

Founders Guide on  
**COMMUNICATION**  
IN STARTUPS



**TECH HIVE**  
ADVISORY



## About Tech Hive™

---

Tech Hive Advisory Limited is a technology advisory firm which provides advisory and support services to private and public organisations with regards to the intersection between technology, business, and law. We focus on how emerging and disruptive technologies are altering and influencing the traditional way of doing things while acting as an innovation partner to our clients. These new technologies often birth new challenges requiring regulations to balance the benefit of innovation and the rights and freedoms of users. Our experience and capability extends across startup advisory, privacy and data protection, data ethics, cybersecurity, intellectual property management and emerging technologies. We ensure our advice serves our clients well by having an excellent understanding not only of their business, but of the markets in which they operate.

### Contributors

Abigail Ichoku  
Imisioluwa Jemisenia  
Oluwagbeminiyi Ojedokun  
Ugo Iwuchukwu  
Onyinye Okonji  
Mercy Murithi  
Ayodeji Sarumi

### Usage of the Guide

The Guide is general and educational in nature and is not intended to provide, and should not be relied on, as a source of legal or business advice. This information and material provided in the Guide may not be applicable in all (or any) situations and should not be acted upon without specific legal advice based on particular circumstances.



## Structure and Overview of the Guide

1.	Introduction .....	1
2.	Benefits of Effective Communication .....	2
3.	Types of Communication in Business.....	2
4.	Enhancing Effective Internal Communication .....	3
5.	External Communication .....	4
6.	Enhancing Effective External Communication.....	4
7.	Conclusion.....	6
8.	Bibliography.....	6



# Introduction

Communication is one of the key areas that requires optimal focus in Startups. It is a known fact that Startups grow exponentially, therefore they need to have good communication strategies at the very beginning. Effective business communication involves successfully passing information across individuals both within and outside a business.<sup>1</sup> A Startup must have proper communication procedures and tactics in place as it is very pivotal in helping it move forward and succeed. Communication should be given priority in your startup, whether you are working remotely or in a physical location. As your Startup grows, the communication pool widens, and it becomes easier for complacency to slip through the cracks.<sup>2</sup> When communication is not effective, it creates fractured teams which in turn affects the success of a startup as the growth of the Start-up is pulled in different directions.<sup>3</sup> Ineffective communication has an impact on your Startup's efficiency, procedures, productivity, profitability, and every other layer.

There are different ways of communicating in a Startup and this could be web based, telephone communication, video conferencing, face to face meetings, reports and official documents, presentations, surveys and others. The appropriate communication method to apply in your Startup largely depends on your preferences and the team strength at any given time..

---

1. 'What Is Business Communication? Why Do You Need It?' (Nextiva Blog, 3 May 2019) <<https://www.nextiva.com/blog/what-is-business-communication.html>> accessed 5 May 2021.

2. 'Why Communication Determines Startup Success' (Droplr, 14 April 2020) <<https://droplr.com/blog/2020/04/14/why-communication-determines-startup-success/>> accessed 5 May 2021.

3. 'Is Communication Killing Your Startup?' (Product Habits, 11 August 2017) <<https://producthabits.com/communication-killing-startup/>> accessed 5 May 2021.

## Benefits of Effective Communication

Effective communication in a startup has several advantages, including helping to build a good team, boosting customer relationships, encouraging feedback, enforcing rules, and promoting efficiency; solving problems such as lack of productivity, organizational silos, low employee engagement, poor communication with remote employees, poor customer service, and boosting workplace morale and innovation to name a few. Incorporating effective communications methods with your workforce, shareholders, customers, and other stakeholders is important.

To enhance effective communication in your Startup, ensure that -

- Clear, confident, respectful, and professional verbal communication is used.
- Listen carefully — successful communication necessitates strong listening abilities.
- You establish a brand voice in digital communication that enhances the reputation of your Startup.
- Effective non-verbal communication skills are adopted.
- You assess the present condition of business communication and establish objectives.
- Identify your Startup's primary teams and their relationships with one another.
- Define communication techniques.
- Select the appropriate tools.
- Every process is meticulously recorded.

## Types of Communication in Business

There are two sides to communication in business. They are -

1. **Internal Communication.**
2. **External Communication.**

Internal Communication

Internal communication can either be upward, downward or lateral. Internal communication from a subordinate to someone higher up in the startup's structure is known as upward internal communication. Downward internal communication is communication between superiors and subordinates, while lateral internal communication is communication amongst co-workers.



