

Internal Communications: Messages That Actually Get Read

May 12, 2026 | Communication + Change

Adapt messages for different audiences, plan distribution, and check whether communication reached people.

May 12, 2026

With Cheryl Thompson

Who it is for

Internal communicators, HR teams, and people leaders

Inside this playbook

14 copyable prompts and practice blocks.

[Open the online playbook](#)

The recorded session

Watch the Learning Lab.

Follow the session, then use the playbook with your own work.

[Watch replay on Vimeo](#) ^[1]

What to take into your work

1. Adapt one message for different audiences.
2. Choose a distribution plan that reaches the intended people.
3. Check understanding and follow-through.

Use the learning

Your playbook

Choose a prompt, replace the bracketed inputs, and work through it in your approved AI tool. Review the result and adapt it to your situation.

This playbook accompanies the May 12, 2026 session. Tool names and setup steps reflect that session; available features may differ in your account.

Welcome to Your AI Toolkit

You sent the announcement. You wrote the email. You posted in the intranet. And three days later, someone on the plant floor says, "Nobody told me about that." Meanwhile, salaried staff read the whole thing and had twelve follow-up questions you didn't anticipate. And your regional managers forwarded it without context, so now three locations have three different interpretations of the same message. This playbook gives you three AI prompts that fix the internal communications gap: translate one message for multiple audiences, build multi-channel communication plans that reach people where they actually are, and scan your email each week for the real signals that tell you whether your message landed.

- You don't need to use everything at once. Start with the one prompt that solves your most immediate problem.
- These prompts work across platforms: Copilot, ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, or your company's internal AI tool.
- Each prompt includes a main version (for licensed tools with full context windows) and an alternate version (for free Copilot or tools with limited input).

How to Use This Playbook

- **Start with Prompt #1.** Paste your message and let AI rewrite it for each of your audiences. Salaried, hourly, and managers each get a version tailored to their context, reading environment, and action items.
- **Build your distribution plan.** Use Prompt #2 to create a multi-channel communication plan that puts the right message in the right format on the right channel for each audience.
- **Close the loop.** Use Prompt #3 to scan your email each week for the real signals about whether the message landed, where the confusion is, and what to do this week to close the gap.
- **Give AI context before asking for help.** The more specific you are about your audiences (who they are, where they get information, what they care about, what you need them to do), the better the output.
- **Review and refine.** AI translates tone and format. You verify accuracy and cultural fit. Never distribute AI-generated internal communications without reading them through the lens of your most skeptical audience.

The Audience Translation Framework

One message does not fit all audiences. The same information needs different length, tone, format, and action items depending on who's receiving it.

Audience	How They Get Information	What They Care About	Format That Works
Salaried / Office Staff	Email, intranet, Teams/Slack	Full context, rationale, how it affects their projects and processes	2-3 paragraph email with links to details, clear "what you need to do" section
Hourly / Plant Floor	Huddle boards, shift meetings, break room TVs, group texts	What changed, does it affect my job, what do I need to do differently starting when	3-5 bullet points maximum, large font, visual if possible, delivered verbally by supervisor
Managers / Supervisors	Email, meetings, manager briefings	What they need to communicate to their teams, answers to questions they'll be asked, talking points	Talking points with FAQ, "what your team will ask" section, timeline for cascade
Regional / Multi-Location	Email, video calls, shared drives	What's the same everywhere vs. what's location-specific, when to cascade, who to contact for questions	Brief with location-specific callouts, single-page summary with detailed appendix

Key Insight: The message isn't the problem. The distribution is. You don't have a communication problem. You have a translation problem. The same announcement needs to become an email, a huddle script, a manager toolkit, and a one-line group chat headline. **The 3-Version Rule**

- **Every internal communication should exist in at least 3 versions:** a full version (email/intranet for detail-seekers), a brief version (3-5 bullets for floor/frontline), and a manager version (talking points + FAQ for cascading).
- **If you only send one version, you reach one audience.** The others either don't read it, don't understand it, or misinterpret it.
- **AI makes the 3-Version Rule effortless.** Write the message once. AI translates it into every version you need.

The AI Efficiency Ladder

Know where you are. Know where you're going.

Level	What It Looks Like	Time / Task
1. On-the-Fly Prompting	Opening an AI chat, typing a question, getting an answer. Starting from scratch every time.	5–10 minutes, inconsistent
2. Repeatable Prompts	Saved templates you fill in. Same quality every time because same structure.	2–3 minutes, consistent
3. Custom AI Projects	AI pre-loaded with your context – your audiences, your channels, your org structure. Works like a team member.	1–2 minutes, personalized
4. Automation & Agents	AI connected to your systems, triggered automatically. Runs without you.	0 minutes, scales

Your goal: Move from Level 1 to Level 2. The prompts in this playbook get you there.

The Prompt Structure

Every strategic prompt has four parts:

Part	Purpose	Example
ROLE	Who should AI pretend to be?	"You are an internal communications strategist for the automotive industry..."
CONTEXT	What does AI need to know about you?	"I'm the HR director at a Tier 1 with 800 employees across 3 shifts, 40% don't have company email..."
REQUEST	What specifically do you want?	"Rewrite this announcement for three audiences: salaried staff, hourly employees, and managers..."
DISCOVERY QUESTIONS	Force AI to ask all questions at once, accept any answer format, then produce output.	"Stop. Ask me ALL these questions at once in one numbered list. Accept narrative answers. Do not re-ask."

