

The background features several abstract shapes in black and lime green. There are two solid black circles, one in the top center and one in the bottom right. There are also several large, rounded, organic shapes in lime green and black, some overlapping each other, creating a modern, geometric aesthetic.

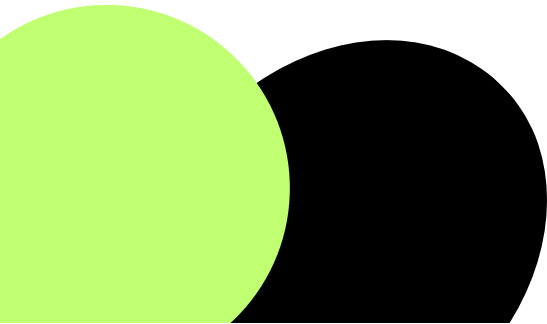
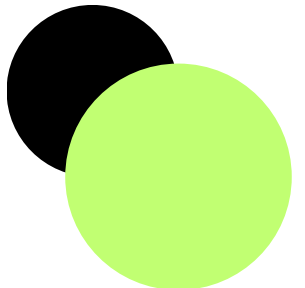
INTERNAL COMMUNICATION  
AT BELKIN

# **How to foster employee informal socialization as part of the IC practices in Belkin?**

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# I. TRENDS IN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

**1. Gamification successfully improves HR aspects such as team building , employee engagement, recruitment, training, performance management, rewards and recognition, internal communication (Sanita Leimane, 2022, p.209).**

Gamification is “the use of gaming mechanisms and design experience to digitally engage and motivate people for achieving their goals” (Sanita Leimane, 2022, p.208). In Internal Communication, gamification elements can be applied in something, which is not a game, to create a fun environment, involve people emotionally and help them solve problems in an easier way. The aim is to trigger behaviour change, by having a better experience.

Andrezza Dernandez et al. (2022) claimed that gamification can elevate socialization, training of employees and on-the-job trainings by its creative, exciting, and playful characteristics. Moreover, gamification at the workplace instigates healthy competition, incites personal growth, alertness of an employee’s own skills, and makes routine activities more varied (Andrezza Fernandez, 2022).

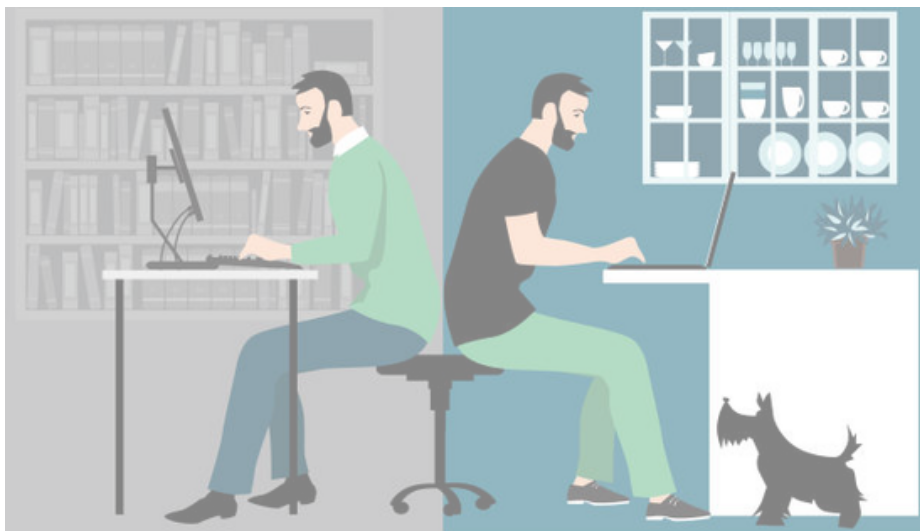


# I. TRENDS IN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

## 2. More and more people are having hybrid workplaces. (Staffbase, 2023)

For example, when in the US a lockdown was enforced, from March 2020 onwards, people have mainly worked at home and solely 11% of them returned to their company offices between April and September 2020 (Eunhwa Yang, 2021).

Several changes in the work environment and work conditions are attributed to this trend. For example, while working remotely, employees might have lower productivity due to “childcare/homeschooling, lack of motivation/focus, limited access to workplace resources, limited software and Internet connection and limited interaction with other coworkers”(Eunhwa Yang, 2021,p.52).



Although people labouring from home experienced worsened work-life balance and decrease in productivity, their workplace flexibility contributed to their job satisfaction. IC professionals’ role in embracing smoothly the teleworking mode is to supply the employees with sufficient financial, technical, mental, and training support. They also need to emphasize on implementing more socialization and collaboration activities, as these lack at a home environment (Eunhwa Yang, 2021).

