

THE IC CAREER GUIDE

Starting out in internal communication

FUT
UNE
NET

Institute
of Internal
Communication

Produced in partnership by FutureNet: The network
for newcomers to internal communication and the
Institute of Internal Communication

ABOUT IoIC

The Institute of Internal Communication (IoIC) is the only independent professional body in the UK solely dedicated to internal communication. We exist to help organisations and people succeed through promoting internal communication of the highest standard.

Our members are shaping workplaces for the better. They know people and business. They create conversations that help people feel connected, engaged and purposeful. They impact the working lives of millions.

We've been driving standards for over 70 years, through our qualifications,

leadership and communities. We are the voice for internal communication, driving the agenda and building a movement of passionate, dedicated professionals.

Because how we communicate at work matters. Because

 WeMatterAtWork

ABOUT FUTURENET

FutureNet is the first and only network of its kind dedicated to supporting new and upcoming internal communication professionals as they strive to become tomorrow's IC leaders.

Aimed at people just starting on their internal communication journey as well as those who have already gained some experience, FutureNet exists to ensure that industry newcomers have a dedicated and safe space to connect with their peers and advance their knowledge and skills.

Our purpose is to develop the existing pool of emerging talent within internal communication, increase awareness of internal communication as a career of

choice for those entering the workforce and broaden the opportunities available, allowing for a more diverse and inclusive profession.

FutureNet is run by a dedicated committee of members who are part of the network and have kindly volunteered their time and energy to the cause and objectives of this exciting IoIC initiative.

For further information about the Institute or the FutureNet network, please visit ioic.org.uk

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SO, WHAT IS INTERNAL COMMUNICATION?

It's when a manager holds a team meeting.
It's when you share an idea with a colleague.
It's your employer's emails, internal website (or intranet), magazine, videos, blogs, social media channels and so much more...

Internal communication helps employees at all levels understand what's happening in their organisation – whether you're the CEO explaining a major change to your employees, or a project leader sharing an update. Internal communicators plan, create and curate this process, making sure everyone in an organisation is kept informed and engaged so that they are able to do their job as well as they possibly can.

And an organisation that communicates well with its people can expect greater productivity, innovation and reputation, and make people both inside and outside the organisation want to work there.

Put simply, internal communication can cover any and all communication between employees within an organisation. Good communication has the power to transform working lives by helping people feel engaged and purposeful – that they matter at work — making for better organisations and a better society overall.

THE MANY ROLES OF THE INTERNAL COMMUNICATOR

One of the best things about working in internal communication is the wide variety of activities you can be involved in. Not only do you gain a lot of transferable skills but there is often a lot of variety. Here are just some of the tasks you might be expected to do when starting out in internal communications:

- Gather insights from employees to inform organisational wide decisions
- Interview employees and write up their story for the internal company magazine
- Manage and monitor internal channels
- Bring employees together at creative and inspiring company events
- Film a senior leader talking about business performance for a vlog
- Design a newsletter template
- Monitor user engagement with digital channels, using email marketing software or analytics programmes
- Write internal news to be shared with various audience groups
- Advise colleagues outside the communications team on the correct way to apply the organisation's brand and embed its values
- Use internal social media channels to share news and engage people
- Network and build relationships with key stakeholders across the organisation.

For a more detailed look at the roles and responsibilities of the internal communicator, check out the Institute of Internal Communication's profession map and competency framework on page 19.

WILL IT SUIT ME?

People enter internal communication from all sorts of backgrounds and organisations are increasingly seeking a diverse range of knowledge and skills to fill their internal communication needs. The ability to write well has always – and will always – served an internal communicator well, but there’s a myriad of attributes which are equally important.

A career in internal communication will suit you if:

- You’re able to build strong, trusting relationships with a diverse group of people
- You have a creative flair which enables you to take ordinary messages and create engaging stories
- You’re interested in psychology or neuroscience and the various factors which influence the ways in which people behave or interpret information
- You have good emotional intelligence and are empathetic towards others’ feelings and circumstances
- You’re keen on gaining a well-rounded understanding of the organisation that you work for and an ability to shape working environments
- You’re organised and able to take an idea and translate it into an actionable plan.

Of course, if you’re studying or have studied Journalism, English, Marketing or PR, you’ll quickly see how your discipline has given you experience and skills that lend themselves to the tasks described on p.5. In no particular order, this includes the ability to write clear and concise content, think creatively, and present confidently.

But, as the scientists, mathematicians and psychologists among you will be the first to point out, these skills aren’t limited to Journalism or English students. And there are lots of ways you can advance them, whether that’s through work experience, attending professional development events like those run by IoIC FutureNet (see more on that on p.13) or even proving your own communication credentials by blogging or vlogging.