Key Prompts from This Lab

This lab teaches three prompts that work as a system: Translate, Distribute, Verify.

Prompt #1: The Audience Message Translator

What it's for: Taking a single internal communication and translating it into audience-specific versions, each with the right length, tone, format, and action items for the people receiving it.
When to use it: Every time you need to communicate a change, announcement, policy update, celebration, or initiative to multiple audiences. Which is basically every time you communicate.

Main Version (Licensed Copilot / ChatGPT / Gemini / Claude)

PROMPT TO COPY

ROLE

You are an internal communications strategist for the automotive industry. You specialize in translating messages for diverse audiences, from plant floor hourly workers to corporate executives. You understand that different audiences consume information differently and need different formats, tones, and action items.

CONTEXT

I have an internal message that needs to reach multiple audiences across our organization. These audiences have different communication preferences, reading environments, and concerns. I need each version to feel like it was written specifically for that audience.

REQUEST

Important: Do not generate any output until I have answered the questions in the DISCOVERY QUESTIONS section below. If I paste this prompt without answers, your only response should be the clarifying questions, asked ALL AT ONCE in a single numbered list.

Using the message I provide, create:

- SALARIED / OFFICE VERSION
 - Full context email (2-3 paragraphs)
 - Include rationale, background, and timeline
 - End with a clear "What You Need to Know" and "What You Need to Do" section
 - Professional tone, complete information
 - Include links or references for additional detail
- HOURLY / PLANT FLOOR VERSION
 - Maximum 5 bullet points
 - Large-font friendly (short words, short sentences)

PROMPT TO COPY

- Focus only on: What changed? Does it affect my job? What do I do differently? Starting when?

- No jargon, no corporate-speak
- Include a visual suggestion (poster, huddle board graphic, or TV slide)

3. MANAGER / SUPERVISOR VERSION

- Talking points they can use in a team huddle (30 seconds max)
- "What Your Team Will Ask" section with 5 anticipated questions and answers
- Timeline for when and how to cascade this message
- One-page format they can print or pull up on their phone

4. ONE-LINE HEADLINE

- A single sentence that captures the essential message
- Suitable for: group text, Teams/Slack post, huddle board header, TV display
- Under 15 words

5. TONE AND CULTURAL CHECK

- Flag any language that might land differently with different audiences
- Identify assumptions that may not apply to all locations or shifts
- Suggest timing considerations (when to send, which shift gets it first)

FORMAT

- Each version: clearly labeled and ready to copy-paste
- Manager version: printable one-page format
- All versions: consistent core message, different delivery

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

1. What's the message? (paste the original)
2. What are your audiences? (roles, locations, shifts)
3. What channels do you use? (email, Teams, huddle boards, group text, etc.)
4. What's the most important action you need people to take?
5. Any sensitivities or cultural considerations?

Ask me ALL of these questions at once in a single numbered list, then wait. Do not answer them yourself. Do not start drafting while you wait.

When I respond, accept my answers even if I write them as a paragraph, answer out of order, or cover multiple questions at once. Do NOT re-ask the full list. If ONE specific detail is genuinely missing and the answer would meaningfully change the output, ask ONE short follow-up about only that gap. Otherwise, proceed directly to the REQUEST output and note any assumptions you made.

Alternate Version (Copilot Free / Limited Context)

PROMPT TO COPY

STOP. Check the bracketed details below. If any are empty or vague, ask me about them in one numbered list and wait. Accept narrative answers. Do not re-ask. Proceed even if some details are unclear and note any assumptions.

I need to communicate this message to our organization:

[PASTE YOUR MESSAGE]

Our audiences:

- Salaried/office staff (read email)
- Hourly/plant floor (no email, get info from supervisors and huddle boards)
- Managers/supervisors (need to cascade to their teams)

Rewrite this message as:

1. A 2-3 paragraph email for salaried staff (full context, clear action items)
2. 5 bullet points for the plant floor (short, no jargon, what changed and what to do)
3. A manager talking points page with a "What Your Team Will Ask" FAQ (5 questions)
4. A one-line headline (under 15 words) for group chat or huddle board

Keep the core message consistent across all versions. Make each feel like it was written for that specific audience.

Example Scenario: New Business Award

EXAMPLE TO COPY

Our company just won a new program with Northland Motors. \$42M over five years. The Northland Motors 2027 SUV interior trim program. Tooling starts Q3, PPAP in Q1 the following year, SOP in May 2027. This means hiring 35 new people across two shifts, \$8.5M in capital investment, and standing up a launch team that pulls 6 engineers off existing programs starting next month. Press release goes out Friday at 9 AM.

