

# Organizational communication in change management: A narrative review



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**Abstract** In an increasingly digital and competitive business landscape, communication practices within organizations are evolving to meet new operational and cultural demands. These shifts have redefined how companies engage with internal and external stakeholders across different levels. Despite the growing importance of communication, many organizations continue to face structural and strategic challenges that hinder effective message delivery and alignment. This review aims to identify key trends, persistent challenges, and the reported benefits of organizational communication, offering a synthesized view of recent academic contributions to the topic. A structured narrative review was conducted using thematic analysis of 52 peer-reviewed studies published in English and Spanish over the last decade. Using thematic analysis, the study identifies prevailing trends, key challenges, and reported benefits within organizational communication in the context of change management. Major trends include the adoption of digital communication tools, personalized messaging, strategic utilization of social media, and the incorporation of storytelling techniques. Challenges highlighted encompass resistance to change, message fragmentation, data security concerns, and information overload. The review also underscores significant benefits such as enhanced decision-making processes, improved stakeholder alignment, innovation facilitation, reputation management, and talent retention. These findings contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the evolving role of communication as a strategic asset in organizational change processes. The study concludes by emphasizing the necessity of integrated, adaptive, and inclusive communication strategies that not only support change initiatives but also foster organizational resilience and competitiveness in dynamic environments. Together, these findings provide a solid foundation for developing more effective communication practices aligned with the current demands of organizational transformation.

**Keywords:** communication strategies, digital transformation, internal communication, organizational change, stakeholder engagement

## 1. Introduction

Historically, theorists such as Henri Fayol and Frederick Taylor, at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, established foundations for business organization, influencing the study of labor relations and the performance of collaborators (Arenas, 2020). In the 1930s, Elton Mayo highlighted synergy in social interactions and workplace communication. In the 1970s, Chester Barnard and Herbert Simon emphasized communication as an essential process for the coordination and achievement of organizational objectives, emerging theoretical models such as those of Shannon and Weaver and Downs and Hazen (Contreras Delgado & Garibay Rendón, 2020).

In today's globalized and competitive environment, organizational communication is essential for effective operation and business success. A clear, effective and strategic communication system is important for achieving corporate objectives and maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage (Almeida & Vera, 2020). The importance of internal communication is highlighted by Fernández, (2019), who mention that the commitment of collaborators is essential for performance and productivity. Companies with effective internal communication are 47% more likely to have highly engaged employees and a 25% reduction in staff turnover.

Technological advancement has transformed organizational communication, allowing the massive adoption of digital channels and social networks. A study carried out by Fernández, (2019) revealed that more than 70% of companies use social networks as part of their communication strategies, and it is estimated that 90% will implement digital tools to improve internal and external collaboration in the next year. In Latin America, companies have increased their investment in organizational communication strategies.

At the regional level, in Latin America, companies have significantly increased their investment in organizational communication strategies. Meléndez, (2023) estimates that 12% of the institutional budget is allocated to communication



activities. However, Arévalo-Martínez & Mayo, (2023) emphasize that only 30% of employees feel fully informed about organizational decisions and changes, highlighting the need to improve communication strategies to foster a participatory culture. According to Castro & Rincón-Ramírez, (2022), 85% of companies in Latin America use digital platforms to interact with their internal and external audiences, and 70% use social networks and messaging applications to strengthen communication. In Ecuador, 67% of companies consider that internal communication is a determining factor in achieving their strategic objectives (Pazmay Ramos et al., 2017), although 40% identify the lack of resources and training as obstacles to improving their communication practices.

Organizational communication involves the transmission of messages, information and knowledge between all members and levels of the organization (Vivas et al., 2022). This flow seeks to establish a shared understanding and a cohesive corporate culture, facilitating internal coordination and cooperation to achieve a common purpose (Méndez Carpio & Palacios Montero, 2020). In addition, it seeks to establish an effective connection with the external client, projecting a positive image and strengthening the reputation of the entity. It also implies understanding the needs and expectations of collaborators and other external actors, becoming a strategic tool to build and maintain the reputation of the organization, manage crises, promote team participation and strengthen the quality of the service offered (Rodríguez-Fernández & Vázquez-Sande, 2019).

