

A Delphi Study to Identify Standards for Internal Communication

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Abstract

In recent years, significant advancement has been made in establishing standards for measuring external public relations efforts. Little has been done, however, to standardize measurement for those responsible for internal communication. Employees are critical to the success of any organization, and the effectiveness of communication with them is of paramount importance. Seeking to rectify this gap, the Institute for Public Relations and the Commission on Research, Measurement, and Evaluation created an international 11-member task force comprising academics and practitioners in 2015 to develop internal communication measurement standards. The task force identified and tentatively defined possible standards for internal communication.

The researchers of this study extended the global task force's initial work by conducting a Delphi study in 2016 with a purposive sample of 22 internal communication thought leaders to determine if a wider audience of internal communication practitioners agreed with the task force's recommended standards and definitions. This research describes the findings of the Delphi study and introduces and defines measurement standards that internal communication practitioners can use to create more effective communication plans and measure the value communication bring to their organizations. The proposed standards also supersede the current "engagement" catchall goal that tends to be amorphous and difficult to address. In the future, the researchers plan to test the reliability and validity of the internal communication standards developed in this study, so that practitioners can measure in a consistent and comparable manner—the ultimate goal of standardization.

Introduction

Effective internal communication has been repeatedly linked to financial outcomes (Dortok, 2006; Ehling, White, & Grunig, 1992; Grossman, 2013; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Meng & Berger, 2012; Towers Watson, 2013). A 2007-2008 study by Watson Wyatt Worldwide (now Towers Watson), an international business research firm, indicated that high-effective organizations are much more likely to measure and evaluate internal communication compared to low-effective organizations (as cited in Meng & Berger, 2012). Ironically, only about 50% of internal communication practitioners have a formal approach to measuring and evaluating their communication initiatives (Meng & Berger). In Meng and Berger's survey and interview research with international public relations practitioners, participants cited barriers to internal communication measurement, including a lack of money and staff, difficulty determining a direct link between communication initiatives and business results, and time constraints.

Not only do some public relations practitioners have difficulty knowing how to measure and evaluate internal communication, some also appear to do so in different ways (Mendez, Casadesus, & Gimenez, 2013; Meng & Pan, 2012; Ruck, 2015; Ruck & Welch, 2012). The lack of a standardized approach to measuring internal communication ultimately adds to potential inefficiency, because practitioners and their organizational leaders do not have a shared vocabulary to compare and contrast results.

To remedy these problems, the Institute for Public Relations and the Commission on Research, Measurement, and Evaluation created an international 11-member task force comprising academics and practitioners to promulgate the development of internal communication measurement standards. A standard is defined as a published specification in the public domain that provides a common language for comparison purposes (Institute for PR, 2013). The task force identified and tentatively defined possible standards for internal communication measurement in 2015.

The researchers of this study extended the international task force's initial work by conducting a Delphi study in 2016 with a purposive sample of internal communication thought leaders to determine if a wider audience of internal communication practitioners agreed with the task force's recommended standards and definitions. This paper describes the findings of the Delphi study and introduces and defines measurement standards that internal communication practitioners can use to create more effective communication plans and measure the value communication bring to their organizations. Moving forward, the researchers plan to test the validity and reliability of the proposed internal communication standards, so that practitioners can measure internal communication in a consistent and comparable manner.

Literature Review

Challenges of Measuring Internal Communication

Scholars have emphasized the importance of measurement and evaluation of internal communication since the 1980s, but have experienced difficulties in choosing appropriate metrics to evaluate all aspects of an organization's internal communication (Meng & Berger, 2012). In Ruck and Welch's (2012) review of 12 different internal communication assessment studies, they found an overreliance on management-centric rather than employee-centric assessments. Mendez, Casadesus, and Gimenez (2013) suggested problems in developing a single measurement model that could account for all factors affecting any type of organization.

They also expressed concern about the number of items and excessive time requirements necessary to complete such a model. Many public relations practitioners also have expressed frustration in knowing how to measure internal communication efforts (Davis, 2015; Meng & Berger, 2012; Meng & Pan, 2012; Richardson, 2015). Limitations at the individual and organizational level create a range of challenges for internal communication measurement. For example, an employee is often overloaded with information from a wide array of channels throughout the day, making it difficult to ensure critical information is received, processed, understood, and retained in a way that is useful (Davis, 2015; Zwijze-Koning, 2016).