Here is the draft announcement we want to translate for every audience:

"Friends and Colleagues, I am proud to share that we have been awarded a new program with Northland Motors. This \$42M award over five years will anchor our 2026 to 2030 strategic plan. Our 2027 SUV interior trim program goes into production in May 2027. To deliver this on time, we will be expanding our team by approximately 35 people, investing \$8.5M in new equipment, and establishing a dedicated launch team starting in March. I want to thank our sales team for the relentless work that secured this win, and our entire organization for the operational performance that made us the right choice. More details to follow at the All-Hands on October 14. Steve Reynolds, CEO"

Audiences:

EXAMPLE TO COPY

- Salaried staff at Plymouth HQ (220 people: engineering, sales, HR, finance, IT). Read email, Teams, intranet.
- Hourly employees at the Wixom plant (480 people, 3 shifts, no company email). Information comes from huddle boards, shift-start meetings, break-room TVs.
- Plant managers and supervisors at both sites who cascade to their teams.
- Field sales and program managers who travel to OEM sites and need talking points for customers asking "what changes for me."

Channels available: email, Teams, intranet, huddle boards on every line, break-room TVs, shift-start meetings, plant-manager cascade, group text for managers, posters.

Most important action: everyone hears it from us before they read about it on LinkedIn or in Automotive News.

No language considerations. No restructuring announcements baked in. Pure positive news.

****Where This Goes Next: Copilot Cowork **** Today, Copilot produces five versions of the message on your screen. You copy them into Outlook, the huddle board, the manager email, the Teams channel, and SharePoint. With Microsoft Copilot Cowork enabled, the same prompt writes the five versions AND drafts the email in Outlook for your approval, posts the headline to the Teams channel for plant managers, creates Planner tasks for each manager to confirm cascade, and files the talking points to SharePoint. One instruction. Output goes to the world. Same prompt structure. Different ending. The participants who get good at architecting prompts now are the ones ready when their IT team enables Frontier.

Prompt #2: The Multi-Channel Distribution Planner

What it's for: Building a complete communication distribution plan that maps the right message to the right channel at the right time for each audience, so you stop relying on email alone and start reaching people where they actually are. **When to use it:** For any significant communication (policy changes, benefit updates, safety initiatives, organizational changes, celebrations) that needs to reach everyone, not just the people who read email.

Main Version (Licensed Copilot / ChatGPT / Gemini / Claude)

PROMPT TO COPY

ROLE

You are a multi-channel communication planner for the automotive industry. You design distribution strategies that reach every employee, from desk-based salaried workers to frontline plant floor operators who may not have company email or regular computer access. You understand the realities of shift work, multilingual workforces, and competing priorities for attention.

CONTEXT

I have an important internal communication that needs to reach every employee in our organization. Different people consume information through different channels, at different times, in different formats. I need a plan that ensures every audience hears it through the right channel at the right time.

REQUEST

Important: Do not generate any output until I have answered the questions in the Discovery Questions section below. If I paste this prompt without answers, your only response should be the clarifying questions, asked all at once in a single numbered list.

Based on my communication and organization, create:

1. Channel and Audience Plan

For each channel available to me, describe which audience it reaches best, what format the message should take, when to send it, and who is responsible for delivering it. Cover channels like email, intranet, Teams, huddle boards, shift meetings, break room TVs, posters, group texts, manager cascade, and town halls.

2. Distribution Timeline

A day-by-day rollout plan:

- Day 0: leadership alignment
- Day 1: manager briefing and cascade
- Days 1 to 2: distribution across all channels
- Days 3 to 5: reinforcement and follow-up
- Day 7 and beyond: confirmation that the message landed

Include shift coverage for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd shift.

3. Channel-Ready Content

For each channel in the plan, write ready-to-use content:

- Email: full message with formatting
- Huddle board: bullet points, large-font ready
- Manager script: what to say in 30 seconds at shift start
- Group text or chat: a one-line headline
- TV display: key points at 6 to 8 words per line, 4 lines maximum
- Poster: a headline, 3 key points, and a contact for questions

4. Language Considerations

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Flag any content that may need translation, suggest visual alternatives where language is a barrier, and recommend how to confirm comprehension for employees whose first language is not English.

5. Follow-Up Plan

How to confirm the message was received, what to do if a group did not get it, when to reinforce, and how to handle follow-up questions.

Discovery Questions

1. What is the communication? (paste it or describe it)
2. How many employees and locations?
3. What channels do you currently have available?
4. What percentage of employees do not have company email?
5. Are there language considerations?
6. How urgent is this? (immediate, this week, planned rollout)

Ask me all of these questions at once in a single numbered list, then wait. Do not answer them yourself. Do not start drafting while you wait.

When I respond, accept my answers even if I write them as a paragraph, answer out of order, or cover multiple questions at once. Do not re-ask the full list. If one specific detail is genuinely missing and the answer would meaningfully change the output, ask one short follow-up about only that gap. Otherwise, proceed directly to the REQUEST output and note any assumptions you made.

Alternate Version (Copilot Free / Limited Context)

PROMPT TO COPY

STOP. Check the bracketed details below. If any are empty or vague, ask me about them in one numbered list and wait. Accept narrative answers. Do not re-ask. Proceed even if some details are unclear and note any assumptions.

