EXCLUSIVE REPORT

# The Technology Gap in Corporate Communications

social chorus

There's been a lot of buzz about how digital content has changed the way we communicate. In our personal lives, we text instead of call, we keep up with both the news of the world and of our friends via Facebook and Twitter, and what we used to call "gossip," we now call "social sharing." In short, we can communicate with as many people as we choose, all over the world, whenever we want.

Digital communication has also disrupted traditional marketing practices. From video streaming that allows TV viewers to bypass commercials to the shift toward providing valuable, actionable information for consumers, marketers aren't looking back as they freshen up their strategies for the road ahead.

Not surprisingly, the development of new communication tools is keeping pace with changes in the way we communicate, giving people a myriad of ways to get the right information in front of the right readers at the right time.

However, there's been a lot less attention given to the development of internal communications tools. As a result, many of those communications professionals are still using software and methods from the early days of the digital revolution. We knew intuitively that employee communications could benefit greatly from the same kind of purpose-built tools we use in every other part of our lives – but we didn't have the hard data to back that knowledge up. So we partnered with Dimensional Research® to conduct a survey examining the impact of digital tools and technology (or the lack thereof) on internal communications teams.

SocialChorus teamed up with **Dimensional Research®**, a leading market research firm for technology companies to conduct an online survey of 331 Communications and HR professionals.
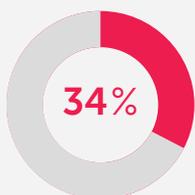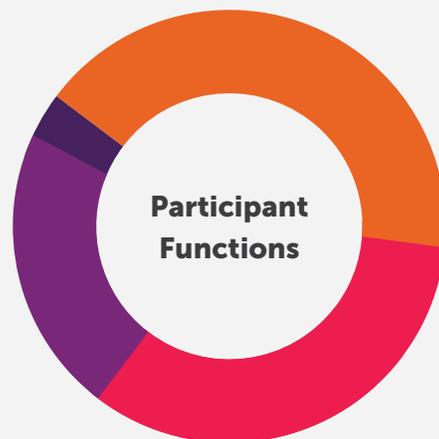
34%
Percentage of respondents from companies with **more than 20,000** employees

4%
Consultants

19%
Executives

Participant Functions

42%
Team Managers

35%
Individual Contributors

OVERVIEW

It soon became apparent that the lack of tools can't be blamed on not making employee communications a priority. Eighty-seven percent of respondents indicated that fostering employee alignment with organizational and strategic changes was a key objective for company leaders, with 84 percent indicating that "increasing employee engagement" was a primary objective. In addition, 52 percent of respondents indicated that they were expected to provide advice and guidance to the C-suite. Altogether, that's a lot of energy that's being put towards improving communications – so what's taking so long?
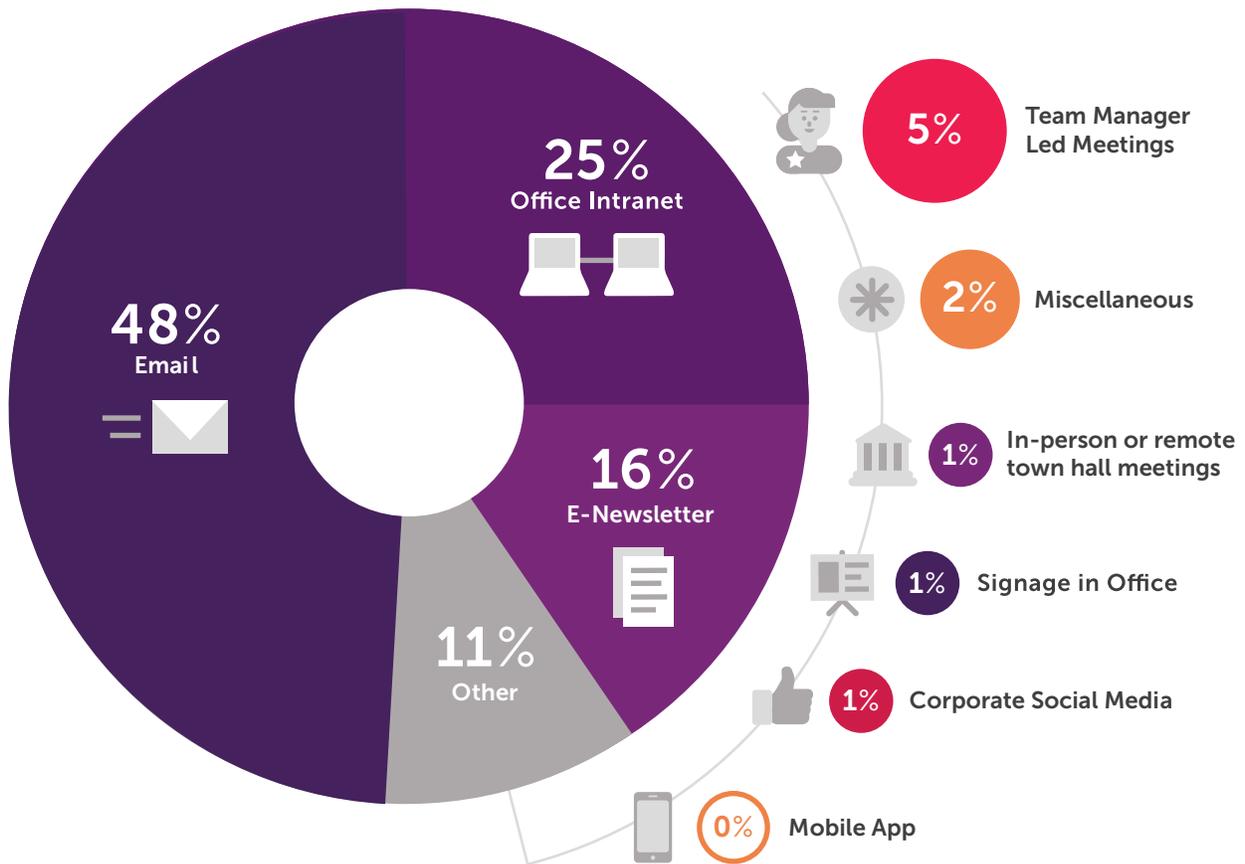
> " 84% said increasing **employee engagement** was a primary objective of company leaders. "

