

THE STATE OF WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

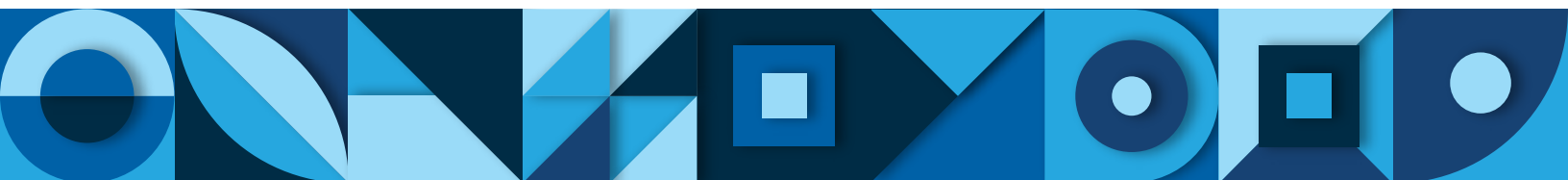
Better Signals, Less Noise



Presented by: **KORBYT** & **reworked** in association with **ICQLOGY**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	Executive Summary
4	Workplace Communication: Not a Crisis of Volume, But a Demand for Clarity
6	Establishing a Foundation of Connection and Trust with Workers
8	Understanding How a Lack of Channel Discipline Leads To “System Friction” and Shadow Comms
12	The AI Golden Rule: Reduce, Don’t Produce
14	Digital Signage: Push Communication That Feels Like a Pull
16	Industry & Workforce Trends: Connections, Opportunities and the Hybrid Divide
20	Key Recommendations for Organizations
21	Conclusion / Future Outlook
22	Appendix



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There's a paradox around internal communication: 50% of workers say message volume is about right but 44% still tune out. Getting the right messages to the right people at the right time requires taking steps toward better message and channel discipline.

Reworked partnered with Korbyt on the *2026 Workplace Communication Survey* to reveal the true state of workplace communication and surface the key dynamics shaping how employees receive, trust, and act on internal communication.

Insight 1: Employees don't want less communication. They want **clearer** communication

Half of respondents say the message volume they receive is "about right," yet 44% still feel overwhelmed. The issue is **relevance** and **clarity**, not quantity. Satisfaction with volume **may actually be a signal of disengagement**, not good communication.

Insight 2: Trust in workplace communication is **driven by operational value**

Employees feel the most connected when communication helps them do their jobs. They are also most likely to trust communication that comes from their direct manager and helps them do their jobs — **not communication that mimics leadership performance**.

Insight 3: Channel discipline is **broken** and needs more attention

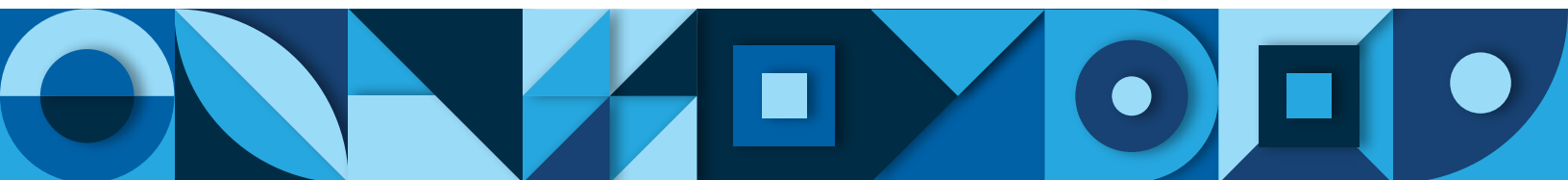
Repetitive messages across channels create fatigue and drive employees to unofficial communication tools.

Insight 4: AI should **reduce** noise, not increase it

Employees know the difference between AI-generated messages and human ones. Mostly they don't care, unless those AI messages are repetitive, untrustworthy or otherwise add to the noise.

Insight 5: Digital signage can inform **without interrupting**

72% of workers see workplace screens as a low-friction channel to stay informed. Screens are most useful for company-wide announcements and operational updates.



WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION: NOT A CRISIS OF VOLUME, BUT A DEMAND FOR CLARITY

The sheer amount of messages people encounter in their daily lives can be dizzying. People are constantly bombarded with communications both at work and at home. In 2025, the United States topped a list of countries with the highest number of emails sent, with [9.8 billion emails](#) sent daily.

How does this amount of communication affect workers? As it turns out, workers feel mostly okay with the amount of internal messages they receive from their organization.¹ About half of workers feel their current message volume is “about right,” yet a significant portion (44%) still feel they receive “too many.”

Employees aren't in a state of crisis over the sheer **amount** of communication, but rather its **quality**.

- They don't want more messages; they want better, highly relevant and actionable information.
- They don't want AI to send them more emails; they want to use AI to provide more clarity to messages.
- They don't want to see the same message blasted across email, Slack and digital signage; they want relevant communications tailored to different channels.

They pay attention to what matters: 56% tune in when “clear action is required,” while 57% pay attention when a message is “timely or urgent.”

To get deeper insights into employee satisfaction with workplace communication and what steps leaders can take, Reworked partnered with Korbyt for the *2026 Workplace Communication Survey*. We surveyed over 1,100 senior managers, managers and line-level workers² for insights into how they feel about:

- The current level of communication
- Why they trust communications (or don't)
- How they feel about AI in their email

¹ For report purposes, internal messages include communications from email, messaging apps or physical messaging from digital signage or town halls. It encompasses messages from managers, leadership communications and HR and company announcements.

² See Appendix for full demographics information.

Where relevant, we examined answers from the top represented industries and compared answers by workers in different job locations to see how workers approach internal communication differently.

Their answers provide a blueprint for leaders to follow that ensures workplace communication is being received and understood, not ignored.

KEY FINDINGS

01

Workers want communication that's relevant to them and not simply duplicated across all the channels they use.

