



*size*  
*of the sector*

Institute  
of Internal  
Communication

*The power within*





*Contents*

Size Matters

Findings

The Finer Points

Method

Final Comments

Next Steps

The Authors

## Size Matters

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Internal Communication. What is it? Why do we need it? Who does it? We don't hear those questions as much these days. Why? Because IC has finally emerged as a professional practice and employers recognise its positive influence on employee engagement. So now that the case for IC and its role in organisational success is more widely understood, we've turned our enquiring gaze to answer a new question with potentially far-reaching implications: what's the true size of our sector and how many people in the UK work specifically in IC? As the UK's sole professional body uniquely devoted to the development of IC and the people who work in it, we'd long recognised the importance and value of a clear and accurate picture of the size of the sector. This year we set about making that calculation.

We'd heard figures of around 20,000 quoted from time to time, but we'd never seen a definitive reference for that. So this summer we set out to measure the size of the sector, in collaboration with theblueballroom, a communications agency and sponsor of IoIC. Our aim was to answer the question: how many people in the UK work wholly or in part in IC? It promised to be a complicated task – and it was.

## Findings

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Following a detailed, systematic research effort carried out earlier this year, we believe we can confidently say that the number of people working in IC or IC-related roles is in excess of 45,000.

*Here's how we arrived at that figure...*

# The Finer Points

## Sector and scale:

Our research was largely carried out within the private sector, with some exploration of the public and charity sectors as a second phase.

In 2013, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) estimated that there were approximately 4.9 million companies in the UK. As employers, over 99% of these were small (between 0-49 employees). Of the remaining one percent, an estimated 30,000 were medium-sized (50-250 employees) and 6,000 large (250 employees or more).

By using other prominent data sources including the FTSE 100 and the Times Best Companies to Work for, we then identified some of those 36,000 medium-sized and large companies by name and used a sample of 1000 of these to conduct our research using the LinkedIn database. The sample included 35% medium-sized and 65% large companies.

We chose to exclude small employers from the scope of this particular research project, partly for reasons of practicality and partly on the reasonable assumption that small businesses were much less likely than larger companies to employ a dedicated IC practitioner, whether part- or full-time.

## LinkedIn:

Our first assumption was that IC practitioners are likely to have a LinkedIn profile, although we're aware that not everyone in IC will. Based on this assumption, we used LinkedIn as the main source of data for this research. In order to gauge how likely IC practitioners were to be on LinkedIn, we carried out a quick sense-check by searching the profiles of 100 practitioners known to theblueballroom and found that 74% were listed on LinkedIn. We then performed a similar search, this time against a list of 100 IoIC members and found that 80% were listed on LinkedIn. This confirmed our prediction – LinkedIn was a valid data source.

## Job titles:

Our initial research filtered titles with 'Internal Communication' in them. We later revisited our sample list of 1000 medium and large companies and did another search, this time on a smaller sub-set of 200 companies which had previously shown up as not having any 'Internal Communication' roles in their companies. This time we changed the search term by swapping 'Internal Communication' for 'Employee Communications' and 'Employee Engagement'. The result was a further 10% increase in estimated numbers which we added to the final number. Note - We're aware that many job titles combine Communication with other disciplines, including Marketing and PR. We've made educated guesses by looking at people's profiles to see if they are in fact working in the IC arena. Similarly, when looking at people with Engagement in their title, we've selected those with specific references to communication in their job profiles.

## Public and charity sectors:

For the public sector, we accessed a list of department and agency contacts supplied by the Government Communications Service (GCS). This list contains approximately 650 communication professionals of key contacts, working across 180 public bodies. Of these, 50 have IC in their job titles. However,



we assumed from our own direct contact with practitioners in this sector that substantially more of the sector's practitioners would have IC responsibility within their roles. From a sample of 30 public sector departments listed on Wikipedia (employing a total of 2,047,609 people), we found a sum of 322 jobs that can be categorised as IC-related. So far we haven't extended this search to local government lists, although that would be a natural step for the next phase of research. We looked at the charity sector by sourcing a list of the UK's top 40 charities (there are almost 2000 registered in the UK) through Wikipedia and looking for employee numbers and IC roles through their own websites and through the LinkedIn database. Among the top 40 charities, there were 196 jobs which bore IC-related titles or contained elements of IC within them.



## Agency and Consultancy:

An initial reliance on LinkedIn to determine practitioner numbers within IC agencies and among freelancers proved to be of limited value. Of the 1000 members of IoIC approximately 150 were working in agencies or as sole traders, although many of these did not provide employment information useful to our research. The scope of a future phase of research would extend to include the agency sector. By their diverse nature, IC freelancers and consultants are harder to 'count' collectively, but our informal knowledge leads us to conclude that their numbers extend into the thousands. Adding these to our total will undoubtedly increase still further the known size of the IC sector.