Not surprisingly, we also found that a lot of the problems internal teams struggle with could be resolved if they could effectively use solutions similar to those that are readily available for other uses. Instead, we have an entire profession that's trying to win a new game while playing by the old rules – and with worn-out equipment. A full 89 percent of respondents, for example, said they most frequently use older forms of communication. Trailing behind were meetings led by team leaders (5 percent), in-person or remote town halls (1 percent), corporate social media (1 percent), and office signage (1 percent). An astounding 0% said mobile apps where there most frequently used method of communication, which is almost unbelievable considering how popular mobile phones and productivity apps have become *(See Figure 1)*.

FIGURE 1 | What is the most frequently used method to communicate with employees?

48% Email

25% Office Intranet

16% E-Newsletter

11% Other

5% Team Manager Led Meetings

2% Miscellaneous

1% In-person or remote town hall meetings

1% Signage in Office

1% Corporate Social Media

0% Mobile App

To top it off, 97 percent of respondents said that they face challenges with the tools they do use, pointing more towards a lack in innovation than a low amount of enthusiasm. Specifically, the challenges identified by respondents reflected their dependence on older technology. Many were technical in nature. For example, 44 percent reported that firewalls and other obstacles – such as an intranet that requires VPN access – make it difficult for employees to access information. Those who work outside the confines of the corporate office were particularly challenging to reach (36%). Another 37 percent reported problems arising from poor integration – in other words, too many tools that don't work together. In addition, 32 percent of respondents indicated that not all of their colleagues had access to a computer. These types of issues create major inefficiencies for every company in every industry.

CHALLENGE:

ENGAGING AN AUDIENCE THAT'S CONSTANTLY BOMBARDED WITH MESSAGES
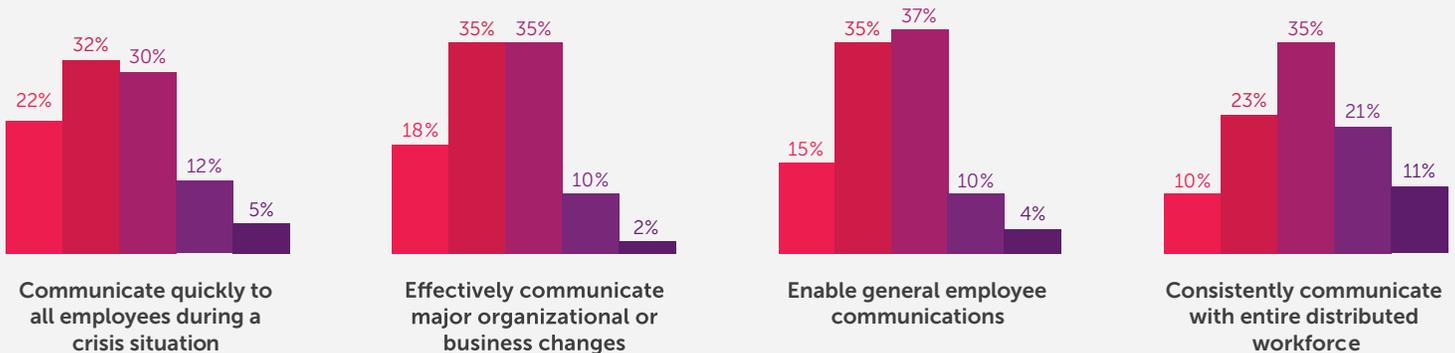
71% report that their employees don't read email and other content.