02

AI should be used to tailor the message, not simply to send more emails.

03

As an unobtrusive comms channel, digital signage is an underutilized resource — particularly for large organizations who need to reach workers at scale.

TAKE ACTION

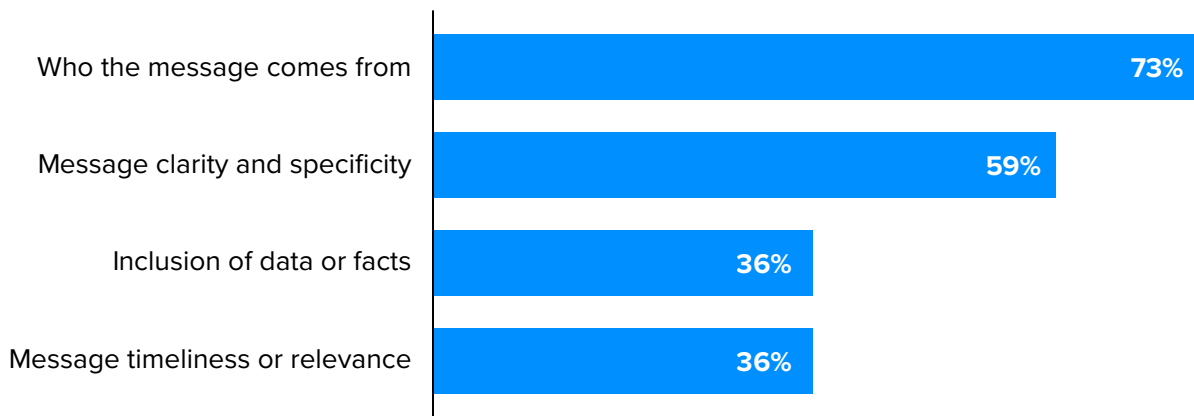
- Write every message with one clear outcome in mind
- Avoid repeating identical messages across multiple channels
- Focus communication on timely updates and clear actions employees need to take
- Audit for passive disengagement, not just stated dissatisfaction



ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION OF CONNECTION AND TRUST WITH WORKERS

Trust plays a major part in the worker relationship and has a direct effect on the organizational bottom line. **Trust is built** on both **who** the message comes from and **what** it tells them to do. For 73% of workers, who the message comes from is one of the most important factors they consider when evaluating message accuracy (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Factors that most influence worker confidence that an internal message is accurate

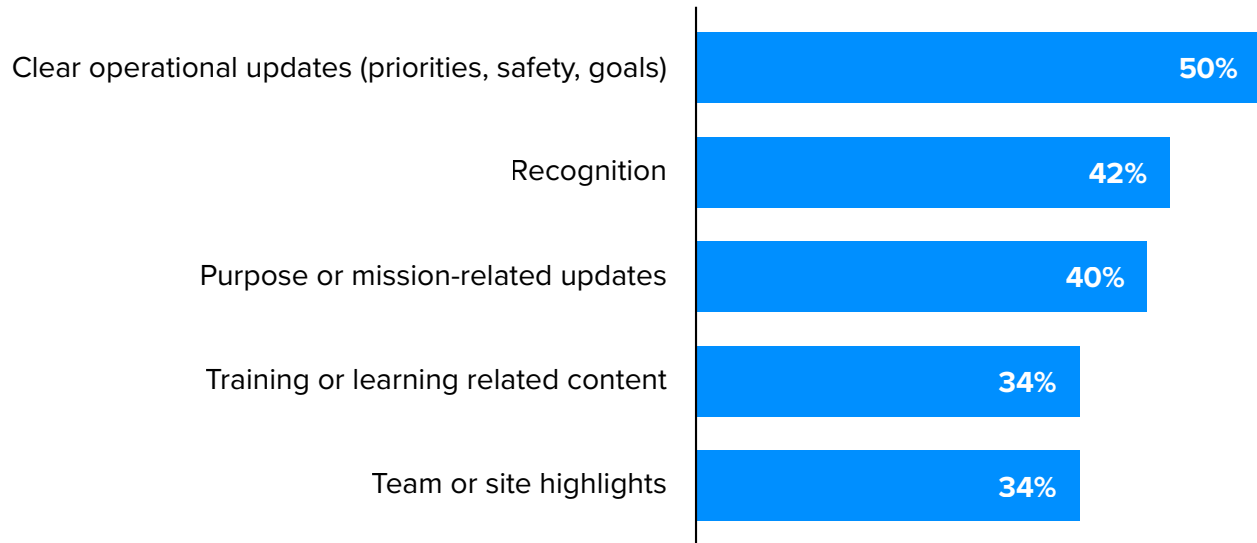


[According to research](#), when workers don't trust their employer it can have negative implications for productivity, operational efficiency and profitability. Every message workers receive is an opportunity for the organization to build that foundation of trust. But establishing connections at work takes more than surface-level messaging based on culture or emotion. The most effective workplace communication is heavily informational.



The signals are clear: workers want communication that’s clear, accurate and timely. While there is a place for feel-good messaging, half of all survey respondents say that clear operational updates contribute to their feelings of being connected at work, more so than recognition content.

Figure 2: Which types of content help employees feel more connected at work



Employees feel connected when they understand what’s happening operationally — not just when they’re recognized or given a reason to feel inspired. Lead with clarity on priorities and changes, and always name the sender explicitly. “From the Leadership Team” doesn’t cut it. Employees trust people, not titles.

Because workers trust people they know over titles, direct managers are almost always the missing link here. **Employees trust their direct manager more than any executive or channel.** If managers aren’t equipped to cascade and contextualize messages, the connection data will stay flat no matter what else you do.

