Our Research: Benchmarking ROI from 5 of the top employee communication channels

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Companies spend a vast amount of time and money communicating with employees using a variety of channels. But which tools achieve the best ROI? Answering this question is surprisingly difficult. Most communication channels don’t come equipped with metrics to help measure success. This leaves employers struggling to make informed decisions or to prove a return on investment (ROI) for communications spend.

Over the last two years, we’ve helped our clients measure communication effectiveness across print and online channels. This works by embedding unique key words in each type of communication. When an employee sends the key word to H.Engage, they earn points and we know which communication triggered the interaction. While we’ve seen some variance from client to client, a consistent pattern has emerged. Here’s how the most common channels stack up, organized from highest to lowest ROI. For the purpose of this analysis, we’ve excluded H.Engage-specific game pieces, which typically generate much higher rates of engagement.

#1 Videos - Engagement range: 40-69%

Short, relevant videos have proven to be a great driver of engagement. Whether they feature a senior leader talking about their own wellness priorities, or an employee talking about their favorite benefit, videos engage employees by making the topic seem more personal and relatable. Videos don’t have to be long or fancy. Many of the best performing ones were filmed on an iPad with poor sound quality. Our data shows that videos longer than two minutes have a drastic drop in engagement. Keeping it short and to the point really pays off.

#2 Posters - Engagement range: 18-48%

Posters have produced pretty wide variance in engagement among our clients. The best performers are posters that are visually engaging and focus on one message. Our internal rule is if it wouldn’t fit in a Tweet, it probably doesn’t belong on a poster. Posters that perform the worst are those that are dense with information. They quickly get lost in the clutter of bulletin boards or relegated to rarely visited cafeteria corners where they aren’t able to attract much attention.

#3 Newsletters - Engagement range: 10-19%

Despite being one of the most expensive mediums to produce, newsletters haven’t surpassed 20% engagement. Employers often take a one-size-fits-all approach with newsletters, using them as a catchall for communicating a variety of topics to a broad audience. This means that employees have to sift through dense pages of content to find information that’s relevant to them. Plus, even when the content is relevant, taking the time to read an 8-12 page newsletter is a pretty daunting commitment that many employees just aren’t willing to make.
#4 Postcards - Engagement range: 6-28%

Postcards sent to the home are expensive and generally ineffective. While typically seen as a channel to engage employees and spouses at home, many seem to suffer the same fate as junk mail and end up unread in the trash. Using other communication channels to alert employees to watch for a postcard has increased their participation rates, but with limited upside.

#5 Table tents - Engagement range: 3-31%

Similar to postcards, table tents consistently appear toward the lower end of the spectrum in terms of their success. Unless they’re widely distributed throughout the office, table tents can easily be missed due to their small size and the fact that many employees eat lunch at their desk. Plus they run the risk of being discarded by office cleaners.

![Stats from a recent deployment](image)

Based on the benchmarking data, we would recommend the following adjustments to most communication strategies:

- **Less is more.** Shorter videos, newsletters, posters all perform significantly better. Cut content wherever possible.
- **Try video, but keep it simple.** Make sure to host it on a platform like Wistia so that you can gather metrics on utilization.
- **Re-invest resources from postcards and table tents.** They’re probably not making a very large impact and you could do more with the money.
- **Use targeted email.** Personalized communications drastically improve response rates, and email is a simple way to communicate these.
- **Texts are the new postcards.** Postcards may not be effective, but texts certainly are. With 90% of employees under the age of 50 using text, it’s become the best way to deliver short bursts of content that people will actually read.