## I. TRENDS IN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

### 3. Nowadays, ICs professionals pay more attention to the topic of diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) at the workplace.

Nowadays, companies attempt to apply diversity, equality, and inclusion by hiring people from various backgrounds, religions, ethnicities, and sexual orientations. This helps companies obtain higher perceived fairness of the organization, increased productivity, better employee engagement and employees become ambassadors of the company (Yeunjae Lee, 2021).

Also, taking DEI into consideration influences how much the organization is trusted by both external (74.6%) and internal (70.7%) stakeholders. Research shows that gender diversity is a valuable additional metric to consider when evaluating investments (Staffbase & Ragan, 2023).

Groups with diverse backgrounds are proven to keep groups cognitive resources sharp and vigilant. Thinking about innovation, diverse groups are boosting a company's intellectual potential and achieving higher goals (David Rock, 2016).

### 4. Dealing with social responsibility has increased as a strategic concern:

Organizations are increasingly focusing on sustainability and ethical practices internally. This trend is reflected in internal communications, with companies sharing information about their sustainable initiatives, corporate social responsibility efforts, and ethical values.

Incorporate social responsibility strategies include “refraining from accepting a bribe, lying, and cheating, and using the company’s resources for personal purposes and, generally, being honest” (C. B. Bhattacharya, 2022, p.964).



Social responsibility practices turn employees into brand advocates, and this attracts future personnel. By reminding employees that they are solving some of the most significant problems in the world through their work, the company purpose related to sustainability also reminds the employees that they are part of an enormous ethical movement (C. B. Bhattacharya, 2022). They feel they belong to something greater than themselves, and this boosts their job satisfaction.

# I. TRENDS IN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

## 5. Growth of social media in internal communication practices

The rise of social media has altered internal communication practices globally. It has brought employees closer to their company's values and missions. As a result, they have become more vigorous and enthusiastic, and felt privileged to work at a certain organization. Eventually, becoming better engaged at the workplace and brand supporters. Companies achieve this by executing social media listening, relevant and easy to spread content, transparent leadership, trustworthiness, consistency, and employee training on social media (Michele Ewing, 2019).

Intranet and social media have become common sources of information for employees in organizations as they bring the company closer to the employees. Social media opens the loop for employee feedback because it allows people to interact more freely, share thoughts, and exchange ideas. Companies utilize social media to share important company announcements, news, and updates. Therefore, employees are informed in real time and can share thoughts or find solutions (Julia Friedl, 2021).





## II. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION DEFINITION

### 5. Growth of social media in internal communication practices

Internal Communication relates to the exchange of information among individuals within a company or institution with the aim of improving personnel's productivity and encouraging positive working environment (Poloski et al., 2021). According to Vercic et al. (2012), it enables smooth collaboration and change management strategies. Furthermore, it fosters employee satisfaction leading to employees becoming brand ambassadors (Vercic et al., 2021).

Internal Communication is defined as the broad scope of communication channels used within an organization. It relates to the exchange of information among individuals within a company or institution. Moreover, it is defined as a two-way communication which establishes structured communication frameworks between employees and employers. When executed effectively, internal communication provides numerous advantages for the organization, for instance, heightened employee engagement, amplified productivity, diminished absenteeism, elevated innovation levels, improved service quality, and overarching success for the organization as a whole (Poloski, Bilusic, & Najjar, 2021).

Internal communication establishes and maintains communication systems which connect employers and employees. It serves in terms of exchanging ideas, information, attitudes, and emotions among individuals. Its primary function is to enhance and nurture the interpersonal dynamics within an organization, particularly between employees and managers. Internal communication is often related to internal communication satisfaction because the better internal communication systems work within organization, the more satisfied employees are (Vercic A. T., The impact of employee engagement, organisational support and employer branding on internal communication satisfaction, 2021).

Internal communication can be defined as a specialized category of communication that operates exclusively within an organization. It constitutes an essential component of change management strategies and is commonly associated with various domains including human resources, change management, organization development, public relations, marketing, and general management (Vercic, Vercic, & Sriramesh, Internal communication: Definition, parameters, and the future, 2012)

### III. COMPANY DESCRIPTION

The organization which will be analysed in this paper is Belkin – consumer electronic company which has been on the market for 40 years. It consists of more than more than 1,200 employees spread over 23 countries globally (Belkin, n.d.). The Global Headquarters are in El Segundo, California, while the European Headquarters are in Amsterdam.