THE VALUE OF THE PROFESSION

Organisations need to communicate effectively with their employees. It sounds simple, but the reality is less so. And as organisations get bigger and change faster, this becomes an even bigger challenge.

This is where internal communication comes in. At the most basic level, you have to communicate well at the right time so employees know what is expected of them and what is happening in the organisation. At a deeper level, for employees to feel engaged with their workplace and give their best, they have to see that their organisation cares about their views and understand how their role contributes towards overall business objectives.

Strong internal communication is even more important today. There are lots of reasons why, but the main ones are:

- **Economic climate** – people rarely take “jobs for life” now. This means organisations have to work harder on relationships with their people.
- **Customer experience** – employees can make or break a customer’s experience with your business. That’s why they need to be clear about what they’re doing, and believe in it too.
- **New technology** – the ways we communicate – and expect to be communicated with – are always evolving. Organisations need to keep up or face their employees leaving them behind.
- **Frequent change** – Organisations can’t sit still. To remain competitive in this ever-changing world, they need to keep tweaking and refreshing the way they work to remain competitive. But this can be hard on employees and organisations need to ensure they are informed and supported.

With all this going on, it’s an exciting time to be in internal communication. It’s developing at a rapid pace, becoming better understood and gaining respect as a discipline, and there are always new skills to learn.

WHERE DO INTERNAL COMMUNICATORS WORK?

There are around **25,000** dedicated internal communication professionals working in the private sector and an estimated 20,000 more in IC-related roles – and it's growing all the time.

Here's a run-down of the typical roles you'll find. And later in the guide, we'll give you a glimpse into life as an internal communicator with our day in the life profiles...

In-house. This is the traditional comms job, working for an organisation. The communications team may be a standalone team or part of a wider Corporate Communications, Marketing or HR function. In-house internal communicators share company news and engage employees, both from the perspective of the senior leadership team and colleagues who want to share and promote updates throughout the business.

Agency. Internal communicators working for an agency pitch ideas to a business in the hope of winning a contract to work for them. This could be for a one-off project, like a campaign, or a long-term agreement for a regular piece of work, like a company magazine. Agency roles mean getting to see many different types of business by working on a variety of jobs, depending on their needs.

Freelance. Freelance internal communicators work for themselves and promote their skills to find temporary work for organisations that need additional support. This is often for a period of 3-6 months but can vary. Most freelancers will have a good foundational level of experience before moving on to this way of working.

"I'M CONSTANTLY PUTTING DIFFERENT HATS ON"

What does life look like as an internal communicator at one of the largest British charities?
Claire Heyes,
Senior Strategic Communications Manager at Macmillan Cancer Support shares her view.

A DAY IN MY IC LIFE

How I got here... "Like many of my colleagues, I come from a background of reading and writing. I studied French and Spanish at university. Then I worked in HR and recruitment, where I became more interested in people's motivations for joining, and staying, at an organisation and how communications affected this."

My working day... "I'm based in Vauxhall in London. It's pretty regular hours, other than when we have events and we travel to visit employees around the UK."

My role in a nutshell... "I'm constantly putting different hats on. One side is making sure our communication channels are giving employees the information they need, and that the content is timely, varied and inspiring. Another is advising colleagues at Macmillan about the best way to communicate and helping them to plan their own communication strategies."

Some typical tasks... "There's a lot of creativity: writing, creating videos, playing with different digital channels. We ask ourselves: 'How can we bring this message to life for employees?' There's lots to do so that means juggling! For example, this week we've been telling employees about a new benefits scheme, and also updating them on changes to our brand, among other things."

The best things about my job... "You're always in the middle of what's going on in your company. That's a pretty unique, privileged place to be. And I made a conscious decision to move from a more corporate environment into a charity. I wanted to work somewhere I was really proud of. For the majority of us, it's more than a job."

... the hardest... "Making sure that we're sharing messages with the public and our employees at the same time. We don't want our employees to hear important news from the press or Twitter. They should hear it from us first and feel confident that they know what's going on. They're the ones who need to talk about our work to the public."

And the weirdest... "We once put out a communication telling people that they couldn't open the windows because of building work outside, even though it was hot and there was no air conditioning. That was fairly bizarre!"

My advice to someone starting out in IC... "Always take time to understand what you're communicating. Sometimes I've rushed in and that's where I've come unstuck. Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions, because that's when the ideas will start to flow."

WHAT COULD MY CAREER LOOK LIKE?