Internal communication measurement and evaluation approaches can include both financial indicators, such as ROI, and non-financial indicators, such as trust, satisfaction, and advocacy (Meng & Pan, 2012). Financial indicators tend to be short-term, whereas non-financial indicators are typically long-term (Meng & Pan). Research conducted with senior corporate communication executives indicated that measurement approaches typically focus on increased awareness and understanding, employee engagement, and increased productivity and job performance (Meng & Berger, 2012). “However, respondents admitted that there is no single route that can be applied to all situations and clients” (Meng & Berger, p. 349).

In a 2011 survey, 42% of public relations practitioners agreed that common terms and definitions for the measurement of public relations in general “do not exist at all” (Michaelson & Stacks, p. 2). Not only does confusion exist regarding how to measure basic public relations activity in general, there is variability in proposed measurement and evaluation frameworks. For example, Lindenmann (2003) purported an output, outtakes, and outcomes orientation. Michaelson and Stacks (2011) recommended a communication lifecycle framework consisting of awareness, interest, desire, and action indicators. The International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC, 2014) suggested an outputs (public relations activity), outcomes (intermediary effect), and target audience effect approach. Laskin (2016) advocated an output, outreach, outcome, outgrowth, and outperform orientation.

Value of Measurement Standards

In light of the variability of measurement terminology, terms, and models, the Institute for Public Relations has prioritized the development and testing of standards in recent years. Standards are defined as an idea or thing used as a measure, norm, or model in comparative evaluations (Michaelson & Stacks, 2011, p. 4). Using a common language for measurement, standards are advantageous for management, public relations practitioners, clients, agencies, and researchers. This common language enables comparisons in pre- and post- campaigns; among campaigns spanning brands, business units, and geographies; among communication efforts used both internally and externally to an organization; among approaches used by multiple parties and providers; and among industries. Most important, standards enable “comparison, increase reliability, promote efficiency and bring more credibility to public relations” (“About Public Relations,” 2016).

Standards are not synonymous with best practices. Standards define what needs to be measured whereas a best practice indicates how to best meet the objective of the standard (Michaelson & Stacks, 2011). A best practice is a “technique, method or practice that is more effective than others in reaching an established goal” (Michaelson & Macleod, 2007, p. 3).

A Vision for Public Relations Standards

In 2012, the Coalition for Research Standards was created to develop a broad platform of standards within the public relations industry. The five charter member organizations were the Council of Public Relations Firms, the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, the Institute for Public Relations, the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication, and the Public Relations Society of America. The Coalition promoted its vision as “Excellence in public relations enabled by excellence in research, measurement, and evaluation” (“About Public Relations,” 2016, para. 2). Standards represent a critical piece of that envisioned excellence.

The Coalition for Research Standards supports the standardization process recommended by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Specifically, the Coalition supports the ISO principles that (a) standards are voluntary and based upon a market need; (b) standards are created by global experts in the marketplace; and (c) standards are developed via a consensus among a wide range of audiences, including organizations, agencies, research consultants and measurement firms, and academics (“About Public Relations,” 2016).

To date, 85 organizations have pledged their support for public relations standards in general (“About Public Relations,” 2016). Different types of organizations have pledged support for the standards, including companies, universities, public relations agencies, research firms, consultancies, trade organizations, among others (see “Pledge Support to Public Relations Standards” for complete list). Standards have been developed for traditional media measurement (Eisenmann, O’Neil, & Geddes, 2016), ethics (Bowen & Stacks, 2013), and the communication lifecycle (Michaelson & Stacks, 2011) and have been proposed for social media measurement and return on investment (“About Public Relations,” 2016). This paper seeks to expand these efforts by developing measurement standards for internal communication. Specifically, this research project seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Which of the proposed internal communication standards are currently measured and valued by practitioners?

RQ2: Do internal communication practitioners agree with the proposed list of standards?

RQ3: How should the internal communication standards be defined?