Employer messages have a lot of competition, from advertising emails to reminders about our dentist appointments and dinner reservations. Using outdated tools doesn't help move them to the front of the line. In fact, one of the biggest obstacles identified by respondents (54 percent) is "information overload" and the resulting difficulty in capturing employees' attention. Moreover, 71 percent of respondents reported that their employees don't read email and other content, and 36 percent said that they're unhappy with the format in which most content is delivered. And some don't know when to look for updates – 28 percent identified inefficient notification systems for alerting employees to new content. Not surprisingly, few described their tools as "very effective," especially when it came to crisis management, notifying employees of business or organizational changes, general employee communications, and communicating with a distributed workforce *(See Figure 2)*.

FIGURE 2 | How would you rate your communications toolset in its ability to enable you to deliver each of these key types of communications?

Very Effective ⟷ Not Effective

Communicate quickly to all employees during a crisis situation
22% 32% 30% 12% 5%

Effectively communicate major organizational or business changes
18% 35% 35% 10% 2%

Enable general employee communications
15% 35% 37% 10% 4%

Consistently communicate with entire distributed workforce
10% 23% 35% 21% 11%

That supports a conclusion already shared by many employee communication professionals: There is an overall low degree of engagement – and a lack of willingness to engage – among employees. Without a common, easy-to-use platform that unifies people through things like news, announcements, and more, employees don't know where to look, and many times, they don't even know that they should be looking at all.

CHALLENGE:

ENGAGING A REMOTE WORKFORCE

Thanks to the very technology that internal communicators lack, today's workforce is more widely distributed than ever before. Far from rubbing shoulders in the cafeteria, today's employees could be spread out all over the country – or even the world.

One of the the biggest revelations from our survey was that more than half of the respondents (59 percent) considered communicating with a widely distributed workforce as being a primary challenge. Additionally, 45 percent identified the need to provide employees with factual information rather than allowing the rumor mill to fill the vacuum. Other challenges identified by respondents included:

59% consider communicating with a widely distributed workforce to be a primary challenge.

The length of time it takes to communicate organizational changes

Employee focus on bad news due to lack of awareness of good news

The difficulty of effectively communicating with all stakeholders during a crisis

Clearly, employers are struggling to effectively communicate with their distributed workforce, and they're currently not making the most of the tools at their disposal. For example, despite the fact that the workforce has enthusiastically embraced the mobile revolution, only 3 percent of respondents indicated that they effectively use mobile technology to communicate with employees. And only 1 in 3 optimize their content for viewing on mobile devices. A workforce that's on the go needs an app that can move with them.
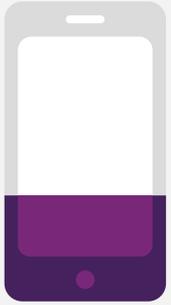
Only **one third** optimize content for viewing on mobile devices.

Most mobile optimization is focused on making **emails** easy to read.

Only **15%** of those who optimize content for mobile have a mobile app for employee communication.

Of those who do optimize for mobile, most focus primarily on making emails easy to read. And of those, only 15 percent have a mobile app dedicated to employee communication. Considering that almost all of us have apps that we dedicate to communicating with our friends and family — Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, WeChat, Snapchat, and more — why would we not do the same for our work lives? After all, we spend the majority of our time at the office.

CHALLENGE:
EFFECTIVE SELECTION AND USE OF METRICS

We also wanted to learn about metrics. Specifically, we wanted to know which metrics internal communications professionals tracked, how confident they were in their effectiveness, and what they did with the resulting information.

We discovered that while the majority of respondents (81 percent) track metrics for employee communications, methods vary widely and tend to be somewhat superficial. Seventy percent of respondents rely on employee surveys. Fifty-six percent track website analytics, 44 percent track email clicks, and 19 percent don't track metrics for employee communications at all.

In addition, only 22 percent of respondents are confident in the effectiveness of the metrics they track. That lack of confidence manifests itself in how the information is used. While more than two-thirds share the metrics with their executive team, 70 percent report that their executives aren't interested enough to ask for them. In short, while everyone understands the importance of metrics, they're not clear on how to use them. As a result, metrics are often given cursory attention, which is bad news — we should rely on numbers, not ignore them *(See Figure 3)*.

FIGURE 3 | 81% of respondents track metrics for employee communications, but methods and results vary.