When starting out in a new career, you want to know that your hard work, new knowledge and efforts are going to take you somewhere. While no career path in internal communication looks quite the same (just look at our day in the life profiles), here's a rough idea of the kind of progression you can expect as an IC professional.

Internal Communication Assistant

Estimated salary: £20-25k

Example responsibilities:

- Editing content
- Uploading to and managing online platforms
- Co-ordinating diaries and meetings
- Supporting the senior members of the team with tactical tasks

Internal Communication Executive

Estimated salary: £25-35k

Example responsibilities:

- Researching and writing content
- Helping with event logistics
- Supporting strategic internal communication initiatives

Internal Communication Manager

Estimated salary: £45-60k

Example responsibilities:

- Input into communications plan
- Building relationships with the senior stakeholders in the business
- Managing channels
- Support on change and transformation communications

Senior Internal Communication Manager

Estimated salary: £60-75k

Example responsibilities:

- Help to develop business and communication strategy
- Partnering with business areas
- Supporting the Head of Internal Communication and acting as the second in command
- Liaising more closely with external communications teams

Head of Internal Communication

Estimated salary: £70-100k

Example responsibilities:

- Owning and creating the internal communication strategy in line with overall organisational objectives
- Line-managing internal communication team
- Working closely and supporting the CEO and senior leadership team

Director of Internal Communication

Estimated salary: £100-200k

Example responsibilities:

- Similar to Head of Internal Communication but with bigger team and budget, sometimes with additional responsibilities such as engagement or external communications
- Potentially sits on the board

***Note:** these salaries are rough estimations and can depend on the sector you're working in. For example, jobs in banking and financial services can have higher salaries. All information supplied by VMA Group, May 2019.

“IT’S REALLY ABOUT MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY AT WORK”

Now you’ve got an idea what happens if you go down the in-house route, but what about agency workers? **Rebecca Leonard** is Communications and Content Manager at Sequel Group, an agency specialising in internal communication.

A DAY IN MY IC LIFE

How I got here... “After a childhood having my reading habit compared to Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*, I studied English at university. After a brief stint in publishing, I found internal communication and haven’t looked back since.”

My working day... “I’m based in Sequel’s office in London, but our clients are all over the world. Some days I’ll be out visiting them, perhaps holding editorial meetings for a magazine or pitching for new work.”

My role in a nutshell... “I help organisations with their internal communication needs across print, digital, strategy and video. I work with a creative team of writers, designers, developers, project managers and filmmakers to help organisations connect and inspire their employees.”

Some typical tasks... “From Nestlé to Heineken, Bupa to RBS, we work with a huge variety of organisations. That means no day is really the same. I help clients with their content — writing articles for magazines, blogs for online and scripts for videos. And I’m a strategic advisor, using our knowledge of the industry to advise clients on the best way to communicate at their organisation.”

The best things about my job...

“It might sound a bit cheesy, but for me it’s about making people happy at work. Communication plays such a huge role in that, whether it’s helping people make meaningful connections with colleagues or understand their role in the company’s bigger story.”

... the hardest... “Managing lots of different clients can be demanding, particularly when they all want something finishing at the same time! And while it’s great getting to know so many different businesses, it can take time to get under their skin and understand what they need from you.”

And the weirdest... “I once had to deliver ‘Valentine’s cards’ sent by employees to each other as part of a campaign about recognising other people’s achievements. Just call me Communications Cupid!”

My advice to someone starting out in IC...

“Explore the industry any way you can. Join a professional body; ask for a mentor; read blogs and books and tweets. You’ll top up your knowledge and build connections in what has to be one of the friendliest and most supportive professions.”

INVESTING IN YOUR FUTURE

We’re betting that most of you haven’t really heard of internal communication as a career before (although we hope you have!) and because of that it can seem like quite a new area to work in.

But we’ve been around for a while, as our long-standing professional bodies can attest to. In fact, the Institute of Internal Communication (IoIC) celebrated its 70th birthday in 2019.

One of the many benefits of being a member of a professional body is the ability to gain professional accreditation which demonstrates your commitment to your career and your understanding of the profession to potential employers. For example, the IoIC runs a Foundation Diploma, Advanced Diploma and a Masters in Internal Communication Management, all of which are accredited by Solent University and are designed to complement and be completed alongside busy working lives.

And on a smaller scale, there are all kinds of courses to help develop your skills, from writing, to video editing, to creating internal communication plans – anything you want to learn, we can guarantee there’s professional training out there to support you.

It’s helpful to get a mentor, either through a professional body, someone more experienced in your network, or at your work. This two-way relationship allows you to get advice, share challenges and build your confidence. The IoIC has a mentor scheme which pairs you up with people experienced in the areas you would like to develop in. They often create lasting relationships that are rewarding for both the mentor and mentee.