Method

The first step of the international Internal Communication Standards task force was to review professional and academic literature on internal communication to identify possible standards and current measurement methods. Following that review, the task force met multiple times over the course of a year to discuss the findings of the literature review and to decide which concepts to include as possible standards. In 2015 and 2016, leaders of the task force (the researchers of this study) presented the potential standards to more than 150 communication practitioners and academics at three international public relations conferences.

Researchers then refined the proposed standards and definitions and conducted Round 1 and Round 2 of a Delphi study with a purposive sample of internal communication thought leaders. A Delphi study consists of structured questions answered by a panel of experts in at least two rounds, working toward the goal of obtaining a group consensus (Wakefield & Watson, 2014). The method is particularly appropriate to use regarding an issue where there is a “lack of agreement or incomplete state of knowledge” (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975, p. 5).

The goal was to determine the level of agreement with the task force's recommended standards and definitions. Round 1 of a Delphi study elicits feedback from participants through loosely structured and open-ended questions followed by a summary of findings and structured discussion among experts in subsequent rounds (Watson, 2008). The Delphi method is also advantageous in its ability to obtain feedback from myriad diverse participants without the inherent bias and groupthink that is often present in group interviews and focus groups (Boyton, 2006; Wakefield & Watson). Finally, unlike a survey that may elicit quick and gut responses from respondents, a Delphi study affords participants the opportunity to reflect and spend time thinking, in this case about internal communication evaluative practices.

Participants for this Delphi study were identified based upon the researchers' professional contacts and snowball sampling. Criterion for participation was a minimum of ten years of experience in the communication industry, including responsibility for internal communication for at least five years. Recruitment emails were sent to 84 participants in both Rounds 1 and 2, although two people declined because they claimed they were not qualified to participate. Recruitment emails were sent to all 84 participants in both rounds in order to secure as robust a sample as possible. A total of 22 out of 82 people completed the survey in both rounds, for a response rate of 27%. While the sample might be considered small compared to other studies, given the goal of reaching specifically thought leaders in internal communication, the responses reflect a comprehensive perspective of experts in this specific area of internal communication.

All respondents who agreed to participate were from North America. Respondents have many years of professional communication experience; nearly half of respondents have between 20 and 30 years of experience and roughly one quarter of participants have more than that. Roughly three quarters of respondents work for an organization with 5,000 or more employees. Industries represented include finance/insurance/real estate, healthcare, manufacturing, services/consulting, mining, and transport, among others.

Round 1 asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the recommended academic and practitioner definitions of 21 proposed standards (see Table 1) and to provide edits and feedback. The standards were grouped as (a) outtakes, whether employees received, paid attention to, comprehended, or retained particular messages; (b) outcomes, evidence of changes to or reinforcement of opinions, attitudes, or behaviors; and (c) organizational impact, if and how internal communication has influenced organizational performance. The study did not focus on outputs, like some measurement models, such as Lindenmann's (2003) or AMEC's (2014), because the researchers presumed that there would be very little disagreement on basic public relations activity, such as number of stories read, number of click-throughs, number of employees in attendance, and so forth. Participants were next asked a series of questions about their use of the standards, whether they recommended additional standards, and which standards they viewed as most important and why.

Following Round 1, the researchers also obtained feedback on the proposed standards list and definitions of the standards from internal communication managers attending a highly regarded public relations conference. Based upon feedback obtained from Round 1 and conference participants, the researchers amended the standard list and definitions for Round 2. Researchers sent a summary of results and the amended version to all 82 participants in November 2016. For Round 2, participants were instructed to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the amended list of 22 standards and definitions and to offer additional edits on the proposed definitions.

Round One Results

Outtakes

As indicated by Table 1, participants currently measure the majority of the proposed outtake standards of awareness, understanding, knowledge, and retention of information. Respondents averred that although awareness is the easiest and most commonly measured standard, it is the least useful. One respondent described awareness as a superficial measure and “that it doesn't equate to an action - behavior, discussion, inquiry.” Respondents further explained the difficulty in measuring the more meaningful standards of understanding, knowledge, and retention of information, consistently citing both a lack of time and resources. In particular, respondents talked about the difficulty in measuring retention of information. One participant explained a lack of knowledge in how to do so. Another said, “There is not support at a leadership level to continue measurement that far into a campaign.”

