

The Upside of Leaked Internal Communications

Exploring Opportunities for Brand Reputation Through Controlled Transparency

2024 Mini Benchmark Report

Key Takeaways From Our Analysis

Internal communications leaks are not just a potential risk to be managed - they can be strategically positioned as **assets that positively shape public perception**.

This approach offers a pathway to demonstrate leadership and innovation — key attributes that resonate with today's media landscape.

- 1 When designed with a dual-purpose mindset, internal communications can go beyond risk containment to serve as credible, proactive tools for public messaging about strategy and innovation.
- 2 While tech and finance companies have been early adopters of this approach, our benchmark indicates that similar strategies can be applied across other sectors, including energy, pharma, and telecoms.
- 3 Leveraging formats like memos and town halls allows companies to set the right tone and level of exclusivity around their communications. Consider the audience and message when selecting the internal communication format.

Read on for the data behind these statements.

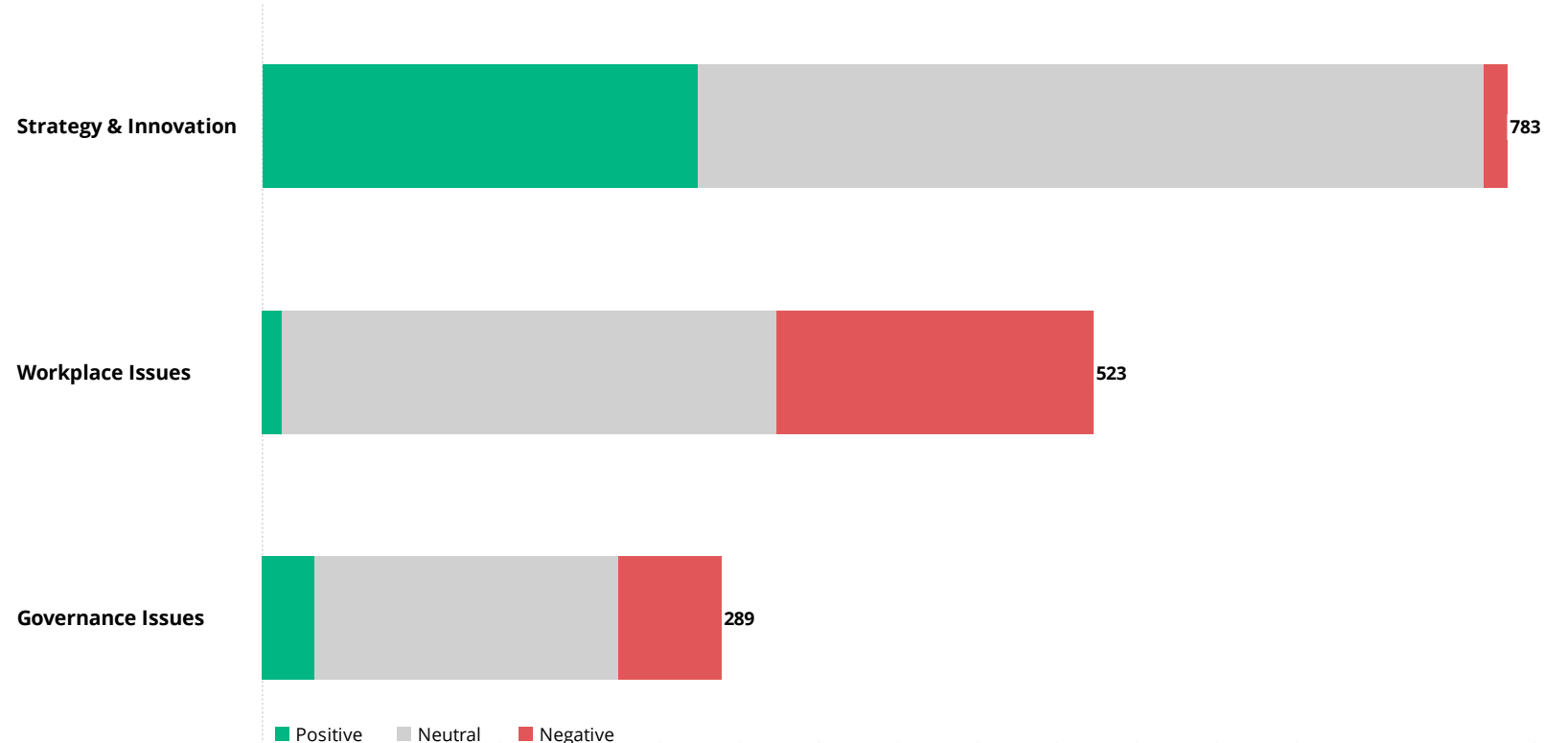
Leaked comms can be powerful tools for sharing positive aspects of company strategy and innovation.