70%

Use employee surveys

56%

Track website analytics

44%

Track email clicks

19%

Nothing

Only **22%** of respondents are confident in the effectiveness of the metrics they track.

2/3 share metrics with their executive team, but **70%** say executives aren't interested enough to ask for them.

CHALLENGE:

INSUFFICIENT INVOLVEMENT IN TECH DECISIONS

**25%** said they had no role at all in selecting the tools used.

One possible explanation for the lack of tools designed to support employee communications could be that the communications team is rarely involved in selecting those tools. While 84 percent of respondents thought that the communications team should take the lead role in tool selection, a full 25 percent said they had no role at all in selecting the tools they used. For those that did have input, the level of participation varied from full collaboration to being asked for input during the final stages of the selection process. Only 4 percent drove the selection process entirely.

Respondents were also asked about the features they would most like to see in a communications tool. Seventy-two percent rated the ability to "track employee use and engagement" as "very important." Also ranked as "very important" were the ability to be "fully managed by the communications team" (68 percent), the ability to "support communication on mobile devices" (59 percent), and the ability to "use one tool for all employee communications" (48 percent). Those needs are clearly not being met by traditional communication tools. It's no wonder that employees aren't inspired to join in – they're not being given the chance to do so.

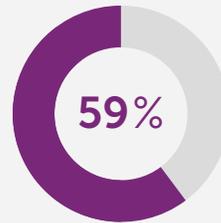**FIGURE 4** | Features respondents rank as "very important" in a communication tool
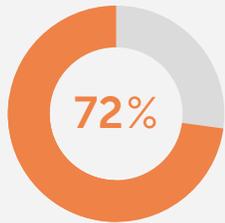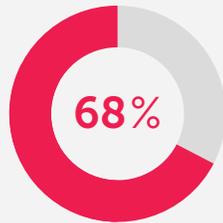
72%

Ability to track employee use and engagement

68%

Ability to be fully managed by the communications team

59%

Ability to support communication on mobile devices

48%

Ability to use one tool for all employee communications

There you have it: If you've been thinking that internal communications professionals are getting a raw deal, it looks like you're right. The good news is that there's plenty of room for employee communications to grow into its new digital role. And the model is already there: the same type of mobile technology we use to communicate in our everyday lives.

THE PROMISE OF MOBILE

97% show interest in using a mobile app for employee communications.

#1

86% said a mobile app would be more effective than tools they currently use.

The potential of mobile lies in the fact that almost everyone already uses it. In fact, one of the main factors that makes mobile communications platforms so promising is the revelation that 92 percent of respondents said that more than half of their employees had access to smartphones. When compared to the fact that 32 percent reported that not all of their employees had access to a computer, it underscores the opportunity provided by mobile tools.

Moreover, internal communications professionals are already on board. In our survey, 97 percent of respondents said that they would be interested in using a mobile app for employee communications, and 86 percent said that a mobile app would be more effective than tools they're currently using. They also ranked notifications for new content – something mobile technology already does exceptionally well – as especially important.

SOCIALCHORUS

is the only communications platform for complex, distributed workforces.

The SocialChorus employee communications platform is an effective, easy-to-use, affordable solution tailor-made for complex, distributed workforces. By having a mobile solution outside of corporate emails you can ensure that employees are aligned with the mission of the organization and have the information they need to thrive. You can easily source, curate and control news and information each employee will find relevant, while reaching everyone in your organization — wherever and however they choose to consume news and information. And as your team grows through inspiring, educational content, the backbone of your business will be built on what really matters: an engaged, loyal workforce.

Are you ready to bring employee communications in line with the way your employees already communicate in their daily lives? We'd love to show you how to get started —give us a call today to learn how SocialChorus can help you transform employee engagement and advocacy in your organization.

CALL TODAY!

PHONE | 844.WRK2LFE

WEB | www.socialchorus.com

EMAIL | info@socialchorus.com

REQUEST A DEMO TODAY

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

SocialChorus teamed up with Dimensional Research®, a leading market research firm for technology companies to conduct an online survey of 331 Communications and HR professionals. The focus was the state of employee communications: successes, challenges, leadership, the impact of technology, and everything in between. All participants had responsibility for their respective company's communication initiatives.

THE DEMOGRAPHICS

When sorted by company size, participants were for the most part evenly distributed, with a plurality (34 percent) being from companies with more than 20,000 employees. When sorted by function, 42 percent identified themselves as a "team manager" and 35 percent identified themselves as an "individual contributor." Another 19 percent identified themselves as "executives," with 4 percent identifying as "consultants."

When viewed by function, most respondents were responsible for either "internal/employee communications" or "corporate communications." Other reported responsibilities included "management of communication tools," "social media/public relations," "corporate/public affairs,"