I need to get this message to every employee in our organization:

[PASTE OR DESCRIBE YOUR MESSAGE]

Org details:

- [NUMBER] employees across [LOCATIONS]
- [PERCENTAGE]% don't have company email (plant floor, field)
- Available channels: [LIST: email, Teams, huddle boards, shift meetings, group text, TVs, posters, etc.]
- Urgency: [IMMEDIATE / THIS WEEK / PLANNED ROLLOUT]

Create:

PROMPT TO COPY

1. A channel-audience matrix (which channel reaches which audience, what format, when)
2. A day-by-day distribution timeline covering all shifts
3. Ready-to-use content for each channel (email, huddle board bullets, manager script, group chat headline, TV display)
4. A follow-up plan to verify the message was received

Make sure no one can say "I didn't know about this."

Example Scenario: M&A Announcement**EXAMPLE TO COPY**

We are announcing that our company has been acquired by Sentinel Industries. The deal was signed last night and goes public Monday morning at 7 AM Eastern. We have a 72-hour window between now and Monday to make sure every one of our 1,650 employees hears about it from us, not from CNBC or LinkedIn.

The key facts: all jobs are protected for at least 18 months. Healthcare and 401k stay the same through the end of next year. The Sentinel leadership team has committed to keeping all four of our plants open. The founding family will exit the board on January 1. Our CEO Steve Reynolds will remain through the transition. There will be no layoffs in 2026.

Here is the message we need to land across the company:

"Our company is joining Sentinel Industries. This is a positive next chapter that protects jobs, expands our customer base, and brings new resources to every one of our facilities. Nothing changes for you immediately. Your benefits, your team, and your work continue as they are. We will hold an all-employee town hall Monday at 10 AM Eastern. More information will be cascaded through your manager Friday afternoon."

Our org:

- 1,650 total employees across 4 sites
- Plymouth MI (HQ, 220 salaried)
- Wixom MI (plant, 480 hourly, 3 shifts)
- Greenville SC (plant, 540 hourly, 2 shifts)
- Saltillo Mexico (plant, 410 hourly, 2 shifts, Spanish-speaking workforce)
- 67% of employees do not have company email
- Available channels: email, Teams, intranet, huddle boards on every line, break-room TVs, shift-start meetings, plant-manager cascade, all-employee text alerts via the safety notification system, posters, town halls
- Urgency: IMMEDIATE. 72 hours.
- Spanish translation needed for Saltillo.

EXAMPLE TO COPY**Prompt #3: The Verification Workflow**

What it's for: Building a weekly verification digest that scans your Outlook for real signals (questions, replies, follow-ups) after a major communication. Tells you whether the message actually landed, who is silent, where the confusion is, and what to do this week to close the gap. Designed to be scheduled and reconfigured for each new campaign. **When to use it:** After any major communication rollout that needs to be verified. When signed acknowledgment forms aren't enough. When you need to prove to leadership that the message reached everyone, every week, until the campaign is closed.

Main Version (Microsoft 365 Copilot Business required, needs email access)**PROMPT TO COPY****ROLE**

You are a senior internal communications strategist with experience supporting EHS, operations, and HR teams in manufacturing plants. You understand the gap between sending a communication and confirming it landed. You know the real signal lives in the follow-up emails, replies, and questions that come in after a major announcement.

CONTEXT

I am verifying whether a recent communication has reached and been understood by the people who need to act on it. Below is the campaign I am tracking right now. When this campaign closes, I will edit the four CAMPAIGN PARAMETERS below to track the next one.

CAMPAIGN PARAMETERS (edit these for each new campaign)

1. CAMPAIGN NAME: [e.g., LOTO Procedure Update - Plant 2]
2. WHAT WAS COMMUNICATED: [1-2 sentence summary of the change]
3. KEYWORDS TO SCAN MY EMAIL FOR: [e.g., LOTO, lockout, tag color, cell restart, buddy system]
4. WHAT GOOD COMPREHENSION SOUNDS LIKE: [e.g., a supervisor referencing the second verification step by name, a maintenance tech flagging an ambiguous tag color situation]

REQUEST

Important: Before scanning anything, check the four CAMPAIGN PARAMETERS above. If any are still in bracketed placeholder form (showing examples like [e.g., LOTO, lockout, tag color]) or are empty, ask me to fill them in as one numbered list and wait. Accept narrative

PROMPT TO COPY

answers. Do not re-ask. If the four parameters look filled in with real campaign data, proceed directly to the digest below and note any assumptions you made.

Scan my Outlook email from the last 7 days for messages matching the keywords above. Produce a weekly verification digest with these sections:

1. VERIFICATION SNAPSHOT. Three sentences on what the email traffic tells me about whether the campaign is landing.

2. COMPREHENSION SIGNALS. Specific quotes or paraphrased examples from emails showing real understanding. Group by shift or function if the email names them.

3. GAPS AND RED FLAGS. Any group, area, shift, or person that is silent, asking the same question repeatedly, or showing confusion. Name them specifically.

4. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS THIS WEEK. Three specific moves I can make in the next 5 business days, sequenced by urgency.

5. TALKING POINTS FOR LEADERSHIP. Four bullets I can use if EHS, HR, or my VP asks for a verification status update.

Do not fabricate quotes. If the email evidence is thin, say so directly and recommend what I should ask supervisors for in the next round.