While leaked internal communications about workplace issues like Layoffs, RTO and DEI issues are a media risk as expected, major brands are have actively leveraged leaked information (whether deliberately “leaked” or not) to enhance their brand image in areas such as **innovation and strategy**.

Companies are positioning internal communications as messages that underscore their commitment to industry leadership and visionary growth, providing communicators with a **new, proactive approach to external messaging through internal communications**.

Internal Communications Topics Mentioned in Media Coverage

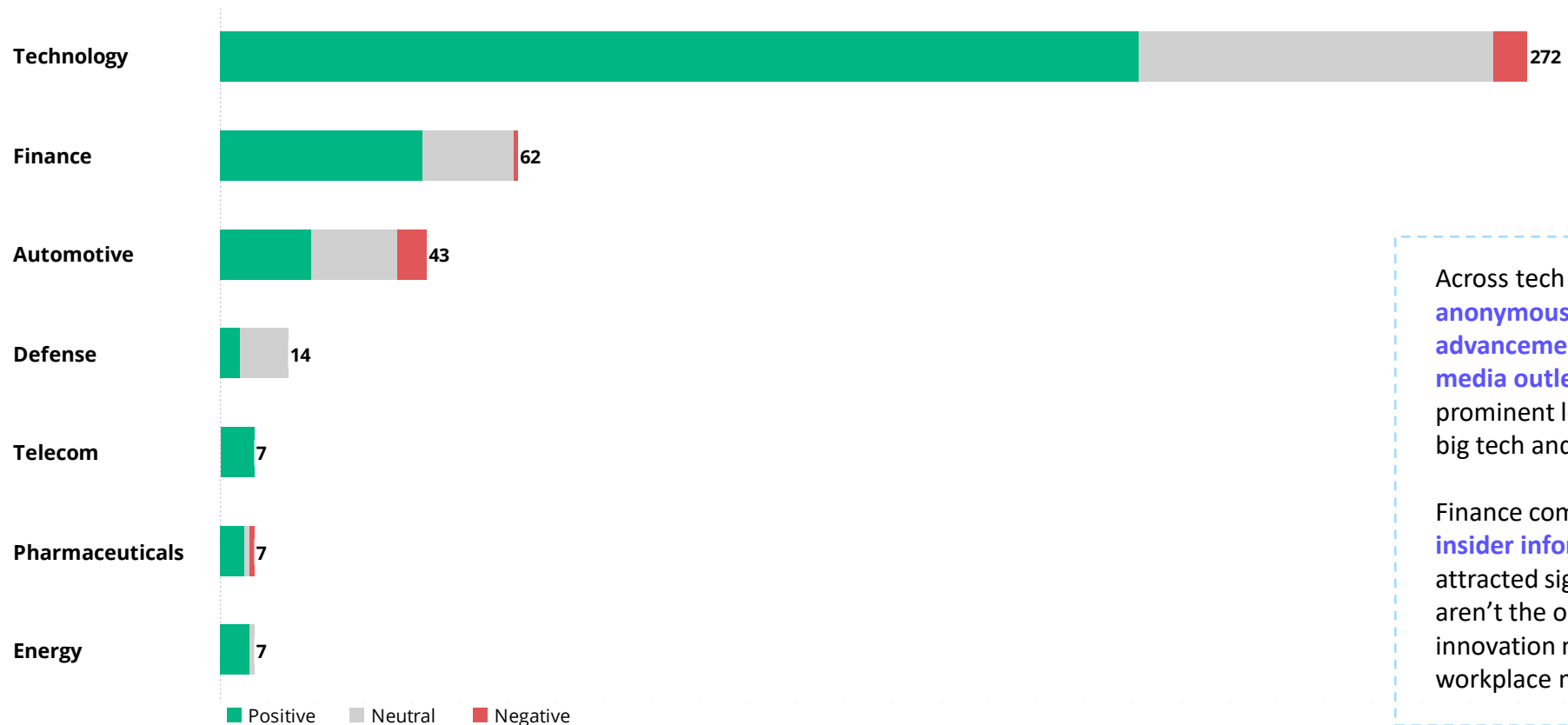
Volume and Tone of Mentions, All Benchmark Companies, Jan-Sep 2024



Positive strategy and innovation mentions from internal comms outpaced negative workplace mentions across sectors.