Belkin's product range consists of computer, tablet, and phone accessories such as chargers, screen protectors, docks and hubs, cables, earbuds, and headphone (Belkin, n.d.). The company focuses on unique design of the products, as well as paying attention to the smallest details. The company fosters a better and smoother connection between people and technology (Belkin, n.d.).



Belkin culture is driven by quality of the products, design, innovation, connecting and empowering people via technology. In Belkin, diversity within the work staff matters. The company also takes sustainability-related actions for the planet (Belkin, n.d.). For example, the company has tried to limit their emission of CO<sub>2</sub> by using Post-Consumer Recycled materials and plastic-free packaging for their products (Belkin, n.d.).

The company communication style is low-context: messages are directly, clearly, and unambiguously expressed. The message flow is fast, as their content is forwarded very quickly. If an issue appears, it is being addressed immediately, so that time can be devoted to more projects. The information is easily passed through the various departments. Communication happens via phone calls, intranet, MS Teams' chat options, or emails. Linked In is used as well to spread news and engage the employees.

This paper will look at the internal communication within the European Marketing Team, located in Amsterdam. It contains 14 employees, of which 6 people in "Localisation", 4 people in "Creatives", 4 people in "Digital Marketing", 3 people in "Channel Marketing", 2 people in "PR & Communication" and 1 Marketing Director.

## IV. WHAT ARE THE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS AT BELKIN?

The Marketing Department has encountered a few internal communication problems. One of them is “Information Silo”. This implies that “groups, teams, or departments do not want to share skills, knowledge, or information with other areas in the same company” (André de Waal, 2019, p.2). In this case, the HQ in California, the US hoard information and don’t share all of it, or on time, with the European HQ in Amsterdam. As a result, the Amsterdam office doesn’t always possess the necessary Marketing materials needed when crafting Marketing campaigns and this might lead to distrust between the teams, and inconsistency within the Marketing activities.

Another issue, which this paper will examine, is “**Lack of informal socialization within the Marketing Team**”. The informal socialization constitutes a mixture of cooperations, experiences, conversations between individuals happening both remotely and at work (Cimperman, 2023).

In Belkin, the problem *arose from several facts*. Firstly, the employees within the Marketing Department are divided into several different sub-teams. Therefore, they don’t have many communication touchpoints altogether. Secondly, employees are currently working 3days remotely, so they don’t have face-to-face personal communication regularly. Thirdly, they don’t have regular teambuilding activities, so socialization diminishes.



The lack of social socialization *engenders several problems*: decreased trust between employees , decline in knowledge sharing, poor communication and collaboration, poor work performance, and low job satisfaction. Moreover, when employees don’t feel connected to each other, there is a drop in employee engagement, organizational commitment, and higher employee turnover. Besides, the employee wellbeing and productivity often plummet down as an aftermath (Cimperman, 2023).

Specifically the employees in Belkin have experienced a decrease in their productivity, team cohesion and engagement due to lack of informal interactions with colleagues. This led to their low job satisfaction.

## V. WHAT IS THE SOLUTION AND WHICH TREND IS IT LINKED TO?

The company can tackle the problem “Lack of informal socialization” if it implements regular Team building activities with Gamification elements. Thus, applying the Gamification Trend in Team Building.

Gamification is described as “designs that attempt to give rise to similar experiences as games do” (Juho Hamari et al., 2018, p.8). Juho Hamari et al. state that gamification is utilized for increasing motivation and engagement(2018). They add that gamification is oriented at giving “rewards such as badges, points or higher placement in a game hierarchy such as beating others on a leaderboard” (Juho Hamari, 2018,p.9).

According to Alla Polyanska (2022) gamification can be external and internal. The external one is aimed at improving customer loyalty and company revenue. The internal one strives to increase the productivity of employees and can be utilized for hiring skilled employees. Gamification also makes employees’ learning process easier, less anxious, and more apprehensible (Alla Polyanska, 2022).

When gamification is applied in teambuilding, it promotes interaction, enhanced communication, and collaboration between the participants. Groups develop stronger connections, overcome communication obstacles and cultivate mutual confidence (Exis, 2023).