Example Scenario: LOTO Procedure Update**EXAMPLE TO COPY**

I am the EHS Communications Lead at a Tier 1 automotive supplier. Three weeks ago we rolled out a revised lockout/tagout procedure across all four plants. All shifts must be operating to the new procedure by next Monday. I need to verify before then whether the new procedure is actually landing on the floor, or if we have gaps we need to close.

Here are the four CAMPAIGN PARAMETERS for this verification run:

1. CAMPAIGN NAME: LOTO Procedure Update - Wixom Plant

2. WHAT WAS COMMUNICATED: A revised lockout/tagout procedure with three new requirements. First, a second verification step where a peer confirms the lock and tag before any work starts. Second, a color change for energy-source tags (red for production locks, yellow for maintenance, green for permits-to-work). Third, a specific protocol for robotic cell restarts that requires both the operator and the maintenance tech physically present at the restart.

3. KEYWORDS TO SCAN MY EMAIL FOR: LOTO, lockout, tagout, tag color, red tag, yellow tag, peer verification, cell restart, robotic cell, buddy system, permit to work

EXAMPLE TO COPY

4. WHAT GOOD COMPREHENSION SOUNDS LIKE: A supervisor referencing the second verification step by name and confirming peer signoff happened. A maintenance tech flagging an ambiguous tag color scenario and asking for clarification rather than guessing. A team lead reporting their crew is waiting for the second person on robotic cell restarts. A near-miss report that credits the new peer verification step for catching the gap.

Rollout context: Email to all salaried EHS and operations leaders. Supervisor cascade in plant huddles. Break-room TV slides showing the new tag color system. Maintenance and production teams across all four shifts were trained in person over the last three weeks.

My biggest concern: 2nd and 3rd shift, where in-person training was shorter and we have less direct visibility. Specifically watching for whether the robotic cell restart protocol is being followed, since that is the highest-risk part of the change. If we go live Monday without that one landing, we have a real safety exposure.

When this campaign closes Monday, I will edit the four CAMPAIGN PARAMETERS above for the next rollout.

Swap the campaign. Keep the slot. The four CAMPAIGN PARAMETERS at the top of the prompt are the only thing that changes between campaigns. Right now it might be LOTO, lockout, tag color, cell restart. When that rollout closes, edit those four lines to track the next campaign. Same prompt slot, new keywords. See the Scheduled Prompts section below for the full architecture lesson and the 4-click scheduling steps.

Prompt #4: The Crisis Communication Kit

What it's for: Rapidly building internal crisis communications. When something unexpected happens and you need to get accurate information to every employee fast, before the rumor mill starts. **When to use it:** Layoffs, facility incidents, leadership changes, policy reversals, PR crises, or any situation where speed and accuracy matter more than polish.

Main Version (Licensed Copilot / ChatGPT / Gemini / Claude)

PROMPT TO COPY

ROLE
You are a crisis communications specialist for the automotive industry. You help HR and communications leaders get accurate information to every employee quickly during unexpected events. You know that in a crisis, speed beats polish, and rumor beats silence.

CONTEXT

PROMPT TO COPY

Something unexpected has happened and I need to communicate with all employees quickly. I need to be accurate, transparent within appropriate bounds, and actionable. Every minute without communication is a minute the rumor mill fills the gap.

REQUEST

Important: Do not generate any output until I have answered the questions in the DISCOVERY QUESTIONS section below. If I paste this prompt without answers, your only response should be the clarifying questions, asked ALL AT ONCE in a single numbered list.

1. IMMEDIATE STATEMENT (within 1 hour)

- What happened (facts only, no speculation)
- What we're doing about it
- What employees need to know right now
- Where to get updates
- Under 150 words

2. FULL COMMUNICATION (within 4 hours)

- Complete context (what, when, why, impact)
- What's changing and what's NOT changing
- Employee FAQ (10 questions people will actually ask)
- Timeline for next update
- Multiple formats: email, manager talking points, plant floor announcement

3. MANAGER CRISIS BRIEF

- What to say and what NOT to say
- How to handle emotional reactions
- Escalation path for questions they can't answer
- Script for "I don't have that answer yet, but here's what I know"

4. FOLLOW-UP SCHEDULE

- When to send updates (even if nothing has changed)
- How to close the loop when the crisis resolves
- Post-crisis communication review

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

1. What happened? (the facts, no interpretation yet)
2. What do we know for certain, and what do we still not know?
3. What decisions have been made? What is still pending?
4. Who is the spokesperson, and what is their level of authority to speak?
5. What is the audience hierarchy (who hears first, second, third)?

Ask me ALL of these questions at once in a single numbered list, then wait. Do not answer them yourself. Do not start drafting while you wait.

When I respond, accept my answers even if I write them as a paragraph, answer out of order, or cover multiple questions at once. Do NOT re-ask the full list. If ONE specific detail is genuinely missing and the answer would meaningfully change the output, ask ONE

PROMPT TO COPY

short follow-up about only that gap. Otherwise, proceed directly to the REQUEST output and note any assumptions you made.

Alternate Version (Copilot Free)**PROMPT TO COPY**

STOP. Check the bracketed details below. If any are empty or vague, ask me about them in one numbered list and wait. Accept narrative answers. Do not re-ask. Proceed even if some details are unclear and note any assumptions.