Respondents were then asked if they recommended that other outtake standards be added to the list. One respondent mentioned the importance of measuring “relevance,” explaining that if the employee does not understand why the message is relevant to her in her job (or believes it is not relevant), the message dies there.

When asked which outtakes standards are the most important and why, respondents provided many responses. Awareness was mentioned by only two of the 22 participants. Respondents explained that awareness merely represented the “first step” in measurement and that if employees have sufficient understanding and retention, it can be assumed that awareness was present. Nearly half of participants ($n=9$) said that understanding is the most important outtake standard. A few participants explained that understanding is a precursor to other more important standards, such as support, action, and engagement. A total of 27% ($n=6$) of participants cited retention and 23% of participants ($n=5$) listed knowledge as most important. Some participants explained how the standards are inextricably linked together and difficult to untangle. One respondent said:

I believe to truly make an impact in employee beliefs and attitudes and drive action, the program should be understood at a minimum. Ideally employees would have a deeper level of knowledge to help connect the program and concepts to their team and their own performance and ultimately be able to retain and recall the information long past the initial campaign.

Outcomes

More than 50% of participants reported measuring five of the proposed outcomes standards: satisfaction, attitude, empowerment, collaboration, and trust (see Table 1). Respondents said that they do not measure some of the outcome standards due to a lack of time and resources. One participant explained that some of these standards simply aren't a priority, and another said, “some of these are more intangible and thus much harder to adequately quantify.” A handful of participants offered that many of these standards are captured on employee engagement surveys conducted by external third parties. One respondent said that these standards are outside the purview of internal communication.

A few respondents recommended adding employee engagement and continuous improvement to the outcome standards. Two participants also recommended that a standard be

included that captures the ability of the employees to connect the dots between their performance and the achievement of strategic business goals.

When asked which standards they believed are the most important in measuring outcomes and why, roughly one-third of respondents ($n = 7$) mentioned trust. One respondent explained, “Most individuals need to experience an inherent sense of trust in an organization, its leaders and fellow workers in order to feel confident enough to work well collaboratively and in team settings.” After trust, the standards mentioned as most important by 20% of participants were satisfaction and empowerment. Procedural justice, collaboration, and teamwork were all mentioned as most important by only one respondent each. Two people mentioned engagement (which was not included on the list) as the most important outcome standard.

Organizational Impact

Participants reported measuring many of the organizational impact standards; the two measured most frequently were retention of employees and safety (see Table 1). Respondents said they do not measure all of the organizational impact standards due to lack of time and resources and a lack of knowledge about how to do so. One participant said these standards are “outside the scope of the assignment.” A few respondents alluded to a lack of support from leadership in taking the time and resources to measure some of the standards. A few participants mentioned the difficulty in specifically measuring productivity. A participant explained, “Productivity is difficult to define in a consistent manner because the group is so diverse in its roles.” When asked which concepts do you believe are the most important in measuring outcomes and why, roughly one-third ($n=7$) of participants mentioned productivity, due its connection to business results. The other standards most frequently cited as being important included reputation and retention. No one mentioned authenticity as the most important standard to measure.

Incorporating feedback

After taking into consideration participants’ feedback and systematically analyzing the suggested edits and feedback to the proposed definitions of the 21 standards, the researchers made the following adjustments to the working list:

1. Added relevance as an outcomes standard, bringing the total number of standards to 22;
2. more clearly defined the standards of understanding versus knowledge, and collaboration versus teamwork for improved differentiation;
3. moved the authenticity standard from organizational impact to the outcomes standards list; and
4. changed the name of the standard procedural justice to fairness;
5. amended the standard definitions for clarity (see Table 2).