“I trust information that is verified, clear and easy to understand and comes from trusted sources. I distrust information that is spotty, not clear or is jumbled, or comes from malicious sources.” — *2026 Workplace Communication Survey*, open comments

TAKE ACTION

- Treat manager enablement as a collaborative effort
- Prioritize communication on company priorities, goals and operational updates
- Clearly identify the sender of important organizational messages
- Ensure operational updates are communicated consistently and predictably

UNDERSTANDING HOW A LACK OF CHANNEL DISCIPLINE LEADS TO “SYSTEM FRICTION” AND SHADOW COMMS

We’ve seen how workers value clarity, relevance and timeliness in their workplace communications. However, for many workers, their organizations aren’t keeping up their end of the bargain. Messages are vague instead of clear, generic instead of specific. What’s worse, for many workers, they feel like they’re getting the same unimportant messages spammed across every communications channel they use. This creates system friction and causes workers to ditch official channels for unofficial ones when they want relevant information.

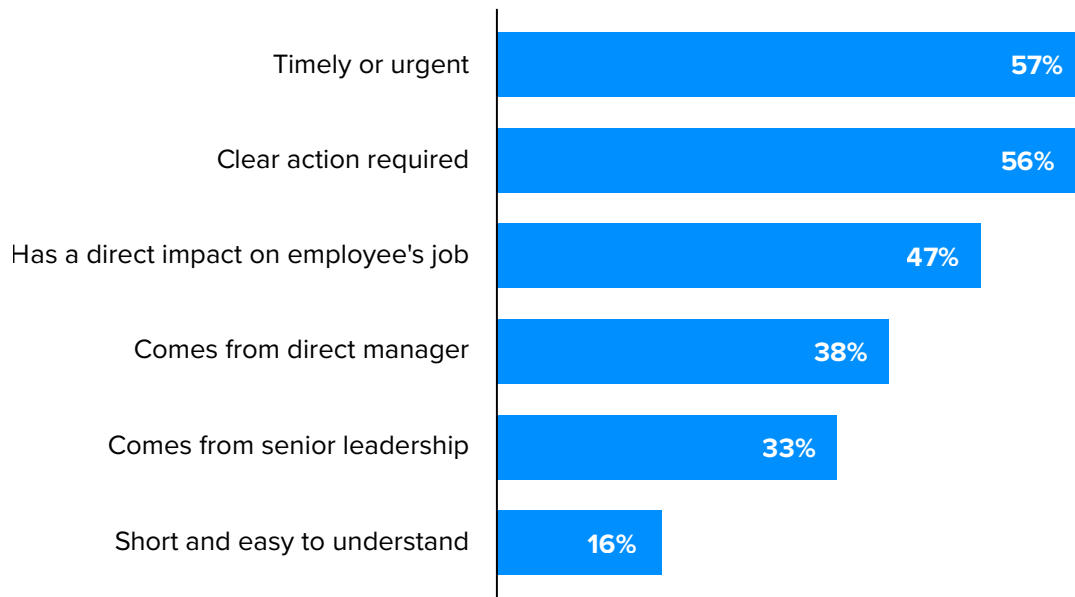
To combat system friction and reduce reliance on shadow communications, organizations need to understand what kinds of messaging feel important to workers, what causes them to tune out, and which channels feel the least intrusive on their workday.

SYSTEM FRICTION: WHY EMPLOYEES PAY ATTENTION (AND WHY THEY DON’T)

Just because leaders send communications out to the workforce doesn’t always mean that message will be received, internalized or acted upon. There’s a host of subjective feelings surrounding workplace messages — and if your message doesn’t meet the criteria, workers will tune out. It’s up to the sender to ensure that when the message hits a worker’s communications channel, it will be relevant enough to be acted upon.

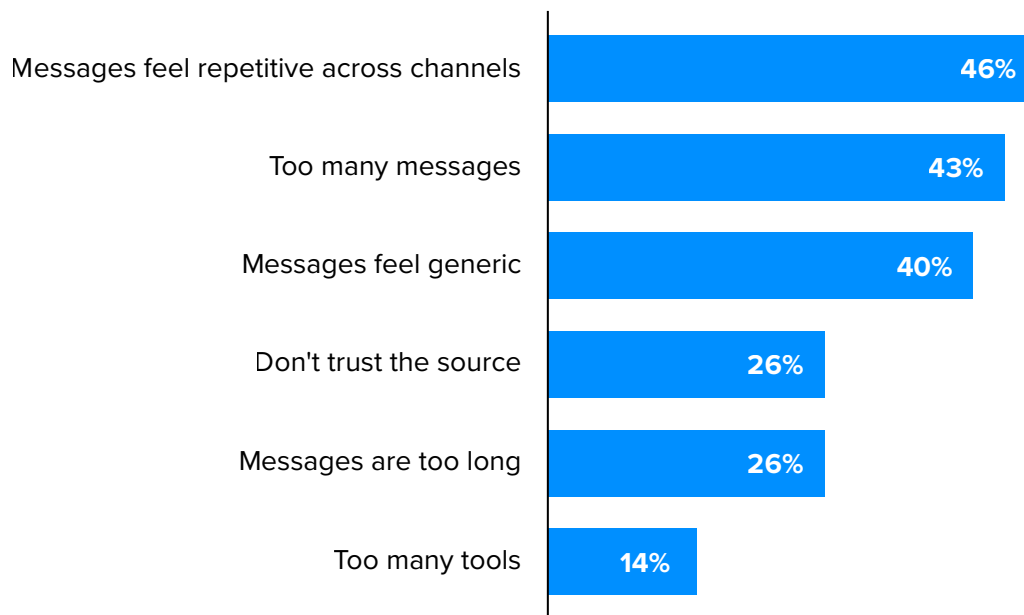
First, let’s look at the common threads of successful communication. **The majority of workers want messages that are timely, urgent or are clearly labeled with action items.** Nearly half of respondents (47%) also mention that they’re more likely to pay attention when the message has a direct impact on their job (Figure 3).