Internal Communication. Source: [Methods of Internal Communication](#)



Effective internal communication goes beyond establishing a standardized communication system within your Startup but also involves creating a transparent and open environment where people are not reluctant to ideate, share and express themselves.<sup>4</sup>

Effective internal communication enhances informed decision making, productivity of the employees and profitability. It ensures everyone is on the same page, establishes regulations, enhances relationships, prevents disputes, inspires innovation and improves employee motivation towards work.<sup>5</sup> Employees that are well informed are more driven to give their all at work and in their teams, and they are more aware of their own strengths, shortcomings, responsibilities, duties, and performance.

## Enhancing Effective Internal Communication

Some of the mechanisms through which effective internal communication can be enhanced-

- Address information gaps and unfavorable stories as soon as possible.
- Encourage openness, transparency, and approachability.
- Regular team meeting updates.
- Team members' ideas and contributions should be heard and valued.
- Exemplify the behaviour you want to encourage and be decisive with those you do not want.
- Clear communication of roles and responsibilities of founders and employees.
- Create processes for escalation and ensure everyone is invested in utilising them.
- Ensure that product and business objectives are aligned across the board.
- Create an open and transparent system- Startups must guarantee that transparency is accepted and that everyone is aligned with the founders' vision and beliefs. This may be accomplished by developing a detailed product plan and setting clear timelines.

---

4. 'Effective Communication in a Startup: A Doorway to Business Success | Scalefusion Blog' (30 September 2019) <<https://blog.scalefusion.com/effective-communication-in-a-startup/>> accessed 5 May 2021.

5. 'The Importance of Communication in Business' (Business 2 Community) <<https://www.business2community.com/communications/the-importance-of-communication-in-business-02313485>> accessed 5 May 2021.



## External Communication

In this age of hyper personalisation of products and services, any external communication from a Start-up has to speak to its customer or user base on a relatable level. What this does is, create a steady flow of feedback and useful data that will help inform any necessary tweaks.

Your product or service may have a fighting chance to be seen if you cut through the noise. And 'screaming loud' cost money. So startups must find creative ways of reaching their unique audience.

Therefore, a Startup's success also depends on how effectively it communicates with the public. This "public" includes customers, prospective investors, government entities, financial institutions, and other stakeholders. How your Startup communicates its values and vision to external stakeholders plays a huge part in affecting its overall reputation.

A Startup's look and feel must be carefully curated to build trust and loyalty, to establish its brand identity, to boost promotional benefits and improve communication.

## Enhancing Effective External Communication.

- Diversify content delivery to appeal to the relevant stakeholders. Content can be in written form, graphics, or video. Short videos in high resolution are recently becoming highly adapted, start-ups should consider adopting video formats to pass their information across effectively.
- The voice and tone of the communication must be consistent and tone sensitive to the changing times. Tone deaf communication may lead to your target audience boycotting your content. Startups can show carefully curated Behind the Scenes (BTS) content to help their audience humanise the brand.
- Font and style must be according to the Brand Styling Guidelines and consistent for easy brand association and recollection.
- Startups must adopt storytelling in their communication; an indirect endearing strategy playing on the nostalgic theme.
- Be sure to produce quality content based on humour, nostalgia, or fear in order to persuade your audience. Either of the first two work better in the corporate world.
- Communicate your brand values through CSR initiatives, events, and programs.
- Adopt the right aesthetics when communicating through advertisement, content etc. Leverage relevant communication channels. Maximise the use of social media as a cost effective Below the Line communication strategy.
- Maintain contact with external stakeholders via email, press releases, newsletters, social media posts, and other methods.
- Know your audience - Are you communicating with investors and shareholders, partners, customers etc?<sup>6</sup> This would help you understand your audience's language.
- Deliver audience-appropriate value.

To build an effective and successful Startup, communication between the internal and external facing teams must always be in sync. Startups need to be creative and intentional about aligning communication between technical and non-technical teams.<sup>7</sup>

---

6. Marketing-15 min read, 'External Communication Strategies: Finding Your Marketing Megaphone' (Fabrik Brands, 16 May 2018) <<https://fabrikbrands.com/external-communication-strategies/>> accessed 5 May 2021.