Round Two Results

In Round 2 of the Delphi study, participants indicated whether they agreed or disagreed with the modified standards and definitions and provided additional feedback for improvement. Participants indicated strong agreement with the modified standards list, with most standards securing more than 90% approval (see Table 2). Participants had the least level of agreement with the discretionary effort standard—only 77% agreement. Researchers had originally

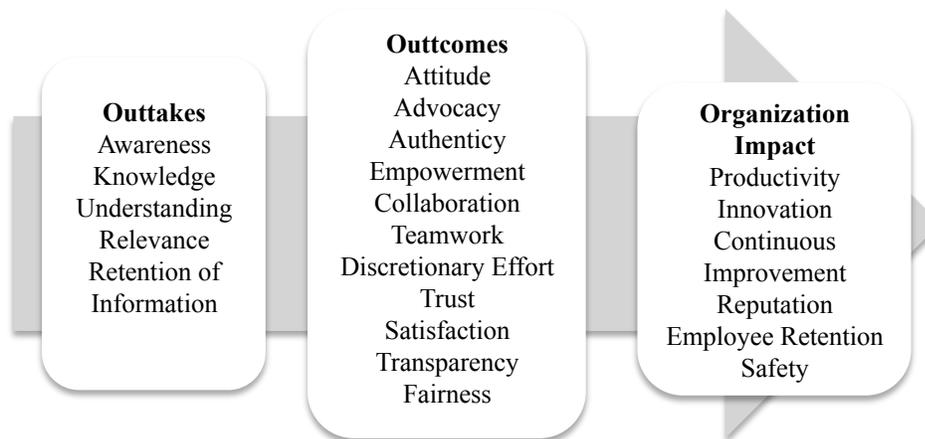
proposed the definition of discretionary effort as follows: “The amount of effort employees are able to give to an organization, a team, or a project, above and beyond what is required.” Many respondents recommended replacing “are able to” with “give” in the definition.

Even though participants indicated strong agreement with the proposed standards and their definitions, researchers carefully analyzed each suggestion and comment offered by respondents (see Table 2 for representative feedback). In light of these comments, researchers made further edits to the standard definitions. Respondents offered particularly insightful feedback on two standards: relevance and engagement. In Round 2, respondents were asked whether they believed relevance, defined as “the degree to which employees find the issue or topic in the communication from the organization meaningful and useful,” should be added as a standard. Approximately 82% of respondents said yes. One person explained, “I think this is something that many of us work towards and it’s important to measure.”

Respondents were also asked whether engagement should be added to the internal communication standards, as suggested by a few people in Round 1. A total of 68% of participants said that engagement is embedded in other concepts and should not be added as a stand-alone standard. A total of 32% of respondents said engagement should be added as a standard. One of these participants explained, “Given that CEOs monitor engagement and invest in engagement surveys, it’s important to define it and for communicators to incorporate it into their efforts.” However, after careful consideration and conversation, the researchers decided not to include engagement as a standard, because it is a function of several other standards, including knowledge, understanding, discretionary effort, trust, and satisfaction. This decision will enable organizations to pinpoint issues related to engagement; it is more actionable to measure the antecedents to engagement.

The final proposed internal communication standards and their conceptual definitions are provided in Table 3. Figure 1 provides an operational model of the proposed standards, suggesting how outtakes lead to outcomes, which in turn, lead to organizational impact. The researchers of this study believe that a successful internal communication program must fully fulfill standards associated with outtakes and outcomes in order to achieve standards of organizational impact. Future research can test this proposed path as well as the relationships between the various internal communication standards.

Figure 1. *Final Proposed Standards*



Conclusions

Based upon this two-year project that included conversations with hundreds of communication practitioners and academics and two rounds of the Delphi study, the researchers have created a list of proposed internal communication standards and definitions (see Table 3). The research process followed the guidelines of the ISO process that stipulates that global experts from a variety of organizations, agencies, research consultants and measurement firms, and academics create standards through a collaborative process (“About Public Relations,” 2016). The researchers hope that these standards will be adopted and used by internal communication professionals to effectively and efficiently guide measurement and evaluation of communication initiatives.

Next steps include providing suggestions for measuring the standards and testing them with select organizations for validity and reliability. The researchers ultimately plan to provide a tested and effective internal communication guidebook and measurement instructions to enable internal communication practitioners the ability to measure and evaluate and to demonstrate a process for testing reliability.