Keep on learning

Rachel Bowyer, Internal Communication Channels Manager at DS Smith, explains how studying for the IoIC’s Foundation Diploma in Internal Communication gave her confidence in her early career.

“I wanted to increase my theoretical knowledge, and therefore my credibility, at work. For the diploma I wrote a communications plan for a real-life example of a project I was working on, compiled a portfolio based on my experience and wider reading, and had a short exam and interview with members of the IoIC professional development team.

“The diploma was useful because it gave me confidence in the areas I had experience in and showed me areas to focus on for my own development. Quite often employers will support you financially with qualifications, so it’s a good opportunity to learn formally if you can take it.”

WHAT I WISH I'D KNOWN WHEN I STARTED OUT

Straight from the horse's mouth — here's what current communicators wish they'd known at the start of their career.

Gillian Kimmet

The importance of continuous learning and having a network to rely on.

Rachel Miller

The importance of creating and maintaining relationships built on trust. Be a fantastic networker inside your organisation – it's your business to *know* your business and its people.

ABthinks

Education is never over. Always know how your company's share price is performing and why. Understanding and borrow best theories and techniques from our sister disciplines – marketing, market research.

Suzie Robinson

You can't please everyone and you need to learn how to say "no" while it sounds like you're saying "yes".

Janice Fitzgerald

The variety of IC, I had no idea the world it could open up and the transferable skills I'd learn.

Advita Patel

Build up your network, they will help you when you need it most.

Kate Jones

Work out what your organisation defines as IC value and deliver it. You'll never convince them that you can add more *sophisticated* value if you're not doing what they believe are the basics.

Justine Stephenson

Being nosy can be a good trait that can help you do your job.

Helen Deverell

No two days are ever the same and it's a career that will fill you with purpose and passion. The perception of how we add value is changing and there's never been a better time to get involved in our industry.

Saskia Jones

Take the time to get to know your audiences. Each group will have different needs, attitudes, knowledge and access to channels. By understanding this you'll be able to make your internal comms more tailored, personal and relevant.

Amanda

It's always about the people. The big strategy isn't half as important to your people as the small things that affect their daily role.

Sequel Group

Listen more than you speak. Less can often mean more.

Oli Howard

I really underestimated the extent to which our behaviour at work is governed by instincts, feelings and emotions. We often make decisions based on these and post-rationalise. Learning to watch for that helps us to anticipate and address people's real needs.

Carol Brown

Assessing the senior team is a key determinant of success in a senior role.

Courney Ellul

Surface new ideas, even if it seems scary.

Helen Reynolds

It's not necessary to leave your personality at home, professionalism doesn't always mean conforming. Our unique insights are a benefit.

Matt Batten

The IC community is incredibly generous with their time and expertise, so reach out for help and advice. Someone, somewhere will have faced the same problem as you and will help you.

Harriet Smallies

IC is sometimes more important than external comms, so needs the same level of detail.

Deborah Hibbett

Learn about the business first, that's how you earn a seat at the table.

“I’M ALWAYS ON THE SNOOP FOR A GOOD STORY”

Matt Batten is Organisational Development Advisor at the Royal College of Nursing. He explains how internal communication helps him to create a positive workplace experience for the nursing community.

A DAY IN MY IC LIFE

My working day... “I work flexibly in a nine-day fortnight, which means I have a half an hour lunchbreak so I can take every other Wednesday off. My office is in Cardiff but most of the time I’m out and about. In my job it’s important to understand what life is like for the people you’re communicating to and on behalf of.”

My role in a nutshell... “I see my role as creating positive workplace experiences that allow people to give their best every day and contribute to the organisation’s success. That could be through managing culture change at work or supporting employee wellbeing programmes.”

Some typical tasks... “There’s so much but I’ll try boil it down! I usually start the day by tweeting from @RCNJobs, enticing people to come join us. And I’m always on the snoop for good stories. I create and edit social media videos that we use on our intranet, social media and in presentations. I also work with stakeholders and keep them up to date. That could be the leadership team, HR or the employee wellbeing manager.”

The best things about my job... “I think it’s seeing the impact you have. By focusing on your employees, you can get your organisation’s culture right and see your business go through the roof”

... the hardest... “In our job you need to be an advisor, helping others in the organisation to make decisions about communication. That means you have to go in prepared; know who you’re talking to and what they want.”

And the weirdest... “I organised a live LEGO build of a lifesize nurse for our centenary celebration. Guests could take a selfie with it!”