## VI. WHAT IS THE COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE ?

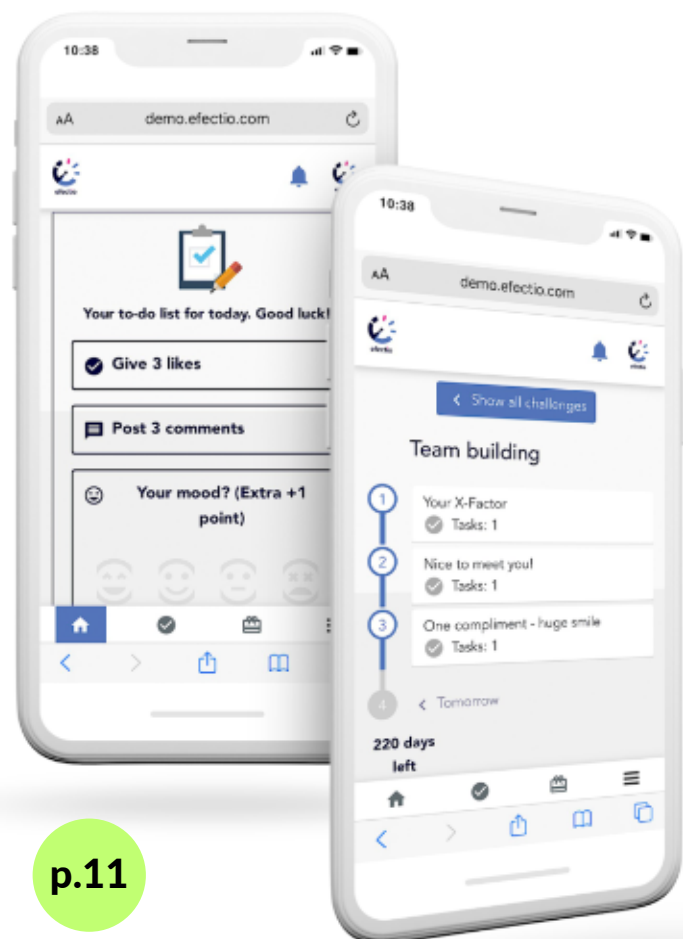
The communication objective of the strategy is behavior-oriented: to achieve 10% higher employee informal socialization, within 6 months, in the European Marketing Team, by implementing Team building activities with Gamification elements. The goal will be measured by following up on the participants number, tasks completed, photos’ “likes”, comments, and employees surveys’ results after the first and the second 3-months period.

## VII. HOW CAN THE COMPANY ADOPT THE STRATEGY?

For example, Belkin can partner with Efectio- Talent Acquisition and Retention Platform. Efectio can create gamification-based games tailored to the needs of a specific company. The games are mobile-friendly, fun to perform and with trackable results. Therefore, suitable for remote workers such as the Belkin employees. The games can be mentally-, physically-, nutritionally-, creativity-, or efficiency- related

For example, Belkin can utilize 2 games. One of them could be “Smart Energo”, built by Efectio for the company Latvenergo. The game goes as follows: employees of the same company are sent emails with diverse challenges to complete. They need to create teams to perform together “responsible, joyful, physically active, and socially significant tasks during a 3-month period” (Efectio, n.d.). Some of the tasks include: going for a walk together, exercising together at the office/remotely, playing scrabble. In this way, even when they are completely new employees in the team, they can get closer to each other shortly after onboarding.

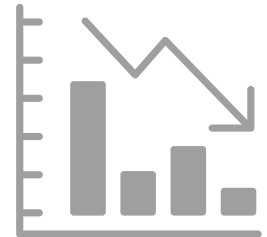
At the end, teams that were formed during the game process could win rewards that would further trigger them to continue engaging in informal socialization. For instance, the rewards can be skiing together in a resort, team dinner, enjoying a wellness program together (spa and swimming indoors), going to a sport event or concert together, cooking class.



## VIII. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE STRATEGY?

### 1. Advantages:

- *fun, creative and carefree environment in which the employees are encouraged to collaborate.*
- *employees can bond, even if they are working remotely*
- *measurable results*
- *visually appealing*
- *can encourage healthy competition*



### 2. Disadvantages:

- *Not all employees might find gamification childish or irrelevant*
- *It might be expensive*
- *Introverts might not like to be involved*
- *employee burnout if they perceive it as an added demand on top of their regular workload*

## IX. HOW IS THE STRATEGY LINKED TO THE COMPANY POLICY AND VALUES?

1. The company prioritizes design and innovation in its products. Colleagues are used to paying attention to these details, and therefore would easily embrace an activity with exciting design patterns and novel challenges.

2. The company operates in the technology industry. Employees stay on top of the industry by also interacting with the newest gadgets. Consequently, the interactivity of gamification will be a loved premium feature.

3. Besides, the company strives for more sustainable actions. The fact that gamification will be used with technology means avoiding using paper and creating waste, as well as avoiding traveling and reducing CO2 emissions.

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