Within organizations, several communication models stand out. Downward communication flows from higher to lower levels and is used to transmit policies, guidelines, and specific tasks (Castro & Rincón-Ramírez, 2022). Upward communication allows employees to communicate their ideas, concerns and suggestions to their superiors through surveys and feedback meetings (Espinoza Morán et al., 2022). Horizontal communication involves the exchange of information between people at the same hierarchical level, promoting coordination and collaboration (Prado, 2023). Diagonal communication occurs between members of different hierarchical levels, promoting the transmission of information and knowledge between areas of the company and promoting innovation (Rueda Fierro et al., 2020). Finally, external communication is aimed at different external audiences, such as clients and suppliers, and is essential for building a positive image and managing corporate reputation (Arévalo-Martínez & Mayo, 2023; Castro Rodríguez, 2021).

In today's work management, organizational communication is critical and constantly evolving. Organizations recognize effective communication as a fundamental pillar that drives agility, innovation and cohesion in a competitive environment (Cáceres et al., 2020; Zevallos Oscco et al., 2022). Digital transformation and globalization promote inclusivity, diverse thoughts and simplicity in sending messages (Palella Stracuzzi & Astudillo Pacheco, 2022; Silva-Giraldo et al., 2023). Solid, adaptive and strategic communication is essential to drive collaboration, innovation and adaptation in a constantly changing business world (Pineda Henao, 2020; Quecano, 2022).

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a structured narrative review approach to examine recent literature on organizational communication. The review aims to synthesize key developments, challenges, and potential benefits related to communication practices within organizations. The process included the formulation of guiding research questions, a comprehensive search strategy, and defined criteria for source selection (Page et al., 2021).

### 2.1. Research questions

The review is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the current trends in organizational communication?

RQ2. What are the current challenges within organizational communication?

RQ3. What are the benefits of organizational communication?

### 2.2. Search strategy

The literature search employed a dual-language strategy, utilizing both controlled vocabulary from the UNESCO Thesaurus and free-text terms. Boolean operators ("AND", "OR", "NOT") were used to refine and optimize the search across various academic databases. Searches were performed in both English and Spanish, with the following query as the primary structure: ("organizational communication" AND ("trends" OR "practices" OR "challenges" OR "obstacles" OR "benefits" OR "advantages")).

### 2.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria applied in this review were as follows: (i) peer-reviewed articles published within the last ten years; (ii) publications available in English or Spanish; and (iii) studies explicitly addressing topics related to organizational communication. The exclusion criteria were as follows: (i) articles published outside the selected time frame and (ii) documents unrelated to the core focus of organizational communication.

### 2.4. Data selection and organization

The process of identifying and organizing relevant literature was conducted manually, emphasizing thematic relevance and conceptual clarity. A total of 52 articles were selected for inclusion based on their contribution to the analysis of trends, challenges, and benefits in the field. The selected studies were categorized thematically to facilitate comparative interpretation across the three guiding research questions.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Current trends

Recent studies highlight several evolving trends in organizational communication that are largely influenced by technological progress and shifts in business practices. These developments reflect how organizations interact with internal and external stakeholders and adapt their communication strategies in increasingly complex environments. Table 1 summarizes the main trends identified across the reviewed studies, which relate to organizational adaptability, engagement, and long-term positioning in dynamic markets.

