



BAYHEALTH | STRATEGIC INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Building a more strategic communications function to support a growing healthcare system

Bayhealth, the largest healthcare system serving central and southern Delaware, was preparing for an ambitious period of growth and investment, guided by its Bayhealth 2030 strategy. Its communications team saw an opportunity to strengthen how it operated and focus its time and expertise on the priorities most important to the healthcare system, its team members, and the communities it serves.

A client story from ROI Communication

The work at a glance

Bayhealth, the largest healthcare system serving central and southern Delaware, worked with ROI Communication to strengthen its internal communications function. Leader interviews, a team member survey, focus groups, and an assessment of channels and processes informed a strategic communications plan and governance model to help the team prioritize resources, clarify communication responsibilities, and connect organizational strategy to everyday work.



Industry	Healthcare
Challenge	Strengthen the connection between a diverse, dispersed workforce and Bayhealth 2030 strategy, while helping the communications team focus its time and expertise on strategic priorities
Audience	Clinical, operational, support, and leadership team members across roles, locations, and shifts, including deskless frontline staff
Services	Communication research and assessment, strategic communications planning, and development of a communications governance model
Outcome	A strategic communications plan and four-tier governance model that help the team prioritize resources, clarify responsibilities, and make more consistent communication decisions

The opportunity

Bayhealth had a strong foundation to build on. Team members expressed pride in the organization and its mission, and many of the communications channels managed by the communications team were well regarded. But the research also pointed to a disconnect between communication and strategy.

At the same time, the communications team was balancing its role as a responsive service organization with the need to operate as a strategic partner. The opportunity was not simply to communicate more. It was to create greater discipline around what needed to be communicated, to whom, through which channels, and with what level of support from the communications team.

The organization was communicating a significant volume of information across a diverse workforce spanning roles, locations, generations, and shifts, but communications priorities, processes, and ownership were not always clear.

For frontline team members, the challenge was particularly pronounced. Focus groups found that employees often had a strong connection to their immediate teams and to patient care but a weaker connection to the organization's long-term strategy. In fast-paced clinical environments, immediate patient needs understandably took precedence over organizational updates, while many deskless team members had limited access to traditional communication channels.

TWO FINDINGS FROM THE TEAM MEMBER SURVEY

78%

said information
was clear and easy
to understand.

57%

said they understood
Bayhealth's
long-term
strategy.



How the work progressed

Our approach

1

Listen broadly

Leaders | Survey | Audit |
Focus groups

2

Identify what matters

Strategy | Access | Leaders |
Prioritization

3

Build the roadmap

Narrative | Channels | Leader capability |
Operating model

4

Make it actionable

Governance | Roles | Workflows |
Tools

Listening first. Then building the model.

The communication team connected with ROI Communication, which began with a comprehensive assessment of how communication was working across **Bayhealth**.

Senior leader interviews explored what was working, where leaders saw opportunities, and what they needed from internal communications. The team member survey examined communication effectiveness, channel preferences, and understanding of Bayhealth's long-term strategy. ROI also assessed channels and processes, followed by in-person focus groups with team members across clinical, support, administrative, and leadership roles.

BY THE NUMBERS

Team member insights

13

senior leader
interviews

475

survey
responses

5

focus groups,
43 participants

Channel and process assessment

18

communication
channels

10

communication
processes

What the research revealed

Together, the research revealed several important opportunities:

Connect strategy to everyday work.

Team members needed a clearer connection between Bayhealth's strategic priorities and what they do every day. Frontline team members, in particular, heard about the strategy but did not always see how its pillars applied to their roles.

Equip leaders to connect the dots.

Managers emerged as one of Bayhealth's most important communications channels. Focus groups showed that direct supervisors — across all types of roles — were highly trusted and uniquely positioned to translate enterprise strategy into daily priorities, team responsibilities, and patient impact.

Make communication more relevant and accessible.