My advice to someone starting out in IC... “Join a professional body. It’ll help you stay on top of your game and you’ll find invaluable support. Someone else always has the answer to your problems.”

GETTING CONNECTED

You’ll be unsurprised to hear that internal communicators like to – well – communicate. There are lots of ways to connect with people in the industry, both in person at networking events and online via blogs and social media.

There’s a dynamic online community (particularly on LinkedIn and Twitter) where internal communicators swap news, views and ideas. It’s also a great place to learn informally and find out what’s hot (and what’s not) in the ever-changing world of internal communication.

Want to join in? Here are some of our top picks for starting your induction into the world of internal communication...

Institute of Internal Communication: You’ll need to be a member to access the full library (and its awesome print magazine, *Voice*) but there are still insightful blogs and online resources open for anyone to read. www.ioic.org.uk/ioic-blog [@loicnews](https://twitter.com/loicnews)

Engage for Success: A dynamic movement promoting employee engagement as a better way to work, their resources section is crammed full of tools, tips, videos and guides. engageforsuccess.org [@Engage4Success](https://twitter.com/Engage4Success)

AllThingsIC: A great online space to find free resources covering a wide range of internal communication elements at various stages of a practitioner’s career. www.allthingsic.com [@AllThingsIC](https://twitter.com/AllThingsIC)

Comms2PointO: Created by comms professionals, for comms professionals, this website and newsletter embraces the wide world of communication — from internal to external — and even posts job alerts. comms2point0.co.uk [@comms2point0](https://twitter.com/comms2point0)

Calling all future internal communicators – FutureNet wants you

FutureNet is a great resource for internal communication newbies. It’s a network for those who have been in the industry for under three years — or those looking to get into the industry. It’s free for loIC members and offers networking, events and support for newcomers to the profession.

Read all about it

And if you like your reading to be in the paper variety, there’s a literal library of work out there that can kickstart your internal communication education. We’d recommend starting with one of these, but there’s also the #ICBookClub that meets on Twitter to discuss their thoughts of a pre-agreed text. loIC members get a 20% discount on any books published by Kogan Page.

- *Making the Connections: Using Internal Communication to Turn Strategy into Action.* Bill Quirke
- *Internal Communications: A Manual for Practitioners.* Liam FitzPatrick and Klavs Valskov
- *The IABC Handbook of Organizational Communication.* Tamara Gillis
- *Voice*, the loIC’s award-winning quarterly printed magazine.

A HELPING HAND

So, now we've whet your appetite, how do you go about getting a job in internal communication? We've asked some IC experts to share what it is that they look for when bringing in new members of their team.

"I look for passion in what they do and that they understand the value internal communications brings to an organisation. The ability to write well, get on with people and ask the right questions are all the building blocks to a successful career. I want to see their ambition to develop as an IC professional through things like networking and taking part in CPD programmes."

Caroline Waddams,
Independent Practitioner

"Creativity to come up with interesting & engaging ways to communicate; resilience, as business is ever-changing & we need to keep up with and adapt to this change; great active listening skills so colleagues really feel heard; and enthusiasm, which is always a great quality."

Jane Roques-Shaw,
Director of Internal
Communication & Culture,
Warner Bros. Entertainment

"We always recruit on attitude, creativity and drive. Experience and knowledge comes in time. Internal comms can be an incredibly creative area in which to work so don't hold back on showing your ideas, enthusiasm and desire to make a difference."

Andy Holt,
Managing Director,
Words & Pictures

"As an internal communication recruiter, I look for people who can demonstrate their interest and commitment to IC through a relevant degree or professional qualification. If you don't have a directly relevant degree or qualification, don't fear! You can still demonstrate your communication skills by including related experience and knowledge, such as social media and video editing, on your CV."

Sara Tehrani,
Team Manager,
VMAGROUP

IoIC PROFESSION MAP AND COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

The IoIC's profession map and competency framework are designed to help internal communicators build their knowledge, skills and behaviours as they progress through their career.

You can use it as a reference tool to help you think about your professional development – where are you now and where do you want to be? Plus, it provides a great overview of the types of skills and qualities you'll need to be a successful internal communicator.

You can download the full map and framework for free at ioic.org.uk



CORE
– the purpose that sits at the heart of the IC profession

PROFESSIONAL AREAS
– what we need to know (knowledge) and our expertise (skills)

BEHAVIOURS
– the behaviours needed to do the job efficiently and effectively

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ioic.org.uk

enquiries@ioic.org.uk

01908 232 168

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 ioic_uk

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This internal communication career guide
has been produced by FutureNet committee
members, Rachel Bowyer and Rebecca Leonard.

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