

Gender equality: How woke (or broke) is your internal comms?

Issued by [icandi CQ](#)

3 Aug 2022

It's Women's Month - that time of year when every company becomes 'woke' to the issues affecting their female employees and the many ways their recruitment programmes, wellness initiatives and gender equality policies are fighting the good fight and winning. And yes, many companies have made very real strides in transforming the workplace into a place where women have voices and make choices from positions of real power and influence across the board and, indeed, on the board.



But are policies and programmes the place where gender equality is really fought and won in the workplace? Or does internal communications have a key role to play in driving, supporting and enabling the policies and programmes to take root and grow into a more diverse and inclusive workplace culture?

It's time to put internal communications to work for gender equality. But where to start?

Start with a deep audit. When last did you take a look at your internal comms strategy through the lens of gender equality? Are you guilty of making gender equality a women's-only issue? Does your strategy marginalise the issues by making them once-off campaigns or does it bring them into the mainstream to unpack and discuss? In other words, how is your strategy enabling, supporting and driving gender equality and where does it fall short? The gap is your opportunity to initiate real and meaningful discussions.

Create a strategy based on real insight. All policies aside, what is the lived experience of your female colleagues? The attitudes of your male colleagues? Remember that promoting gender equality is not just about how many women have a seat at the table. For many companies, it's a systemic and structural issue that makes women feel unseen, unsupported and unable to progress alongside their male colleagues. So before you create a new strategy or content plan, start by asking the women in your company what it means to be a women in your workplace and what they feel the barriers are to achieving real gender equality. And don't stop with a one-off or even annual survey. Make open dialogue and continuous

feedback integral to your strategy.

Make the business case for gender equality. Company policies and initiatives that address gender equality are often seen as reactionary and mandatory. Yet there are so many stats and studies that prove how much value gender equality adds to business innovation, productivity, and ultimately, the bottom line. Create a communications plan that will support your company's gender equality initiatives in a way that unpacks and celebrates the holistic value they offer your business, people and society.

Help leadership lead. Senior leadership plays an important role in setting the tone and approach to workplace inclusivity, especially gender equity. As communicators, help your management be more visible and vocal about celebrating the value that gender equity adds to the business, and not just around Women's Month. Create a plan that encourages and supports leadership to unpack the benefits that gender equality has on their teams, goals and overall business strategy.

Make gender equality a mainstream priority not a minority issue. Gender equality is not a women's issue. Do not exclude men from the conversation. When men champion gender equality, progress rises considerably compared to when they are excluded from the conversation. In fact, male allies can play a significant role in championing women in the workplace. And make sure that when you do talk about gender equality, you do it in a way that reaches across all levels and areas of the business and engages every generation, not just the young and 'woke' folk. One way to do this is to make sure your comms plan employs a mix of channels and format, including leadership messages, webinars, podcasts, events, workshops, newsletters, and even lived experience campaigns.

Create a feedback loop. Create gender equality ambassadors to help facilitate and feedback concerns from their fellow employees. These individuals should have regular access to leadership and be equipped with current messages and information that they can relay back to their teams and colleagues.

Be authentic. Don't just say what you think employees want to hear or speak generically about diversity topics either. Share your company's stories in a way that is honest, open and enables the conversation to continue.

Be transparent. Talk less about your hopes for the future and more about what the company is doing to make things better right now. When you do fall short, be quick to admit and own these shortcomings, and commit to taking decisive action.

Empower employee voices. Now that workplace technology offers the opportunity for people to have their own digital identity, internal comms can create safe digital spaces that enable colleagues to make their own stories heard, be it through user-generated content or social engagement. In this way, you get to pass the mic to employees and make sure that the conversation around gender equality is driven and owned by a diverse range of voices.

Leverage relevant and topical issues. What happens in the outside world impacts and plays out internally, whether you like it or not. The #MeToo movement was a good example of this. It quickly spread across industries, countries and social media, forcing many companies to review their policies and behaviours around sexual harassment. Keep your finger on the pulse of what the world is saying and what your employees are talking about so that you can leverage any relevant opportunities to engage your employees in real issues, as and when they play out.

When we make an 'event' or occasion of gender equality, it only serves to reinforce it as a 'women's issue'. But it doesn't have to be that way. Your internal communications strategy has the power to bring gender equality into the workplace mainstream, making it part and parcel of your employees' everyday conversation, vocabulary and behaviour.

That's where real transformation begins.

▪ **How to draft craft an annual report** 20 Jun 2023

▪ **Tell or sell - how website storytelling goes beyond selling** 8 May 2023

▪ **Can your EVP drive work-life integration in 2023?** 23 Mar 2023

icandi CQ



icandi CQ is a 31% Black Woman Owned, Level 2 B-BBEE strategically driven full-service digital brand, communication and employee experience agency.

[Profile](#) | [News](#) | [Contact](#) | [Twitter](#) | [RSS Feed](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>