Figure 3: What makes internal messages feel important enough for employees to pay attention



Why do employees tune out? Too often, messages feel repetitive across channels or are simply generic, with no relevance to the worker or their job (Figure 4).

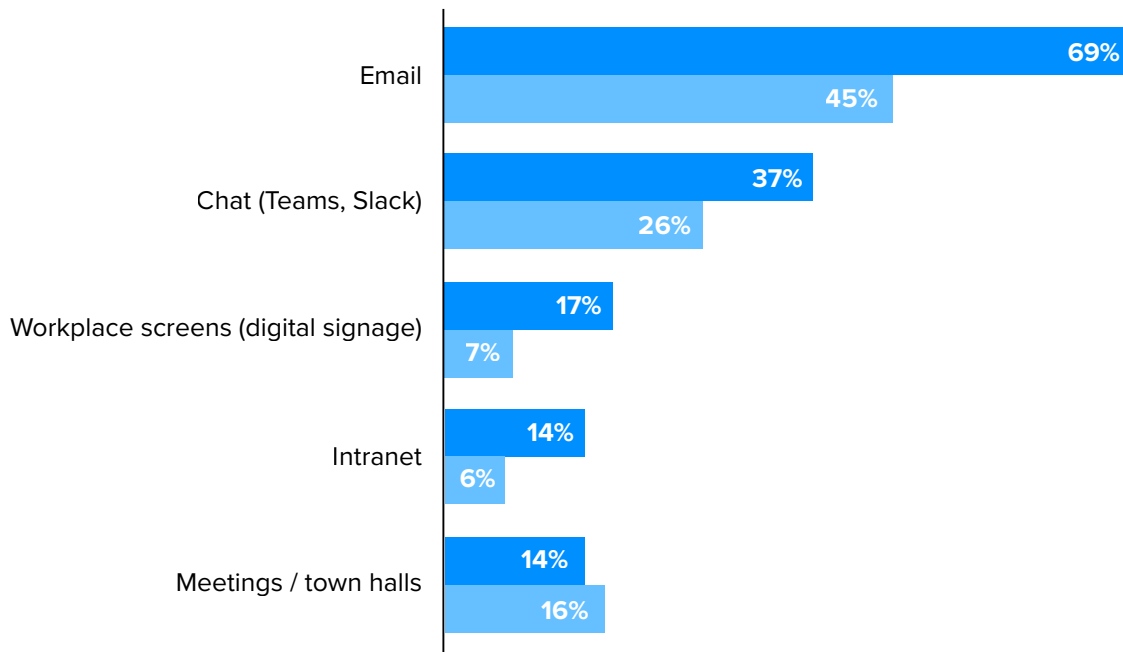
Figure 4: What causes employees to tune out internal messages



While internal communications need clarity and specification, they should also feel unobtrusive, so as not to interrupt workflows. Not every message demands immediate attention or responses, and the more control workers feel they have over their communications channels, the more connected they'll feel to the organization. Email is still the king for non-intrusive communication, but when any official channels fail to be clear, timely or specific, employees circumvent them. Unofficial channels thrive where there is “system friction.”

Of the channels we asked about on the survey, which include a mix of synchronous and asynchronous channels — email remains the least intrusive communication method — 69% of workers prefer it for uninterrupted workflows (Figure 5).

Figure 5: The channel tradeoff: Low disruption vs. high connection



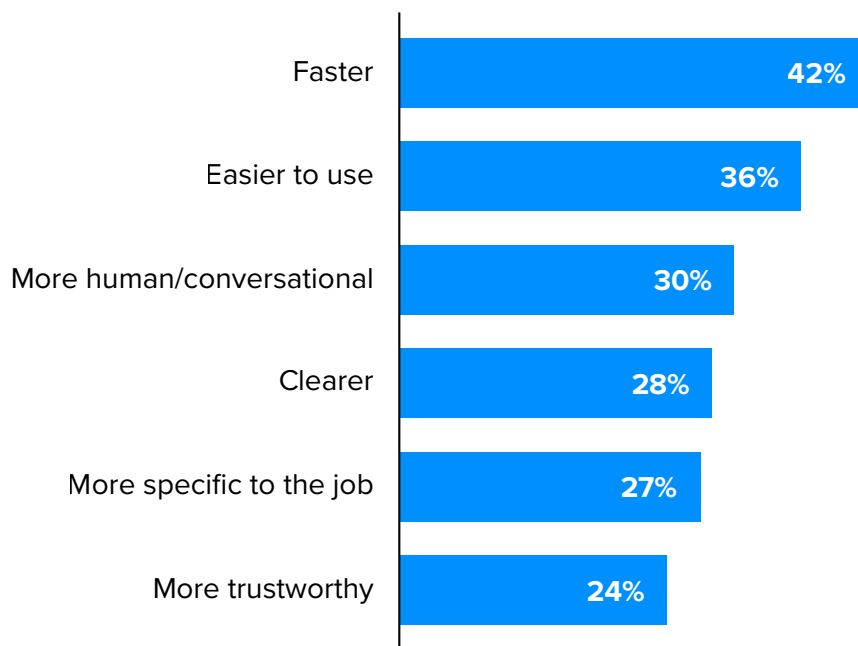
- Channels that feel the least intrusive/least disruptive to focus and workflow during the workday
- Channels that help workers feel most connected to what's happening in the company

HOW TO REDUCE RELIANCE ON SHADOW COMMUNICATIONS

Even though workers might tune out official communications, this doesn't mean they aren't getting information at all. Often, workers will simply turn to unofficial channels (side chats, WhatsApp groups or messages, hallway conversations) and rely on those shadow communications to give them the information they need.

Why workers rely on unofficial channels often mirrors the reasons they tune out of official workplace communications. Unofficial channels are faster, easier to use and more specific to their jobs (Figure 6). When employees go to Slack DMs or hallway conversations for real information, that’s a signal that official channels are slow, vague or redundant. Each channel needs a defined role, and the same message shouldn’t live in all of them. Treat channel discipline as governance, not preference.