# Method



As explained, we took the estimated number of companies in the UK from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (4.9 million) and focused on the 36,000 of those that are medium-sized and large companies. In doing this we made the assumption that medium-sized and large businesses are more likely than small businesses to employ IC practitioners are (with only 0-49 employees).

We then used lists such as the FTSE 100 and the Times Best Companies to Work For to identify some of these 36,000 companies. And from there we conducted in-depth research into a 1000 sample of companies using the LinkedIn database.

For each company, we typed '<company name> internal communication' into LinkedIn, and filtered the results to include UK employees who list the company in question as their current company. This way, we were left with all the people who worked for that company, in the UK, and who had 'Internal Communication' somewhere in their profile. We then manually examined each person's profile in turn to determine whether they worked in IC within their role. As you can imagine,

some companies had no one; some companies had multiple people.

Having taken that information from the sample of 1000 companies, we then changed the search term to determine the total number of employees in each of them. We then split the results of this search into medium and large companies and calculated the total employee numbers in those two categories, separately. This helped us simply to calculate the 'average' total employee number for both medium-sized and large companies so that we could estimate a 'total number' of people working in IC in those 36,000 companies. This was necessary in order to increase the accuracy when scaling up.

*Based on our sample of 1000 companies in the private sector:*

**120** the average number of employees in  
a medium-sized company

**21,519** the average number of employees  
in a large company

*Based on the number of people working in an Internal  
Communications role in those 1000 companies:*

An average of **0.24 people** in a medium-sized company  
work in an Internal Communications role (i.e. **0.2% of the  
workforce**)

An average of **4 people** in a large business work in an IC  
role, i.e. **0.019% of the workforce**

*Multiplying those figures by 30,000 to account for the medium-  
sized companies, and 6,000 for the larger ones, we estimate that:*

**7,200\*** people work in IC in medium-sized companies in the UK

**24,000\*** people work in IC in large companies

**31,200\*** *We grossed up the number, allowing for a further  
25% of the potential market who are not on LinkedIn.*

*We then added another 10% to represent those with employee engagement  
in their title, not internal communication (as mentioned earlier).*

This comes to **45,760**  
(in excess of 45,000)

\*estimated number

# Final Comments

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A calculation that in excess of 45,000 people are wholly or partly engaged in IC practice may or may not surprise observers. What's clear is that IC keeps a significant body of practitioners employed, with the potential to wield a big influence on organisational success.

We know that this figure is small in comparison to the numbers who work in, say, HR or marketing, accountancy or IT, but it is sufficiently large for employers and for everyone else concerned with the national economy and the world of work to care a great deal about how IC is practised in the UK.

With that clearly in mind, our research and the size of the IC sector it has estimated highlight the need for high standards of practice, sound governance and professional development, to ensure the quality and competence of these practitioners.

# Next steps

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The more we delve, the more we find that's worthy of further research. We want to understand even more about our sector, our practitioners and their activities and so we will continue to explore the size of the sector.

Any next steps would include researching definitive numbers of IC practitioners working in agency and consultancy and the charity and public sectors, which as we explained earlier, have been harder to find from our first search. Even so, we believe it's a necessary effort in order to gain a more comprehensive picture of the scope and extent of the IC sector.



# The Authors

theblueballroom and IoIC have worked together to research, write and produce this report.

## About the Institute

The Institute of Internal Communication (IoIC) is the only UK professional body solely dedicated to supporting IC practitioners throughout their career.

We are a not-for-profit, membership organisation and all our activities are based around five key pillars: advocacy, career development, community, thought leadership and organisational development.

The Institute provides seminars and workshops across the UK, stages a national conference, runs the largest competition for internal communicators in Europe, provides accredited qualifications, training courses and a continuing professional development (CPD) scheme, and supports a large knowledge bank.

For further information visit us at:

[ioic.org.uk](http://ioic.org.uk)

[Twitter @ioicnews](https://twitter.com/ioicnews)

[LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ioic)

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## About theblueballroom

theblueballroom is a business communications agency with a vision to make business better. It provides a unique combination of internal communications, public relations and digital expertise, driving powerful engagement with the people who really matter inside and outside your business.

From strategy and planning to delivery, the team develops creative communications that make an impact, always keeping people and content at the centre of their focus.

For further information visit us at:

[theblueballroom.com](http://theblueballroom.com)

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