Despite the study’s progress in creating internal communication standards, the research project has limitations. First, even though the Internal Communication Standards task force included communication practitioners from around the world and the fact that the proposed standards were presented to three international conferences where researchers listened to the feedback of participants, the Delphi study was conducted with participants from only North America. Therefore, testing the standards with organizations from outside North America is crucial. Second, this research assumes that the standards are discrete measurements. In reality, many of these standards—such as awareness and knowledge, collaboration and teamwork, and trust and satisfaction—are dependent upon or correlated with one another, or in certain instances, perhaps even causal. Additional testing of the standards will map out the relationships among the standards and perhaps even uncover more complex standards than first imagined. Third, the standards presented in this study are those recommended by IC thought leaders, all representative of senior management. Future research might interview employees to learn what standards they believe are most important for understanding their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

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APPENDIX

Table 1
Percentage of Respondents Measuring Proposed Standards in Round 1

Standard	<i>n</i>	%*
<i>Outtakes</i>		
Awareness	18	90
Understanding	13	65
Knowledge	10	50
Retention	9	45
<i>Outcomes</i>		
Satisfaction	14	82.35
Attitude	11	64.71
Empowerment	11	64.71
Collaboration	10	58.82
Trust	10	58.82
Advocacy	8	47.06
Teamwork	8	47.06
Discretionary Effort	6	35.29
Transparency	6	35.29
Procedural Justice	4	23.53
<i>Organizational Impact</i>		
Retention of Employees	15	71.43
Safety	15	71.43
Reputation	12	57.14
Productivity	10	47.62
Innovation	9	42.86
Authenticity	7	33.33
Continuous Improvement	7	33.33

* Percentages vary depending on the number of respondents per section.

Table 2
Feedback on Proposed Definitions from Participants in Round 2

Proposed Standard	Proposed Definition	% Agree	% Disagree	Representative Feedback
<i>Outtakes</i>				
Awareness	Whether employees have heard of an organizational message, issue, or topic	91	9	None
Knowledge	Employees' level of comprehension about organizational messages, issues, or topics	91	9	Include other parts of the business, competitors, the marketplace, and customers
Understanding	Employees' ability to think about, relate to and use their knowledge in a way that helps the organization achieve its goals	95	5	Some employees may be able to think about, but not relate to or use their knowledge to achieve goals. I like the idea of a shorter, crisper statement ... employees' ability to use this knowledge in a way that helps the organization achieve its goals
Relevance	Degree to which employees find the issue or topic in the communication from the organization meaningful and useful	82	18	I don't want to evaluate my communications broadly based on an assumption that it was relevant to all; don't see it as a standard.
Retention of Information	Degree to which employees can recall key messages or topics when asked	82	18	I just don't see this as a standard for communications on a regular basis. This really is the same as knowledge since neither definition involves a time element
<i>Outcomes</i>				
Attitude	A way of thinking or feeling about an organization, ranging from very positive to very negative	86	14	Attitude can also refer to how someone thinks about a program, initiative, issue, etc.
Advocacy	Employees' discretionary effort and time to promote or defend an organization and its products and services	95	5	I don't see this as a standard for all employees. How would results be evaluated?
Authenticity	Perception that an organization is transparent, honest, and fair, especially regarding the pursuit of its organizational objectives	91	9	I think people can be authentic, not organizations
Empowerment	Employees have the information, rewards, and power to take initiative and make decisions to solve problems and improve performance	86	14	Suggest "incentives" instead of "rewards;" I'd look to streamline this. I would simply say that employees have the power (or maybe ability) to take initiative and make decisions to solve problems and address performance
Collaboration	The process of employees across different divisions and or units coming together to solve a problem and/or create something successfully	82	16	Does this have to be a process? Believe "different divisions and/or units" is too limiting; employees coming together, typically from different functions, divisions or units.; These days, collaboration happens both within and outside the company

