfaction. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 28(2), 264–284. <https://doi.org/gg43>
- [37] Men, L. R. & Stacks, D. (2014). The Effects of Authentic Leadership on Strategic Internal Communication and Employee-Organization Relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(4), 301–324. <https://doi.org/bcbp>
- [38] Miquel-Segarra, S. y Aced, C. (2018). El rol de la comunicación interna ante los desafíos de la digitalización. *Communication Papers*, 7(15), 27. <https://doi.org/gg44>
- [39] Miquel-Segarra, S. y Aced, C. (2019a). Perfil de los responsables de comunicación interna en España. *Revista de la Asociación Española de Investigación de la Comunicación*, 6(11), 99-118. <https://doi.org/gg45>
- [40] Miquel-Segarra, S. y Aced-Toledano, C. (2019b). Objetivos y dificultades en la evaluación de la comunicación interna en las empresas españolas. *Profesional De La Información*, 28(5). <https://doi.org/gg4>
- [41] Nelli, R.P. (2018). *Internal communication in Europe. Key success factors and managerial approaches*. Ascai; European Association for Internal Communication. ISBN: 978 88 343 3641 0. <https://bit.ly/3v4jR3C>
- [42] North American Communication Monitor (2018). *North American Communication Monitor 2018 Tracking Trends*. <https://bit.ly/3pur2AY>
- [43] Omilion-Hodges, L. M. & Baker, C. R. (2014). Everyday talk and convincing conversations: Utilizing strategic internal communication. *Business Horizons*, 57(3), 435-445. <https://doi.org/gg46>
- [44] Palencia-Lefler, M. (2008). La incomunicación interna en la Universidad española. *Revista Latina de comunicación social*, 63, 277-286. <https://doi.org/fvtztp>
- [45] Pereira, T., Portilla, I. y Rodríguez- Salcedo, N. (2019). Big data y Relaciones Públicas. Una revisión bibliográfica del estado de la cuestión. *Revista de Comunicación*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/d4v8>
- [46] Pérez, R.A. (2001). *Estrategias de comunicación*. Barcelona, España: Ariel.
- [47] Pérez, R.A. (2012). *Pensar la estrategia*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Crujía.
- [48] Puebla-Martínez, B. y Farfán J. (2018). Gestión de la comunicación interna a través de las aplicaciones para móviles. Caso de estudio: El Corte Inglés. *Revista Prisma Social*, 22, 113-126.
- [49] Ruck, K. & Welch, M. (2012). Valuing internal communication; management and employee perspectives. *Public Relations Review*, 38(2), 294-302. <https://doi.org/fztkfm>
- [50] Sánchez-Gómez, M. (2016). *La comunicación interna en programas de transformación según el modelo de Lewin. El caso de las empresas del Ibex 35*. Tesis Doctoral. Universidad de Málaga.
- [51] Simancas-González, E. y García-López, M. (2017). Gestión de la comunicación en las universidades públicas españolas. *El profesional de la información (EPI)*, 26(4), 735-744. <https://doi.org/gj8ckz>
- [52] Tapia, A.; Herranz de la Casa, J. M. y García-González, J. (2010). El uso de las TICs en la comunicación interna de la universidad: el caso de la Universidad Europea Miguel de Cervantes. *Doxa Comunicación: revista interdisciplinar de estudios de comunicación y ciencias sociales*, 10, 107-124. <https://bit.ly/2ScOAhI>
- [53] Tkalac Verčič, A. & Pološki Vokic, N. (2017). Engaging employees through internal communication. *Public Relations Review*, 43(5), 885-893. <https://doi.org/gfx6hz>
- [54] Verčič, D. & Zerfass, A. (2016). A comparative excellence framework for communication management. *Journal of Communication Management*, 20(4), 270-288. <https://doi.org/gg47>
- [55] Villafañe, J. (1999). *Imagen Positiva. La gestión profesional de la imagen corporativa*. Madrid: Pirámide.

[56] VMA Group (2018). The View. An in-depth look into communicating in an integrated world. <https://bit.ly/2SiAHOU>

[57] Volk S. C.; Berger K.; Zeffass A.; Bisswanger L.; Fetzer M. & Köhler K. (2017). How to play the game. Strategic tools for managing corporate communications and creating value for your organization. Leipzig, Germany: Academic Society for Management & Communication.

[58] Walden, J.; Jung, E.H. & Westerman, C.Y.K. (2017). Employee communication, job engagement, and organizational commitment: A study of members of the Millennial Generation. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 29(2-3), 73-89. <https://doi.org/f683>

[59] Xifra, J. (2017). Manual de relaciones públicas e institucionales. Tercera edición revisada y ampliada. Madrid: Editorial Tecnos.

[60] Zeffass, A.; Verhoeven, P.; Moreno, A.; Tench, R. & Verčič, D. (2020). European Communication Monitor 2020. Ethical challenges, gender issues, cyber security, and competence gaps in strategic communication. Results of a survey in 44 countries. Brussels: EUPRERA/EACD