Figure 6: Why workers rely on unofficial channels



TAKE ACTION

- Define clear roles for each workplace communication channel
- Run an annual channel audit to prevent channel sprawl
- Adapt content to the channel
- Use audit results to streamline messages to meeting room signage or channels that are more effective/high traffic/least disruptive



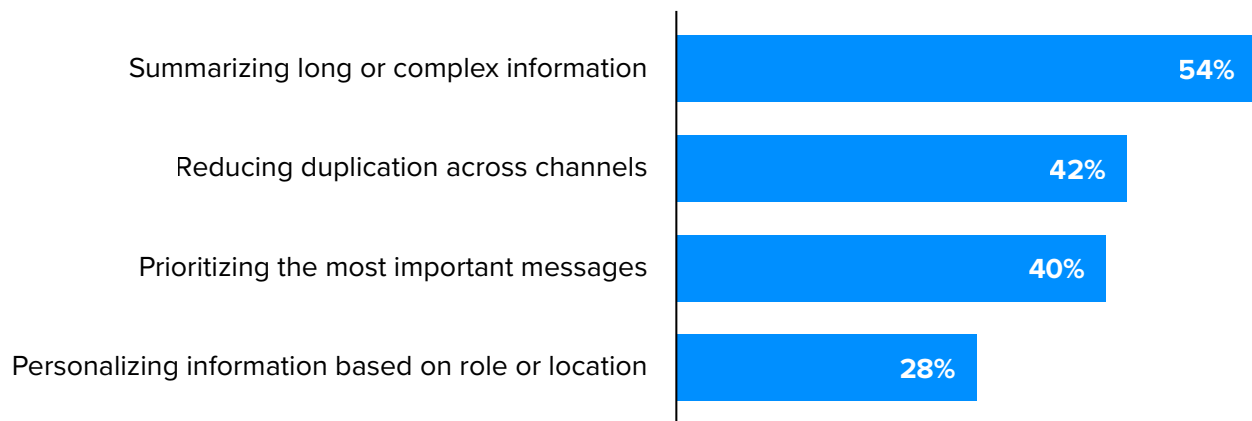
THE AI GOLDEN RULE: REDUCE, DON'T PRODUCE

The rise of generative AI and proliferation of AI tools in technology suites is impacting workplace communications much like it's impacting nearly every part of workers' lives. Workers are adept at recognizing AI-generated messaging — 81% can usually tell when a message was created using AI. But for the most part, workers don't care **unless the message increases noise**. Trust collapses the moment AI increases message volume or reduces transparency. Disclosure and deduplication (rather than volume and avoidance) is the correct approach.

Survey respondents sent clear signals about the role they think AI should play in workplace communications. They want AI to act as a synthesizer and organizer to reduce overload, not a creator. The bottom line for AI in workplace communications is this: **If you use AI to do more, you get AI wrong and more workers will tune out as a result.**

Employees are anti-noise, not anti-AI. The best use of AI in communications is often invisible: summarizing, deduplicating or prioritizing information. This speaks to what we've seen previously about workers' desires for messages that are clear and relevant. Workers are also using AI for themselves, summarizing long or complex information or prioritizing their most important messages (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Where AI could be the most helpful in workplace communication



There's an important caveat here surrounding AI: The moment AI starts generating new messages, trust is gone. Nearly half (45%) of employees question the accuracy of a message when they suspect AI was used. Further, **an overwhelming majority of workers (92%) agree with the following statement: AI should primarily be used to reduce information overload, not to increase the volume of communication.** Reduce, don't produce, is the watchword phrase around AI.

Workers' skepticism around AI-generated messaging points strongly toward transparency. Workers trust messages based on sender identity and consistency. If AI is drafting or substantially editing a message and employees find out later, that's a trust violation. And if half of employees already question accuracy when they suspect AI involvement, adding more AI-generated content is the wrong move.

Organizations should consider a simple disclosure practice, even an informal one such as a statement at the bottom of any communication letting the worker know that "This communication was prepared with AI assistance." This is especially critical for any sensitive topics like layoffs, policy changes or performance messaging. But before deploying AI in communications workflows, ask employees what they'd want to know. A question like "Would you want to know if a message you received was AI-assisted?" gives both the data and a trust signal that you're asking in the first place.

TAKE ACTION

- Establish clear guidelines for when AI should generate internal communication
- Use AI to review planned communications and consolidate overlapping messages before distribution
- Run a one-question pulse survey to gauge employee sentiment on AI-generated content
- Prioritize fewer high value communications rather than increasing message volume



DIGITAL SIGNAGE: PUSH COMMUNICATION THAT FEELS LIKE A PULL

Leaders with workers in physical locations have another channel available in their toolkit: digital signage. The opportunity is especially strong in large organizations, where communication overload and channel repetition are more acute. 16% of workers at large organizations say staying informed has become “somewhat harder” over the last 2-3 years, while 19% believe they receive “far too many” internal messages. Shifting some communications to digital signage could alleviate this pain point.

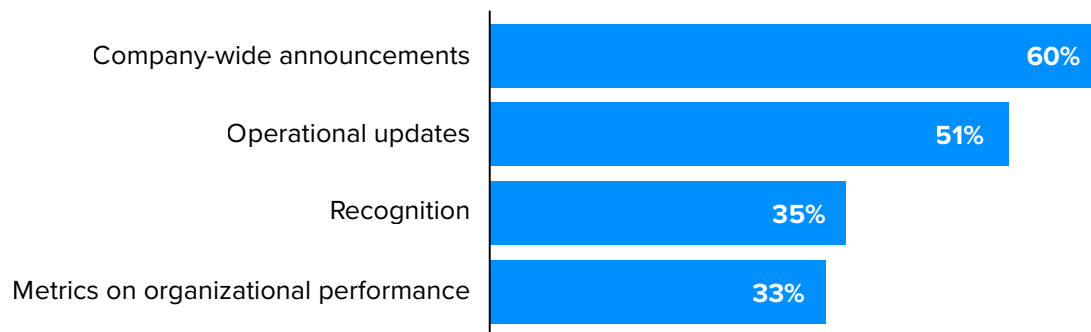
Screens are highly effective “push” channels that feel like a “pull” because they offer ambient reinforcement of operational priorities. Digital signage is an unobtrusive, underutilized resource that could go a long way toward addressing employee concerns about communication fatigue. Screens work because they don’t demand attention.