**Table 1** Thematic synthesis of the main trends emerging in organizational communication.

Author(s)	Trends described
(Cáceres et al., 2020; Chew et al., 2023; Dávalos-Mogollón et al., 2024; Riforgiate & Tracy, 2023; Rodríguez-Fernández & Vázquez-Sande, 2019; Solari-Legua & Salas-Canales, 2023).	Adopting digital technologies, multichannel communication
(Arenas, 2020; Cáceres et al., 2020; Dávalos-Mogollón et al., 2024; Segredo Pérez et al., 2017; Yoo et al., 2021).	Strategic use of social networks for visual and multimedia content
(Arzuaga-Williams, 2019; Battiston et al., 2021; Pacheco-Rodríguez & Alvarez-Avilés, 2022; Rentería-Vega et al., 2023; Valencia Franco & Castaño González, 2022).	Focus on diversity and inclusion
(Riforgiate & Tracy, 2023; Rodríguez-Fernández & Vázquez-Sande, 2019; Rueda Fierro et al., 2020; Silva-Giraldo et al., 2023).	Communicating purpose, social responsibility, crisis communication
(Arenas, 2020; Casamayor, 2023; Durán Bravo et al., 2021; González Cifuentes & González Pardo, 2023; Incappuñío & Quispe, 2019; Pineda Henao, 2020).	Transparency, authenticity, data analysis in communications
(Castro Rodríguez, 2021; Espinoza Morán et al., 2022; Musheke & Phiri, 2021; Palella Stracuzzi & Astudillo Pacheco, 2022; Sixto-García et al., 2021).	Personalization of communication
(Almeida & Vera, 2020; Baquero Galvis & Cárdenas García, 2020; Espinel Pazmiño, 2022; Hamouche & Parent-Lamarche, 2023; Quecano, 2022).	Implementing narratives, business storytelling

One of the most frequently observed trends is the integration of digital tools and social platforms into communication systems. The digitalization of communication processes enables organizations to engage more efficiently with diverse audiences through real-time and targeted messaging. This transformation also requires managing the accuracy, relevance, and consistency of the information shared. Another important trend is the growing emphasis on personalized communication. Moving beyond standardized messaging, organizations are segmenting their communications to address specific audience needs and expectations. While this approach enhances message relevance and stakeholder connection, it also demands deeper insight into audience profiles and preferences.

The strategic use of social networks has become a core component of external communication. Visual and multimedia formats, such as videos, infographics, and interactive content, are being used to improve message retention and user engagement. Moreover, communication strategies increasingly aim to reflect diversity, equity, and inclusion. Integrating diverse voices and applying culturally sensitive messaging helps build credibility and a cohesive brand identity. Additionally, organizations are placing greater emphasis on transparency and authenticity. The use of data analytics to assess communication effectiveness is expanding, enabling more informed and adaptive practices. Finally, storytelling is adopted as a technique to convey organizational values, improve internal engagement, and foster emotional connections with stakeholders.

#### 3.2. Current trends

In today’s dynamic and interconnected environment, organizational communication is exposed to multiple challenges that influence how entities interact with employees, clients, and broader stakeholder groups. Identifying and analyzing these issues provides insight into the barriers organizations face when implementing effective and strategic communication practices. A thematic synthesis of the main challenges identified in the reviewed literature is presented in Table 2.

One of the most recurrent issues is information saturation, which limits the visibility and effectiveness of key messages. In such environments, organizations must develop mechanisms to prioritize, filter, and deliver content in a clear and meaningful way. This becomes even more complex in multicultural and multilingual contexts, where communication strategies must adapt without compromising organizational consistency. Another persistent concern is the protection of sensitive information. As digital communication expands, the risk of data breaches and unauthorized access escalates. Organizations



must implement secure systems and personnel training to ensure responsible handling of internal and external communications.