Something unexpected happened at our organization:

[DESCRIBE THE SITUATION: what happened, what you know, what's been decided]

Create:

1. An immediate statement (under 150 words: what happened, what we're doing, what employees need to know now)
2. A full employee FAQ (10 questions people will actually ask, with honest answers)
3. Manager talking points (what to say, what NOT to say, how to handle emotional reactions)
4. A follow-up communication schedule

Prioritize speed, accuracy, and transparency. No corporate fluff.

Example Scenario: Cyber Incident**EXAMPLE TO COPY**

At 3:47 AM this morning a ransomware attack hit our network. The IT director called me at 4:15. By 5 AM the CEO, CFO, plant managers, and legal counsel were on a call. It is now 7:30 AM. Here is what we know and what has been decided.

What happened: A ransomware variant (Akira, based on initial forensics) encrypted our primary ERP, our quality systems, and parts of our email infrastructure. We have not yet been contacted by the attackers. No customer data appears to be compromised based on initial review but we cannot confirm yet. The breach point looks like a phishing email to a finance team member two weeks ago.

What is down: SAP, MES at all four plants (Plymouth, Wixom, Greenville, Saltillo), internal email is partially restored on backup servers, the intranet is offline, file shares are encrypted. Manufacturing can continue on paper for 24 to 48 hours using printed schedules from yesterday, then we have a serious problem.

EXAMPLE TO COPY

What is decided:

- We are not paying the ransom. Legal and CEO aligned.
- We are notifying the FBI at 10 AM today.
- All four plants run today on paper-based scheduling using our tabletop playbook.
- Northland Motors, Beacon Motors, and Heritage Motors (our top three customers) get heads-up calls from our CEO between 9 and 11 AM today.
- IT is bringing in CrowdStrike incident response. Estimated recovery: 7 to 14 days for full systems, 48 hours for email.

What is not yet decided: whether we go public today or wait for a clearer recovery timeline. Whether to hold Friday's all-hands or postpone.

What employees are starting to see at 7:30 AM: email is flaky, most cannot log into SAP, plant floor is reverting to paper. By 8 AM the rumor mill will be running hard.

Spokesperson: CEO Steve Reynolds. Full authority. Audience hierarchy: OEM customers first (CEO direct calls 9 to 11 AM), leadership team done, plant managers at 8:30 AM call, all employees need something by noon.

Prompt #5: The Communication Calendar Builder

What it's for: Planning a quarter or year of internal communications so you're proactive instead of reactive, with recurring themes, consistent cadence, and built-in variety. **When to use it:** At the start of a quarter or year, or whenever you feel like your internal communications are purely reactive and you want to get ahead of the calendar.

Main Version (Licensed Copilot / ChatGPT / Gemini / Claude)

PROMPT TO COPY

ROLE
You are an internal communications calendar planner for the automotive industry. You help comms professionals plan proactive, engaging communication calendars that build employee trust and reduce the "surprise announcement" problem.

CONTEXT
I want to plan our internal communications for a defined time period. I need a calendar that balances required communications (policy updates, benefits enrollment, safety initiatives) with engagement content (celebrations, recognition, culture-building) and proactive transparency (business updates, strategic direction, employee Q&A opportunities).

REQUEST

PROMPT TO COPY

Important: Do not generate any output until I have answered the questions in the Discovery Questions section below. If I paste this prompt without answers, your only response should be the clarifying questions, asked all at once in a single numbered list.

Based on my organization and what is on the horizon, create:

1. Communication Calendar

A month-by-month plan with:

- Required communications (policy, benefits, safety)
- Planned communications (business updates, strategy, changes)
- Engagement content (recognition, celebrations, milestones)
- Cadence recommendations (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly for each type)

2. Content Themes

Recurring monthly themes that build culture:

- Employee spotlight opportunities
- Business transparency moments
- Recognition and celebration triggers
- Ask Leadership Q&A sessions

3. Message Templates

Ready-to-customize templates for the 5 most common communication types:

- Company announcement
- Policy or benefit change
- Recognition or celebration
- Safety communication
- Business update or transparency message

4. How to Tell If It Is Working

How to track whether your communications calendar is doing its job over time. Cover reach, comprehension, employee response, and timing consistency.

Discovery Questions

1. What is the time period for this calendar? (quarter, half, full year)
2. What is the size and footprint of the organization? (employees, locations, shifts)
3. What is your current communication cadence? (weekly, monthly, ad hoc)
4. What is already planned for this period? (announcements, launches, initiatives, audits)
5. What recurring required communications do you own? (open enrollment, safety, profit sharing)
6. What is the biggest gap or pain in your current rhythm?

Ask me all of these questions at once in a single numbered list, then wait. Do not answer them yourself. Do not start drafting while you wait.

When I respond, accept my answers even if I write them as a paragraph, answer out of order, or cover multiple questions at once. Do not re-ask the full list. If one specific detail is genuinely missing and the answer would meaningfully change the output, ask one short

PROMPT TO COPY

follow-up about only that gap. Otherwise, proceed directly to the REQUEST output and note any assumptions you made.

