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BEST PRACTICES, CASE STUDIES AND STRATEGY FOR COMMUNICATORS

Volume 12, Issue 1

December/January 2008

The next move: from tactician to coach

Leadership communication – the
AstraZeneca way

The communication climate change
at RCMP

Inspiring colleagues to make
Sainsbury's great again

Lights, camera, action: A fresh start
at ITV

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MELCRUM

Global research and training for internal communicators

About the publisher

Melcrum is a research and information company with offices in London and Chicago. Through our publications, research, training materials and seminars, we gather best practices from businesses around the world to help practitioners make better business decisions. Melcrum has clients in over 80 countries and has an international reputation, not only for editorial and research products of the highest standards, but also for tracking important trends in organizational communication, corporate communication, knowledge management and human resource management.

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FROM THE EDITOR

From tactician to coach – the evolving role of the communicator



Dear Reader,

I'm delighted to be writing to you as the new editor of *SCM* and I look forward to continuing to bring you features, case studies, news and reviews of the highest quality.

Please do get in touch if you have interesting feedback or views on the articles that we publish. Equally, I'd love to hear from those of you who may have put into practice the techniques or tips as reported in our features. I also hope to meet many of you in due course at future events, which present a perfect opportunity to discuss your current projects and issues in order to keep track of the challenges that you're facing.

In this issue, we examine how the internal communicator can find themselves in the position of communication coach to their senior leader. This can be extremely beneficial for both parties as Synopsis' Dominic Walters and David Norton reveal from their experience with global pharmaceutical leader AstraZeneca (page 16).

Also in this issue

Penny Lawson from the UK's largest commercial television network, ITV, shares with us the strategy employed by the internal communication department to engage and involve employees during an extremely public change of CEO (page 28).

And as it's that time of year again when we all look to make, and stick to, resolutions, Martha Finney interviews a number of leading figures in the communication world and presents their suggestions for how you can make 2008 the best year yet for internal communication (page 32).

Seasons greetings

I'd like to wish all our readers a very happy and peaceful holiday season and a prosperous New Year.

Kelly Dyer

Editor

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P.S.

In volume 11, issue 6 of *SCM*, the author of *Seeking Solutions at Volvo's Benchmarking Event*, Sue Dewhurst of Competent Communicators, was inadvertently omitted. We apologize to Sue for the misunderstanding.

If you have any comments about any of the articles published in this issue, or if you have an idea for a future article, please contact: kelly.dyer@melcrum.com

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in touch

EVENTS & RESEARCH

EMPLOYER BRANDING A VITAL TOOL FOR SUCCESS

A new guide from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) aims to help organizations explore and fully develop their employer brand for maximum impact. The practical guide *Employer branding: a no-nonsense approach* includes case studies from large organizations such as Lakeland, Orange and ScottishPower on the topic of why and how they developed their corporate brand.

In today's marketplace where companies compete for the cream of the talent, it's vital for a company to have a strong brand with which to attract, engage and ultimately retain the highest calibre of employee. This is backed up by recent research carried out by the CIPD that shows approximately 75 percent of companies that use employer branding as a tool for recruitment find it effective.

Understanding your workforce

This isn't just a concept for recruitment however. Rebecca Clarke, CIPD organization and resourcing advisor, says it will aid employers in understanding what makes their workforce tick. "It's an opportunity to gather intelligence to help employers better understand what makes people stay with their organization and be prepared to go that extra mile."

Teamwork, says Clarke, is imperative in making the brand a success: "Working together with other departments such as marketing, internal communications and PR is important if branding initiatives are to be successfully implemented." **KD**

For more information go to:
www.cipd.co.uk/surveys

**"TEAMWORK IS
IMPERATIVE IN MAKING
THE BRAND A SUCCESS."**

CORPORATIONS SHOULD TACKLE WORLD'S WOES

Corporations and CEOs should take more responsibility for helping to solve major social problems, such as poverty and the environment, according to an international study of the roles of corporations and CEOs, conducted by global PR agency, Ketchum.

The researchers polled 2,750 "influential citizens" (defined as the 10 to 15 percent of the population who initiate changes in their community or society) across 11 countries. Most of those surveyed said corporations are falling short as environmental stewards and aren't measuring up in honesty or ethics.

The survey also revealed that while honesty, ethics and fairness are seen as the most important personal characteristics for a CEO, they're the ones that seem to be least often fulfilled.

Influentials in Canada, the UK, Germany and the US gave the lowest marks to CEOs for being/seeming ethical.

Environmental stewardship

Respondents in most European nations say that corporations should focus more attention on environmental protection, while those in the US and the developing nations – India, China and Argentina – attach near equal significance to environmental issues and profits.