40% of workers agree (and 32% strongly agree) that workplace screens are valuable because they provide information without interrupting their work.

In-office work won’t be disappearing anytime soon; according to research only [11% of U.S. job postings](#) were fully remote in 2025. There’s an opportunity with digital signage to reach workers in ways that other channels can’t. But organizations must take the same channel discipline approach to digital signage as they do to other channels.

Signage earns its place when it’s operational and specific, not decorative or generic. Before putting a message on a screen, ask this question: Would this make sense to someone walking by in 5 seconds? If not, it might belong somewhere else. Workers say the most useful screen content are company-wide announcements and operational updates (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Most useful content for digital signage



³ See Appendix for definition and breakdown.

Irrelevance, generic messaging and stale refresh cycles are the bane of all communications channels, including digital signage. Assign ownership, set a refresh cadence and require local relevance before anything goes up.

TAKE ACTION

- Treat signage like an editorial channel
- Shift routine and operational updates from email to workplace screens when possible
- Use digital signage to deliver information without interrupting employee workflows
- Use workplace screens to reinforce company announcements and operational priorities



INDUSTRY & WORKFORCE TRENDS: CONNECTIONS, OPPORTUNITIES AND THE HYBRID DIVIDE

The majority of survey respondents came from 4 industries: Banking, business services, legal and manufacturing. Also, nearly two-thirds of survey respondents (62%) work full time in the office.

Which begs the question: Do any of these industries or worker locations have differing opinions about workplace communication?

Here’s a look at how different work models (in-office vs. hybrid) and industries (specifically highly regulated vs. less regulated) experience communication differently.

NOTABLE INDUSTRY DIFFERENCES

First, let’s set a baseline. Are there any industries where workers feel more connected to their work than others? The answer is business services. **Workers in business services feel very aligned and empowered in their workplace communications.** At the opposite end are the highly regulated banking and legal industries. Workers here report low shared understanding, as well as the least control over their communication flow (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Worker sentiment around communications (by industry)

	Banking	Business services	Legal	Manufacturing
Our sense of shared understanding about what’s happening across the organization is very strong	26%	47%	22%	32%
We have a great deal of control over how and when we receive important workplace information	22%	28%	16%	22%
We receive far too many internal messages from our organization	23%	15%	17%	11%

⁴ See Appendix for breakdown.

INDUSTRY AND DIGITAL SIGNAGE

There are several key differences around how workers in the different industries view digital signage. Generally, those in banking are the most critical of digital signage, while those in business services are highly engaged and enthusiastic. Those in manufacturing see the value of digital signage but also experience relevance issues. Meanwhile, legal workers have the lowest visibility among these four industries (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Worker sentiment around digital signage (by industry)

	Banking	Business services	Legal	Manufacturing
I strongly agree that workplace screens are valuable because they provide information without interrupting my work	23%	30%	19%	27%
Looking ahead, digital signage should play a much bigger role in internal communication	14%	20%	12%	12%
I do not see digital signage at my workplace	21%	15%	24%	14%
Digital signage is not useful for keeping me informed	11%	3%	5%	5%

Banking employees are the most critical of digital signage, with 11% rating them as “Not useful at all” — more than double the rate of the four industries. Their top complaint is that the content on the screens “feels generic” (10%, the highest among the four industries).

Those in business services have the highest visibility regarding digital signage. They are the most likely to have digital signage in their workplace, with 35% reporting they “Always” see them and only 15% stating they do not have them at all. Among the four industries, **business services workers find screens the most “Very useful” for staying informed (36%). Further, business services workers are the strongest advocates for expanding digital signage, with 20% stating screens should play a “much bigger role” in internal communications.**

From highest visibility to lowest, we have legal workers. Legal professionals are the least likely to have digital signage, with nearly a quarter (24%) stating they do not see screens in their workplace. Consequently, they are the least likely to “Strongly agree” (19%) that screens are a valuable, non-interruptive communication tool.

Finally, we have manufacturing workers, who see the non-disruptive value in digital signage. **Manufacturing workers strongly appreciate the passive nature of screens.** Combined, 94% agree (67%) or strongly agree (27%) that screens are valuable because they provide information without interrupting their work. They also rely on workplace screens to get important information more than the other three industries (11%).

Manufacturing workers’ primary complaint is a lack of personalization; 11% (the highest of the four industries) state screens are less useful because the “content is not relevant to me.”

There are opportunities here for leaders in all industries around digital signage. Workers at all industries appreciate communication that’s relevant, specific and timely. By driving usage of digital signage, industry leaders can boost employees’ feelings of control over the number of messages they receive.