Alternate Version (Copilot Free)**PROMPT TO COPY**

STOP. Check the bracketed details below. If any are empty or vague, ask me about them in one numbered list and wait. Accept narrative answers. Do not re-ask. Proceed even if some details are unclear and note any assumptions.

I need to plan our internal communications for [QUARTER / YEAR].

Org: [SIZE, LOCATIONS, INDUSTRY]

Current state: [HOW WE COMMUNICATE NOW]

Known upcoming events: [LIST ANY PLANNED CHANGES, INITIATIVES, OR MILESTONES]

Create:

1. A month-by-month communication calendar (required, planned, and engagement content)
2. Recurring monthly themes for culture-building
3. Templates for our 5 most common message types
4. A simple measurement plan to track if our communications are working

Help me go from reactive to proactive.

Example Scenario: Annual Communications Calendar**EXAMPLE TO COPY**

I am the head of internal communications for a Tier 1 automotive supplier. It is the end of Q3 and I need to deliver the 2027 annual internal communications calendar to the executive team by December 15. The CEO wants "a 12-month plan that anticipates what we communicate, when, to whom, through what channel, with built-in verification."

Org profile:

- 1,650 employees across 4 sites: Plymouth MI HQ, Wixom MI plant, Greenville SC plant, Saltillo Mexico plant
- 67% of employees do not have company email
- We make automotive interior trim and seating components for Northland Motors, Beacon Motors, Heritage Motors, and Pacific Motors
- Unionized hourly workforce at all four plants (UAW in MI, Steelworkers in SC, CTM in Saltillo)

EXAMPLE TO COPY

Current state: We are reactive. Most internal comms goes out within 48 hours of leadership deciding something. We have no calendar. We rerun the same compliance comms every year (open enrollment in November, safety stand-down in May) but everything else is ad hoc. The annual engagement survey came back showing 41% of hourly employees said "communication from leadership" was their #1 source of dissatisfaction.

Known events for 2027:

- Q1: New CEO from Sentinel takes over February 1
- Q1: Annual profit sharing announcement in February
- Q2: Safety stand-down across all 4 plants in May
- Q2: Wixom plant 20-year anniversary in June
- Q3: New Northland Motors 2027 SUV interior trim program PPAP in August
- Q3: IATF 16949 surveillance audit at all sites in September
- Q3: Annual engagement survey relaunch in September
- Q4: Open enrollment in November
- Q4: Year-end recognition event in December
- Ongoing: Quarterly business reviews (March, June, September, December)
- Ongoing: Monthly safety and quality KPI shareouts at every plant

Required recurring rhythms to build in: employee recognition, Ask Leadership sessions, business updates, culture-building moments not tied to specific events.

Biggest gap: we never close the loop. Things go out, no one verifies, leadership thinks we communicated, the floor says we didn't.

Need the plan in time for budget review on December 1.

Scheduled Prompts: From Repeatable to Running on Its Own

Now that you understand how to structure a prompt, here are some ideas for the ones you can stop running yourself. A scheduled prompt is a prompt that runs on a clock without you triggering it. Microsoft Copilot supports this today. Most internal communications teams do not know it exists. **Why this matters for internal communications:** Your work has rhythms. Daily safety updates for the huddle. Weekly newsletter drafts. The verification digest after a major campaign. The monthly comms audit. Every one of these is a candidate to move off your to-do list and onto a clock.

Cadence	Prompt	What It Replaces
Daily	Pull yesterday's safety incidents and overnight Teams updates. Draft a one-line for this morning's huddle.	The morning scramble to figure out what to say.
Weekly	Draft this week's huddle board content from the topic list and last week's safety incidents.	The Monday morning scramble.
**Weekly (during a campaign) ** Use Prompt 3	Scan the last 7 days of email for keywords from the active rollout. Produce a one-page verification digest.	Wondering whether the message actually landed.
Monthly	Audit last month's communications. What we sent, who saw it, what landed, where the gaps are.	The monthly "are we doing this right" guesswork.

The architecture lesson: Each scheduled prompt is tied to its own keyword set or topic list. You do not run one verification prompt for every campaign in your life. You build one reusable slot in your Scheduled Prompts panel and reconfigure it for each campaign that runs long enough to need it. One slot. Many campaigns. The slot is the architecture. The keywords are the configuration.

How to schedule a prompt in Microsoft 365 Copilot (4 clicks):

- 1. Open Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat. Confirm you are on the WORK tab.
- 2. Run the prompt once. Confirm the output is what you want.
- 3. Hover over the prompt in your chat history. Click "Schedule this prompt."
- 4. Set the time, frequency, run count, and email notification. Click Save. **Reality flags:** Scheduled prompts run against Outlook email, calendar, and Teams data. Not OneDrive or SharePoint files. Max 10 scheduled prompts per user. Requires a paid Microsoft 365 Copilot Business license.

Quality Check: Before Distributing Internal Communications

- **[] Does each audience version pass the "read it as them" test?** Read the plant floor version as if you've been on your feet for 8 hours and have 30 seconds. Read the manager version as if you have 12 direct reports about to ask you questions.

