

IC teams ‘setting themselves up for failure’, according to report

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Internal Communications (IC) teams are failing to develop robust comms strategies to the detriment of the function’s reputation, according to a survey of over 500 IC professionals.

The fifth annual internal communications market survey, ‘Inside Insight’ - carried out by the global recruitment specialist for corporate and marketing communications, VMA Group – found that over one third of professionals do not have a strategy in place. Of those that do, few regularly review it, with 25% doing so annually and a worrying 24% on an ad hoc basis.

Andrew Harvey, Director of Internal Communications Practice, VMA Group, comments:

“By failing to develop and regularly review a strategy, these teams are essentially setting themselves up to fail. Without a strong internal communications plan in place that is aligned to business goals it will be impossible for professionals to demonstrate to the board the real value of their work. This, in turn, will only exacerbate the recurring belief that internal comms is ‘fluffy’ and a nice to have, rather than a critical business function.”

One of the survey respondents, Drew McMillan, Head of Internal Communications & Innovation at Virgin Trains adds:

“There’s a common complaint amongst IC professionals that we are not taken as seriously as some other enabling functions in our organisation. Why should we be if we don’t apply the most fundamental management principles to our work?”

“Perhaps we feel that ‘strategy’ is a dirty word, perhaps we are a little scared of planning and governance or perhaps we don’t want to think that the rules apply to us,” he continues. “But for the profession to flourish and deliver real, sustained value to our organisation, we must get the basics right. A strategy shouldn’t be a dusty tome left on a shelf. It is a living, breathing and (at best) a very simple roadmap aligned to the ‘parent’ strategy of the organisation. Get it right and both you and your stakeholders will see the benefits.”