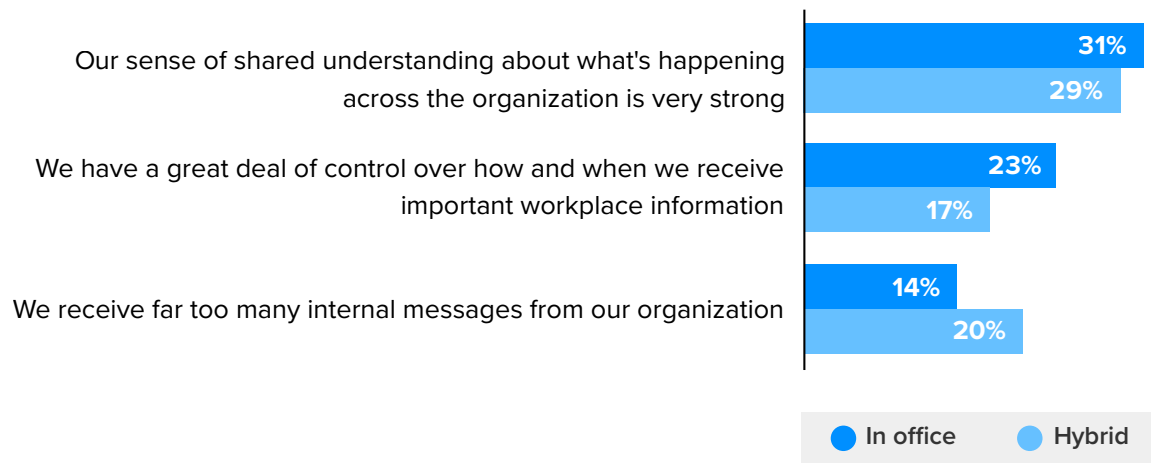


NOTABLE WORK LOCATION DIFFERENCES

By virtue of how they work (in the office for only part of the work week), hybrid workers are at a disadvantage for receiving in-person communications, whether in the form of digital signage or spontaneous discussions around the office. This reliance on digital communication is one of the reasons hybrid workers struggle with message volume for more than their fully in-office counterparts.

Although in-office and hybrid workers report a strong sense of shared understanding in equal measure, hybrid workers feel they receive more messages and have less control over the communications they receive than in office workers (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Worker sentiment around communications (by job location)



For these reasons, hybrid workers are more than twice as likely (20%) to say staying informed has become “somewhat harder” compared to in-office workers (9%). **Hybrid workers and large-org employees are dealing with both more messages AND with less clarity about what matters.** What works for an in-office manufacturing team won’t work for a distributed business services team. One governance policy doesn’t fit all.

But regardless of industry or work location status, frontline workers consistently get treated like a distribution list. Get them involved in communications — not a survey, but something real-time and low-friction. If they can’t reply or react, you’re just broadcasting.

TAKE ACTION

- Design and deliver communications specific to your audience
- Segment your communication strategy by work model and organization size, rather than just topic
- Build at least one feedback loop specifically for deskless workers

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Want to improve your workplace communication but don't know where to start? Follow these best practices:

- 01 | Design communication for action**
Employees appreciate communication that gives them clear next steps
- 02 | Prioritize operational updates that explain company priorities and changes**
Employees want to know more than just feel-good communications
- 03 | Establish clear governance for workplace communication channels**
Governance is the first step to channel discipline
- 04 | Avoid repeating identical messages across multiple channels**
Channel fatigue is real and employees will tune out if they're seeing the same information from channel to channel
- 05 | Use AI to reduce duplication and prioritize important messages**
If you can't be bothered to write it, why should employees be bothered to read it?
- 06 | Establish a transparency standard for AI-assisted communications**
Employees already distrust AI-generated content. Organizations that use AI carefully and disclose AI use appropriately will build more trust than those that don't
- 07 | Use workplace screens to communicate updates without interrupting workflows**
Digital signage is an underused resource for high-impact, low-friction messaging

CONCLUSION / FUTURE OUTLOOK

The problem with workplace communications isn't how much communicators are sending. It's that the **messages don't tell people what to do next**. Before any message goes out, communicators should be able to finish this sentence: "After reading this, employees will ____." If that blank is hard to fill, then the message isn't ready.

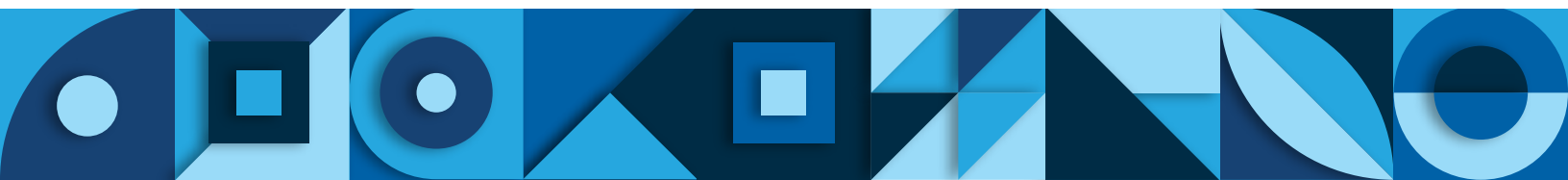
One of the biggest challenges around measuring the effectiveness of workplace communication is that **many workers have stopped noticing they're overwhelmed**. Satisfaction scores around volume are probably masking those who tune out. Although 50% of workers say the volume of messages they receive is fine; 89% are only moderately confident they aren't missing important updates.

Workers are often highly skeptical of the accuracy of AI-generated content and **they want AI to make their lives easier**, not filled with more irrelevant or vaguely written messages. AI is more trusted when it's used purposefully and not just to increase the volume of communications.

For many organizations, **digital signage represents an untapped resource** for reaching workers in a way that doesn't disrupt their workflows. Like other communications channels, digital signage messaging should be specific and timely for maximum value.

The organizations successfully reaching their workers will be **those who take a deliberate approach to worker communication**. Who understand what message belongs on what channel. Who deliver clear and concise messages with full transparency. Who don't add to the noise with duplicated messages or AI-generated email blasts.

Workers want and need to hear from their managers and leaders. **A precise communications strategy will get the message across**.



APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

The *2026 Workplace Communication Survey* was conducted online by Reworked in February 2026. 1,175 people participated in the survey and all questions were required. All respondents are full-time employees located in the United States, working at organizations with at least 50 employees. All respondents are at or below the senior manager level, with 50% of survey respondents working as individual contributors or associates.