- [] **Is the action clear?** Every communication should end with exactly what people need to do and by when. If the action is "nothing, this is FYI only," say that explicitly.
- [] **Did you cover all shifts?** If 2nd and 3rd shift get the message 8 hours after 1st shift, they'll hear it from the rumor mill first.
- [] **Is the tone appropriate for your culture?** What sounds professional at a corporate OEM might sound cold at a family-owned dealership. Adjust.
- [] **Would your most skeptical employee trust this message?** If it sounds like spin, it will be received as spin. Be direct.

Copilot Basics (If You Use Microsoft 365)

- **Work Mode vs. Web Mode:** Work mode can summarize email threads about employee reactions, pull data from SharePoint-stored policies, and help draft responses based on existing templates. Web mode is best for creating new multi-audience communications from content you paste.
- **When to use each:** Use Work mode to find previous communications about similar topics or summarize employee feedback emails. Use Web mode with these prompts for building new audience-specific versions and distribution plans.
- **How to save prompts:** Save the Audience Message Translator and the Multi-Channel Distribution Planner where you can access them fast. These will become your standard workflow.
- **Reminder:** Be careful with communications about sensitive topics (layoffs, investigations, legal matters) in external AI tools. Use company-provided platforms for anything HR-sensitive or legally privileged.

What to Try This Week

- [] **Take your next announcement.** Before you send it, run it through Prompt #1. See how different the plant floor version looks from the email version.
- [] **Audit your current channels.** List every channel you have available. Use Prompt #2 to build a distribution plan for your next important message.
- [] **Add verification.** After your next major communication, run Prompt #3 with the campaign keywords. Read the weekly digest. Take one of the three actions it surfaces.
- [] **Time the difference.** How long does it take to write three versions of a message manually? Now time it with Prompt #1. The difference is your ROI.
- [] **Ask someone on the floor.** "What was the last company announcement you remember?" Their answer tells you everything about your current communication effectiveness.

Resources & Next Steps

- [Link to AI Learning Lab Library](#) ^[2]

Key Frameworks from This Lab

- **The Audience Translation Framework** shows that one message doesn't fit all audiences. Different people need different length, tone, format, and action items.
- **The 3-Version Rule:** Every internal communication should exist in at least 3 versions: full (email), brief (floor), and manager (talking points + FAQ).
- **The message isn't the problem. The distribution is.** You don't have a communication problem. You have a translation problem.
- **Sent is not received. Received is not understood. Understood is not acted on.** Verification is part of communication, not an afterthought.

What We Didn't Cover (Yet)

- Building an AI-powered communication template library for your organization.
- Using AI to analyze employee feedback and sentiment at scale.
- Creating multilingual communication workflows with AI translation.
- Automating recurring communications (weekly updates, monthly newsletters) with AI.

Next Steps

- Run your next announcement through Prompt #1. Compare the three versions. Share them with a colleague.
- Build a distribution plan for one important upcoming communication using Prompt #2.
- After your next major communication, run Prompt #3 with the campaign keywords. Share the verification digest with your leadership.

Questions or feedback? cheryl@cherylthompson.net ^[3]

The Mental Model: Translate, Distribute, Verify

Today's session was built on one idea: sending a message and having it land are two different things. AI helps you bridge the gap between what you write and what every audience actually receives.

Step	Prompt	What It Does
Translate	Prompt 1: Audience Message Translator	Takes one message and rewrites it for each audience (salaried, hourly, managers) with the right length, tone, and action items.
Distribute	Prompt 2: Multi-Channel Distribution Planner	Maps the right message to the right channel at the right time so no one can say "I didn't know about this."
Verify	Prompt 3: The Verification Workflow	Scans your email each week for the real comprehension signals, the gaps, and the actions you need this week.

Your job isn't to write messages. It's to make sure they land. Now you have the tools to do both.

The Operator-to-Architect Move

One last frame before you close the playbook. Twice in this lab, you saw the same architectural pattern. With Prompt 3, you watched a prompt that used to need your trigger get scheduled to run weekly on its own. That is the Level 3 move on the AI Efficiency Ladder, available in Copilot today. With Prompt 1, you saw what happens when the same prompt is paired with Microsoft Copilot Cowork and the pre-built Stakeholder Communication skill: deeper, more operational output, channel-specific artifacts, anticipated questions, what-NOT-to-say lists, coordination notes that catch dependencies you would have missed. That is the Level 4 move, available when your IT team enables Frontier. The work pattern does not change. Role, context, request. What changes is whether the prompt runs once on demand, runs on a clock, or runs through a skill that comes back with more. **The architect move:** the participants who get good at architecting prompts now are the ones whose work moves up the ladder first.

Communication isn't complete until it's confirmed:

- Translate one message for three audiences this week.
- Build one distribution plan that goes beyond email.
- You now have the tools to make sure your messages actually get read, understood, and acted on.

Related resources

Keep working with the material.

The prompts and exercises are included above. Save a useful prompt and return to it with your next task.

Links and resources

These links are clickable in the PDF. For a paper copy, use the numbered references below.

[1] <https://vimeo.com/1191692495/7eac902761?fl=ip&fe=ec>

[2] <https://www.cherylthompson.net/learning-labs#browse>

[3] <mailto:cheryl@cherylthompson.net>