**Table 2** Thematic synthesis of the main challenges identified in organizational communication.

Author(s)	Challenges described
(Arévalo-Martínez & Mayo, 2023; De La Vega et al., 2022; Fernández, 2019; Pazmay Ramos et al., 2017; Rodríguez-Fernández & Vázquez-Sande, 2019; Zevallos Oscco et al., 2022).	Resistance to change, limited adaptation to new trends
(Chew et al., 2023; Fernández, 2019; González Cifuentes & González Pardo, 2023; Hamouche & Parent-Lamarche, 2023).	Fragmented communication, information misrepresentation
(Casamayor, 2023; Castillo-Acosta et al., 2022; Donoso et al., 2023; Durán Bravo et al., 2021; Pazmay Ramos et al., 2017; Solari-Legua & Salas-Canales, 2023).	Limited data privacy protection
(Castro Rodríguez, 2021; González Cifuentes & González Pardo, 2023; Pineda Henao, 2020; Rueda Fierro et al., 2020; Segredo Pérez et al., 2017).	Communication crisis management alternatives
(Almeida & Vera, 2020; Battiston et al., 2021; Dávalos-Mogollón et al., 2024; Espinoza Morán et al., 2022; Méndez Carpio & Palacios Montero, 2020; Prado, 2023; Valenzuela et al., 2020; Yoo et al., 2021).	Aligning internal and external communication
(Dávalos-Mogollón et al., 2024; Durán Bravo et al., 2021; Fernández, 2019; Manaure-Melo, 2021; Méndez Carpio & Palacios Montero, 2020; Palella Stracuzzi & Astudillo Pacheco, 2022; Pazmay Ramos et al., 2017).	Limited fresh content generation
(Cáceres et al., 2020; Contreras Delgado & Garibay Rendón, 2020; Perales-Aguirre et al., 2024; Solari-Legua & Salas-Canales, 2023; Suárez-Caimary et al., 2022).	Information saturation

Additionally, the lack of alignment between internal and external messages can lead to inconsistency and confusion, particularly during change processes or crisis situations. This highlights the need for integrated communication frameworks that support coherence across all organizational levels and touchpoints.

### 3.3. Benefits

Effective organizational communication contributes to improved productivity, internal cohesion, stakeholder engagement, and long-term organizational sustainability. A thematic synthesis of the benefits identified across the reviewed literature is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3** Thematic synthesis of the main benefits associated with organizational communication.

Author(s)	Benefits described
(Almeida & Vera, 2020; Ayón Ponce et al., 2022; Méndez Carpio & Palacios Montero, 2020; Petrone & Petrone, 2021; Valenzuela et al., 2020).	Strengthening communication, mitigating misrepresentation
(Battiston et al., 2021; Petrone & Petrone, 2021; Quecano, 2022; Segredo Pérez et al., 2017; Sixto-García et al., 2021; Valencia Franco & Castaño González, 2022).	Adapting to change, driving innovation
(Acosta et al., 2021; Arenas, 2020; Arzuaga-Williams, 2019; Rentería-Vega et al., 2023; Suárez-Caimary et al., 2022; Yoo et al., 2021).	Promoting diversity and inclusion
(Baquero Galvis & Cárdenas García, 2020; Castillo-Acosta et al., 2022; Churruca Tineo & Mendo Mehan, 2021; Hamouche & Parent-Lamarche, 2023; Zevallos Oscco et al., 2022).	Facilitating decision making, conflict resolution, participatory communication
(Ayón Ponce et al., 2022; Castro & Rincón-Ramírez, 2022; De La Vega et al., 2022; Suárez-Caimary et al., 2022; Valencia Franco & Castaño González, 2022; Yoo et al., 2021; Yue et al., 2021).	Facilitating socialization, goal alignment
(Contreras Delgado & Garibay Rendón, 2020; González Cifuentes & González Pardo, 2023; Piedra-Mayorga et al., 2022; Riforgiate & Tracy, 2023; Rueda Fierro et al., 2020).	Building reputation, optimizing talent attraction and retention

One of the most widely reported benefits is the improvement of internal coherence through communication aligned with organizational mission and values. This helps employees recognize their role in broader objectives, boosting engagement and collective performance. Communication also fosters collaboration and knowledge sharing, which supports innovation and responsiveness to change.

Additionally, strategic communication plays a relevant role in organizational change management. Clear messaging during periods of transformation helps reduce uncertainty and resistance. Transparent and authentic communication builds trust, enhances corporate image, and contributes to employee retention by reinforcing a sense of belonging and purpose.