All data points refer to the entire set of survey respondents unless otherwise noted.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondent Work Location

Fully in-office: 62%
Hybrid: 38%
Fully remote: 0%

Organization Size

Small (less than 250 employees): 24%
Midsize (250-999 employees): 30%
Large (more than 1,000 employees): 47%

Top Represented Industries

Banking / Financial Services / Insurance: 19%
Manufacturing: 19%
Legal / Law Firm: 17%
Business Services: 15%
Technology: 7%
Healthcare: 5%
Government / Public Sector: 4%

*All other industries under 4% of survey respondents.
Numbers may not total 100% due to rounding.*

ABOUT

Korbyt

Korbyt helps organizations create smarter workplace and customer experiences across digital and physical spaces. The Korbyt Anywhere platform brings together digital signage, employee communications, and space booking in one integrated solution. With purpose-built AI tools and data-driven insights, it helps deliver targeted communications, optimize spaces, and improve engagement across every touchpoint. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, Korbyt serves enterprises worldwide with digital signage, workplace communications, and space management solutions.

Learn more at [GoKorbyt.com](https://Gokorbyt.com).

ICology

Icology is the go-to community for internal communication professionals looking for connection, inspiration, and practical support. Built by and for communicators, we're here to help you grow your skills, expand your network, and feel less alone in your work. Learn more at <https://joinicology.com>.

Reworked

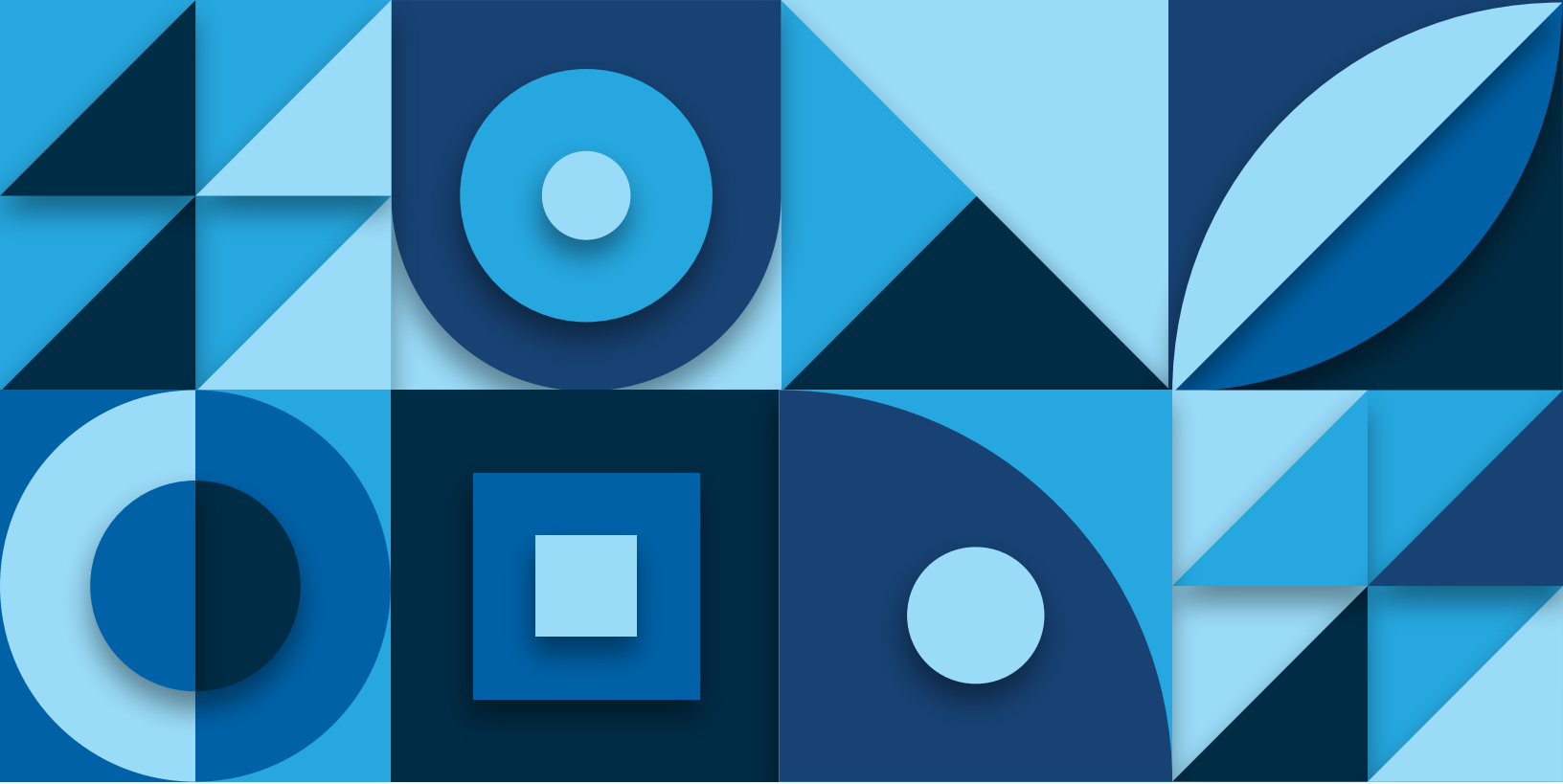
Reworked, published by [Simpler Media Group](#), is a native digital publication covering the r/evolution of work and the transformation of the workplace.

Simpler Media Group

SMG is a B2B technology information and research services company serving a 3 million+ strong community of global digital business leaders.

Our flagship publication, [CMSWire](#), is complemented by our [Reworked](#) and [VKTR](#) publications. Our research division produces a range of annual state of the industry reports, quarterly market segment guides and a range of focused industry insights briefs. We offer performance marketing, custom research, content development and custom event production services directly to our clients.

Our obsessions: next generation digital customer experiences, navigating the r/evolution of work and advancing enterprise learning.



Presented by: **KORBYT** & **reworked** in association with **IC** **COLOGY**