7. 'Leveraging The Power Of Communication In Tech Companies' <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunicationscouncil/2021/04/07/leveraging-the-power-of-communication-in-tech-companies/?sh=3ff4adbd6bb9>> accessed 5 May 2021.

The requirement for efficient communication between engineering and marketing teams at a Startup is a good illustration of this, since both teams have distinct viewpoints based on how they connect or engage with the product, service and customers. Engineering teams are internally focused since they spend their time developing and improving the product while balancing feedback from other teams, the founders, and other key stakeholders. Business development teams, on the other hand, are focused on promoting the product experience to consumers and are more externally focused.

The marketing team needs to be aware of modifications in the product to accurately market the same to customers and users. To appropriately develop the product, the engineering team needs to be aware of customers' buying habits and usage intentions.<sup>8</sup> This emphasises the need to bridge the information gap between different teams to ensure everyone is always working towards the same goal. As stated earlier, Startups grow quickly and as such their churn-out rate increases quite rapidly. Therefore, there must be an established process for communication early on.

A Startup cannot expand by operating in silos, although there are silos between distinct teams with distinct patterns of operation, such as the engineering and marketing teams, as highlighted above. As such, Startups must ensure that they establish ways of effectively communicating within siloed teams. To do so, they must ensure that the entire team's workflow around the product is always recorded; that everyone is involved in communication, and that connections formed throughout the teams are based on shared interests.

---

8. 'Is Communication Killing Your Startup?' (Product Habits, 11 August 2017) <<https://producthabits.com/communication-killing-startup/>> accessed 5 May 2021.





## Conclusion

As earlier stated, founders must never neglect effective communication in their Startups as it affects productivity, profitability, and every other layer in the start-up.

In startups, it is quite easy for communication to be fragmented due to different modes of interaction with the product being created by different teams. Founders must therefore ensure that there is a sync in the flow of communication between the technical and non-technical teams. External communication content must be in line with the internal communication and ingrained in the internal audience (employees, especially those in the front line).

Right from the start, it is important for strategies to be put in place to enhance effective communication and both internal and external communication must be given equal importance.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

'Effective Communication in a Startup: A Doorway to Business Success | Scalefusion Blog' (30 September 2019)

<https://blog.scalefusion.com/effective-communication-in-a-startup/> accessed 5 May 2021.

FinSMEs, 'The Importance Of Communication In Business: How To Improve It' (FinSMEs, 26 March 2019)

<https://www.finsmes.com/2019/03/the-importance-of-communication-in-business-how-to-improve-it.html> accessed 5 May 2021.

'Is Communication Killing Your Startup?' (Product Habits, 11 August 2017)

<https://producthabits.com/communication-killing-startup/> accessed 5 May 2021.

'Leveraging The Power Of Communication In Tech Companies' <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunication-council/2021/04/07/leveraging-the-power-of-communication-in-tech-companies/?sh=3ff4adbd6bb9>

accessed 5 May 2021.

Marketing·15 min read, 'External Communication Strategies: Finding Your Marketing Megaphone' (Fabrik Brands, 16 May 2018)

<https://fabrikbrands.com/external-communication-strategies/> accessed 5 May 2021.

MyStartupLand, 'Developing Communication Skills in a Startup: A Guide' (MyStartupLand, 20 February 2020)

<https://mystartupland.com/developing-communication-skills-in-a-startup-a-guide/> accessed 5 May 2021.

'The Importance of Communication in Business' (Business 2 Community)

<https://www.business2community.com/communications/the-importance-of-communication-in-business-02313485>

accessed 5 May 2021.

'What Is Business Communication? Why Do You Need It?' (Nextiva Blog, 3 May 2019)

<https://www.nextiva.com/blog/what-is-business-communication.html> accessed 5 May 2021.

'Why Communication Determines Startup Success' (Droplr, 14 April 2020)

<https://droplr.com/blog/2020/04/14/why-communication-determines-startup-success/> accessed 5 May 2021.



**TECH HIVE**  
ADVISORY

[contact@techhiveadvisory.org.ng](mailto:contact@techhiveadvisory.org.ng)

[www.techhiveadvisory.org.ng](http://www.techhiveadvisory.org.ng)

  @Hiveadvisory