A diverse, dispersed workforce required more thoughtful audience segmentation and channels designed around how team members actually work and consume information.

Create greater focus and discipline.

The communications function needed a clearer framework for prioritizing work, defining ownership, and focusing its strategic expertise where it could add the greatest value.

The plan: from insight to action

Bayhealth and ROI translated those findings into a strategic communications plan built around four priorities:

1 Create a stronger strategic narrative

Connect Bayhealth's mission, values, commitment to exceptional care, growth, and Bayhealth 2030 in a clear story that gives context to both strategic and operational communications.

2 Build a team member-centered communications ecosystem

Improve the relevance and accessibility of communication by strengthening purpose-built channels, audience segmentation, and the overall team member experience.

3 Activate leaders as communicators

Give leaders the context, talking points, tools, and training to communicate consistently and help team members understand how organizational priorities connect to their work.

4 Strengthen the communications operating model

Refined governance, workflows, roles, and service expectations that allow the communications team to prioritize strategically rather than treating every communication request the same.



"We are making significant investments in the future of Bayhealth and in our ability to serve our communities. Having a communications approach that keeps people connected to our priorities and helps the organization move forward together is an important part of that work."

Amanda Bowie, VP, Marketing, Communications and Community Outreach

Turning strategy into a way of working

A strategy only creates value if it changes decisions and behaviors.

Bayhealth worked with ROI to create a communications governance model that helps the team determine where and how communications should be involved.

The model established tiers based on the importance, reach, and risk of a communication. Enterprise-critical communications — including issues affecting patient safety, regulatory compliance, operational continuity, or organizational reputation — receive the highest level of communications ownership and oversight. Other communications receive support appropriate to their strategic importance and audience.

The governance framework also defined roles, decision authority, channel ownership, workflows, and escalation points — giving Bayhealth a practical way to apply the strategy to everyday communications decisions.

TIERED SUPPORT

Not every communication needs the same level of support.

TIER 1 · Enterprise critical

Full communications ownership

TIER 2 · Enterprise priority

Communications creates or heavily shapes

TIER 3 · Targeted / departmental

Shared responsibility

TIER 4 · Local / routine

Business-owned with tools and guidance



"Bayhealth is establishing a clearer framework for determining where Enterprise Communications should focus and how resources should be aligned with the organization's priorities. This helps our team support the work that matters most to Bayhealth, our team members, and the communities we serve."

Vicki Luttrell, Enterprise Communications Lead

Creating capacity for what matters most

The resulting framework is helping **Bayhealth** make more consistent communication decisions.

The framework provides the communications team with a more defined approach for prioritizing its resources against Bayhealth's strategic needs, while leaders and partners across the organization have greater clarity about their own roles in communication. The plan also provides a roadmap for strengthening channels, leader communication, audience segmentation, measurement, and the communications infrastructure over time.

Just as importantly, communications can increasingly be anchored in a common organizational story — helping team members understand not simply **what** is happening across Bayhealth, but **why it matters and how their work connects to where the health system is going**.

The long-term vision is broader still: team members who feel connected to Bayhealth's mission and strategy; leaders who are confident communicators; a communications function equipped to focus on strategic priorities; and an organization better able to connect its people to the goals that support exceptional care and the communities Bayhealth serves.

When people can see how their work connects to the strategy, organizational priorities become more meaningful — and more actionable.

FROM STRATEGY TO THE PEOPLE IT SERVES

- Bayhealth 2030
- Clear communications priorities
- Leaders + team members
- Daily work and patient care





ABOUT ROI COMMUNICATION

Connecting people to strategy since 2001

ROI Communication is a 100% employee-owned strategic internal communication and employee engagement firm that helps large, complex organizations connect business priorities to the employees who bring them to life.

Looking for communication support?

ROI helps communication leaders create clarity, build trust, and connect employees to organizational priorities.

[Explore our healthcare and life sciences expertise](#)

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