Strategy & Innovation Media Mentions Originating in Internal Messaging

Volume and Tone of Mentions per Sector



Across tech and automotive industries, **anonymous tips about technological advancements frequently appeared in media outlets**, with some of the most prominent leaks highlighting innovation at big tech and auto companies.

Finance companies were also noteworthy, as **insider information on strategic pivots** attracted significant media interest. These aren't the only sectors where strategy and innovation mentions outpaced negative workplace mentions, however.

By selectively sharing internal comms, companies can align external narratives with strategic priorities for maximum impact.

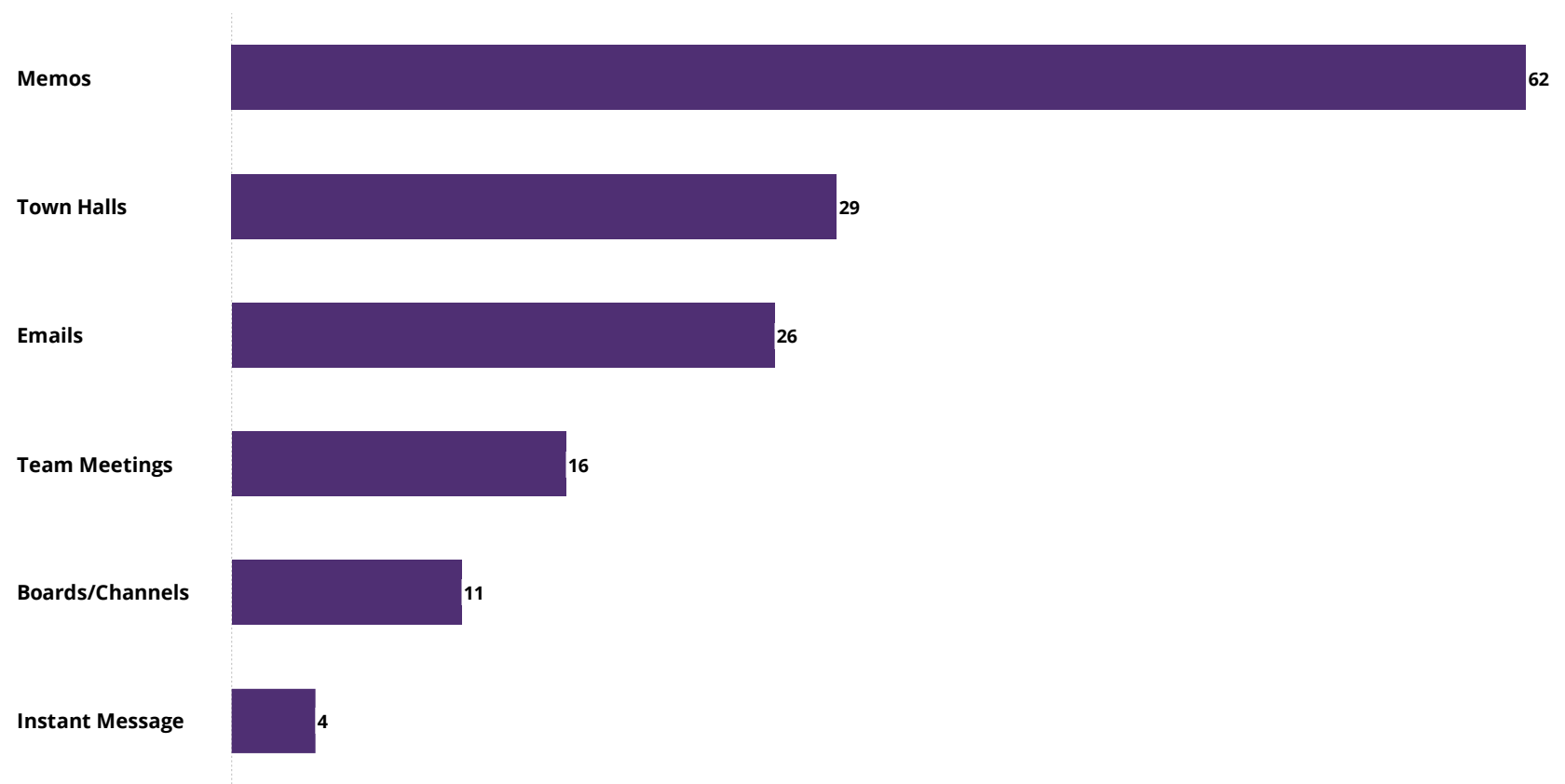
Internal memos are the most common sources for these positive mentions, likely because they carry an “**air of secrecy**” that journalists find compelling.