## 4. Discussion



In the contemporary business world, organizational change management has become a strategic priority. Organizations seek to adapt and thrive in dynamic and competitive environments, where communication emerges as a fundamental tool to facilitate and effectively manage change processes.

One of the points of convergence among scholars and professionals of organizational change management is the recognition of communication as an essential catalyst for the success of any change initiative. Rodríguez-Fernández & Vázquez-Sande, (2019) noted that clear and constant communication is important to keep all members of the organization aligned with the objectives of the change and to overcome the resistance inherent to the process. Similarly, Piedra-Mayorga et al., (2022) highlight the importance of communication at each stage of change, from awareness to consolidation, and argue that effective communication provides the clarity and motivation necessary for employees to engage, commit to the change and adapt it successfully. Musheke & Phiri, (2021) emphasize the need for two-way communication during organizational change, facilitating adaptation to new demands within work entities. The predisposition of collaborators, as an important element, enables an open and transparent communication style, promoting a sense of ownership and commitment to new ways of working.

However, there are divergent positions regarding the approach and implementation of communication strategies in the context of organizational change. Some experts maintain that communication should be seen as a holistic and integrated process in all stages of change, from planning and design to implementation and evaluation. Vivas et al., (2022) emphasize that strategic communication involves not only transmitting information but also creating a shared sense of purpose and direction among organizational members. In contrast, Yue et al., (2021) argue that communication alone is not sufficient to ensure the success of organizational change. They advocate for a broader approach that considers other key factors, such as effective leadership, talent management, appropriate training, and creating an organizational culture that values adaptability and innovation. Pacheco-Rodríguez & Alvarez-Avilés, (2022) maintain that effective communication is only one of the components of a systemic and multifaceted approach to organizational change.

The relevance of communication in the management of organizational change lies in its ability to influence the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of employees. Clear and persuasive communication can mitigate uncertainty and resistance to change, fostering a sense of trust and commitment to the organizational vision and objectives. In highly competitive markets, original communication strategies are vital for organizational differentiation. A novel approach can enable a company to stand out amidst market saturation, capturing attention and fostering a unique brand identity. This distinctiveness is crucial for attracting and retaining customers, ultimately impacting market share and long-term success.

Finally, communication as a strategy in organizational change management reflects the complexity and interconnection of various factors in the current business environment. Although there is a consensus on the importance of communication, divergences persist regarding its scope, focus and relationship with other aspects of change management. Effective communication is undoubtedly essential for navigating organizational change in the 21st century. However, successful change management requires integrating continuous training, inspiring leadership, and a resilient, innovative organizational culture alongside communication strategies that address evolving employee and market needs.

## 5. Conclusions

Organizational communication plays a central role in supporting change management processes in today's evolving business context. This review revealed that consistent, clear, and strategically aligned communication contributes to aligning employees with institutional goals, facilitating adaptation, and reducing resistance during transitions. The literature indicates that two-way communication enhances employee engagement by fostering a sense of involvement and shared responsibility. While some authors propose an integrated approach where communication is embedded throughout all stages of organizational change, others argue that communication must be complemented by factors such as leadership effectiveness, talent development, and a culture that supports adaptability and innovation. The findings suggest that communication alone is not sufficient to guarantee successful change initiatives. However, its influence on employee perception, motivation, and coordination highlights its relevance within a broader organizational strategy. Integrating communication efforts with continuous training, transparent leadership, and inclusive practices may strengthen organizational capacity to navigate complex challenges and achieve sustainable transformation.

## Acknowledgment

Special thanks to the EDUTEM research network for its valuable contributions.

## Ethical Considerations

This study did not involve human participants, personal data, or experimental procedures. Therefore, ethical approval was not needed, as this was a literature-based review.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

## Funding

This study was supported by Universidad Tecnológica Indoamérica under project IIDI-017-24 titled “Arquitectura sostenible desde los sentidos al confort”.

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