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Teamwork	The process of employees within the same unit coming together to successfully achieve a common goal or objective under the leadership of an appointed manager	95	5	I'm a little worried about process; does it have to be under the leadership of an appointed manager? It seems teamwork could also be from different divisions - not just the same unit
Discretionary Effort	The amount of effort employees are able to give to an organization, a team, or a project, above and beyond what is required	77	23	Able to give doesn't seem discretionary to me. I view it as a choice, perhaps willing or demonstrated? Suggest adding "are willing and able to give ..."
Trust	A belief in the reliability, truth, and integrity of the organization's leadership, decision-making, and communication	91	9	Could you just say "I believe in the reliability truth and integrity of the organization's leadership." It's incomplete and missing the core element of trust, which is the belief that leadership will do the right thing
Satisfaction	Extent to which employees are happy or content with their job or work	91	9	For the definition to work, the term needs to be "job satisfaction."
Transparency	The willingness of the organization to share complete positive and negative information with employees in a timely fashion	91	9	Not just timely fashion but clear and forthright; Transparency is about sharing information that employees need in order to make informed decisions; What about comprehensive vs. complete?
Fairness	Employee perception that organizational processes that allocate resources and resolve disputes are impartial and just	91	9	None
<i>Organizational Impact</i>				
Productivity	The quality and quantity of work output based on resources	91	9	Every time we combine elements into a definition, we're asking for agreement (or disagreement) on both; Not sure if I understand 'based on resources.' It's about the work output to benefit/support the organization's goals, etc.
Innovation	Thinking differently and experimenting with new approaches, ideas, or behaviors related to the organization	100	0	Or ... to benefit the organization (vs. related to the organization)
Continuous Improvement	The process by which employees offer small or large improvements to improve efficiency, productivity, and quality of a product or process in the work environment	100	0	Three choices again. Can we just say "Employees are able to offer ways to improve their work."
Reputation	Stakeholders' — both internal and external — evaluation of an organization based upon personal and observed experiences with the company and its communication	86	14	I think it should be about the company, its practices and its communication; Needs a bit more related to the actions and behaviors of the organization and the likelihood of its future behavior.

Employee Retention	The number or percentage of employees who remain employed after X period of time	100	0	None
Safety	Employees' freedom from physical and emotional harm, injury or loss	91	9	Employees' expectation of and commitment to a workplace that is free from

Table 3
Final Proposed Standards and Definitions

Standard	Definition
<i>Outtakes</i>	
Awareness	Whether employees have heard of an organizational message, issue, or topic
Knowledge	Employees' level of comprehension about organizational messages, issues, or topics
Understanding	Employees' ability to relate their knowledge to their work in a way that helps the organization achieve its goals
Relevance	Degree to which employees communication from the organization meaningful and useful
Retention of Information	Degree to which employees can recall key messages or topics when asked after an x timeframe
<i>Outcomes</i>	
Attitude	A way of thinking or feeling about a subject (about an organization, topic, or issue) ranging from very positive to very negative
Advocacy	Employees' discretionary effort and time to promote or defend an organization and its products and services
Authenticity	Perception that an organization is transparent, honest, and fair, especially regarding the pursuit of its organizational objectives
Empowerment	Employees have the information, rewards, and power to take initiative and make decisions to solve problems and improve performance
Collaboration	The process of employees across different divisions and or units coming together to solve a problem and/or create something successfully
Teamwork	The process of employees within the same unit coming together to successfully achieve a common goal or objective under the leadership of an appointed manager
Discretionary Effort	The amount of effort employees give to an organization, a team, or a project, above and beyond what is required
Trust	A belief in the reliability, truth, and integrity of the organization's leadership, decision-making, and communication
Satisfaction	Extent to which employees are happy or content with their job or work
Transparency	The willingness of the organization to share positive and negative information with employees in a timely fashion
Fairness	Employee perception that organizational processes that allocate resources and resolve disputes are impartial and just
<i>Organizational Impact</i>	
Productivity	The quality and quantity of work output based on resources
Innovation	Thinking differently and experimenting with new approaches, ideas, or behaviors related to the organization
Continuous Improvement	The process by which employees offer small or large improvements to improve efficiency, productivity, and quality of a product or process in the work environment
Reputation	Stakeholders' — both internal and external—evaluation of an organization based upon personal and observed experiences with the company and its communication
Employee Retention	The number or percentage of employees who remain employed after X period of time
Safety	Employees' freedom from physical and emotional harm, injury or loss