This gives the impression that the media has obtained exclusive insights into the company’s next moves, creating a sense of transparency and intrigue.

Town halls were the second most effective format for disseminating innovation-related information. By leaking messages shared in internal town halls, companies can control the narrative of strategic initiatives or innovations that leadership wants to gain external recognition for.

Internal Origin of Strategy & Innovation Media Mentions

Volume of Mentions per Origin



Methodology

PublicRelay utilizes a human-technology hybrid approach to extract key messages, topic relationships, and sentiment from unstructured text.

Using this approach, PublicRelay analyzed the earned media of **50 major companies across 9 sectors**. Companies in each sector were chosen based on a combination of factors including firm market capitalization and knowledge of each sector's media landscape.

For each company, PublicRelay analyzed **over 50+ reputational topics across 6 dimensions**. Other company characteristics tracked included CEOs, spokespeople, products, and trending topics. Each topic was associated with a company, and each company/topic association received a distinct sentiment (positive, neutral, negative).

To standardize company comparisons, **the media analysis was limited to 50 of the most prominent global publications**. These publications were chosen based on a variety of factors analyzed from over a decade's worth of PublicRelay's client data, factoring in readership size, global presence, balance in perspective, and publication frequency.

To guarantee media relevance, PublicRelay only analyzed earned media where at least one company was mentioned 3+ times in the article text or was mentioned in the article title.

To ensure measurement precision, PublicRelay only analyzed articles from their original publication source. An article's syndication across multiple publications was grouped with the original published article.

Companies Tracked

Automotive

Ford
GM
Tesla
Toyota
Volkswagen

Defense

Boeing
General Dynamics
Lockheed Martin
Northrop Grumman
Raytheon

Energy

BP
Chevron
ConocoPhillips
Exxon
Shell

Finance

Bank of America
BlackRock
Citigroup
Goldman Sachs
JPMorgan Chase
Wells Fargo

Technology

Amazon
Apple
Google
Microsoft
Meta

Telecom

AT&T
Comcast
T-Mobile
Verizon
Charter/Spectrum

Food & Bev.

Coca-Cola
Diageo
Kraft Heinz
Mondelez
PepsiCo

Pharma

Bristol-Meyers Squibb
Eli Lilly
Merck
Novartis
Pfizer
Roche

Insurance

AIG
Allianz
AXA
MetLife
New York Life
Prudential

Publications Analyzed

ABC
Al Jazeera
Associated Press
Australian Financial Review
Barron's
BBC
Bloomberg
Business Day Nigeria
Business Insider
Business Standard
CBC
CBS
CNBC
CNN
Fast Company
Financial Post
Forbes
Fortune
Fox Business

Fox News
Hindu Business Line
Los Angeles Times
MSNBC
National Post
NBC News
New York Times
Nikkei
Nikkei Asian Review
NPR
Politico
Reuters
South China Morning Post
Straits Times
Sydney Morning Herald
TechCrunch
The Atlantic
The Economist
The Guardian

The Hill
The National
The Telegraph
Time
Times of India
Toronto Star
U.S. News & World Report
USA Today
Wall Street Journal
Washington Post
WIRED

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PublicRelay is the most trusted data & analytics solution for communications and marketing professionals at the world's most recognizable consumer and business brands, associations, universities, and government agencies.

Our clients confidently use our media analysis to plan and measure influencer engagement, reputation management, competitive landscape, and message pull through. Known for its innovation, superior data quality, and actionable insights, PublicRelay helps communicators not only understand what they have done but what to do next.