On a worldwide basis, environmental stewardship is the area where the gap between expectations and performance is the greatest, followed closely by honesty and ethics. **AW**

For more information go to:
www.ketchum.com

TRUE PARTNERSHIP ENDURES

Recent research from US-based attitude specialist, Sirota Survey Intelligence shows that organizations with a true partnership culture between employer and employee are more likely to emerge from crisis situations in better shape than those without.

During periods of economic downturn when members of staff need to be made redundant, for example, employers who actively seek to connect with their constituencies, in other words their employees, business communities and suppliers, will stand themselves in good stead once the situation resolves itself. This is as a result of a partnership being forged based on mutual trust and benefit, qualities that should enable the organization to have a long life.

Sincerity equals satisfaction

The research also demonstrated that the degree to which workers perceive that their organization has a sincere interest in the communities in which it's operating affects their overall satisfaction rates. For example, 82 percent of employees who feel that their employers have a genuine interest in their communities are satisfied overall with their employer. But this figure drops to an overall satisfaction rate of 49 percent when they don't believe their employer is a good "corporate citizen".

Douglas Klein, president of Sirota Survey Intelligence, says, "An employer that treats its employees as true partners makes every effort to avoid layoffs. When it becomes necessary to reduce costs, many steps can probably be taken as an alternative to involuntary layoffs." Klein continues to say, "Employees themselves can be a source of many useful suggestions about how to best handle the situation, and they are one of the best monitors of the effectiveness of steps taken." **KD**

For more information go to:
www.sirota.com

BOOKS

Every year there are new books out and it can be difficult to know what's worth buying. Here are some to consider:

EVALUATING PUBLIC RELATIONS: A BEST PRACTICE GUIDE TO PUBLIC RELATIONS PLANNING, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

► by Tom Watson and Paul Noble, Kogan Page, 2007

The authors of this new version have taken note of my criticisms of the first edition (*SCM* Volume 10, Issue 6 October/November 2006), so the second edition promises to be an excellent one for PR practitioners.

THE CEO: CHIEF ENGAGEMENT OFFICER



► by John Smythe, Gower, 2007

Speaking of change, after years of waiting, 2007 saw the publication of John Smythe's *The CEO: Chief Engagement Officer: Turning Hierarchy Upside Down to Drive Performance* (Gower). In my review

(*SCM*, Volume 11, Issue 4 June/July) I

said "this is the most significant book for internal communicators in 25 years" and so far no-one has disagreed with me.

MANAGING UNDERSTANDING IN ORGANIZATIONS

► by Jorgen Sandberg and Axel



Targama, Sage, 2007

This book was the surprise of the year (*SCM* Volume 11, Issue 5, August/September). A wonderful description of how to move to a more

humanistic, knowledge-based, dialogue-driven approach to make internal communication effective. It's tough reading, but one for serious internal communicators who've mastered Smythe and want more.

THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF LEADERSHIP

► Steve Denning, Jossey Bass, 2007

I first heard global storytelling guru, Aussie Steve Denning, at the IABC Conference in Vancouver in 2006. An amazing speaker with wonderful content. Anything by him would have to be worth

"DENNING IS PROBABLY THE BEST IN THE WORLD AT EXPLAINING HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH VARIOUS TYPES OF STORIES"

paying attention to. His new book *The Secret Language of Leadership* (Jossey Bass, October 2007) promises to be good. Denning has been published in the *Harvard Business Review* and is probably the best in the world at explaining how to communicate with various types of stories depending on the situation. Never before have I read such an array of glowing testimonials from truly famous people. Definitely one for those interested in transformational change.

Compiled by Rodney Gray

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BLOGS & URLS

BLOG: ALL THINGS WORKPLACE

► <http://www.allthingsworkplace.com>



All things workplace is authored by Steve Roesler who presents ideas and research on a variety of

organizational issues. The blog is home to over a hundred posts under several categories relevant to internal communicators such as leadership, organizational effectiveness, communication and creating change and smooth transitions, with an archive dating back to August 2006.

Most recently, Roesler has been posting a series of self-written articles on change. In the latest post, "Change and hurry sickness at work" Roesler says, "When we make organizational changes,

everyone's 'inner drummer' starts pounding out a different beat until the groove comes back. Does your organization allow time to regroup, rehearse and learn the new arrangement? If not, the very people wanting to initiate change may very well get in the way of success."

Roesler incorporated organization effectiveness firm Roesler Group, based in the US, in 1977. **SH**

DEATH TO INTERNAL MARKETING

► <http://kevinkeohane.wordpress.com/>



Kevin Keohane is client partner and head of brand and employee engagement at European communication agency SAS. His blog

looks at employer branding, engagement and stakeholder communication but also discusses social media, categorized by Keohane as "digital engagement".

In his most recent blog, Keohane writes about the relationship between HR, marketing and internal communication. He says, "When internal communication, marketing and HR don't play well together, the business suffers commercially and its employees suffer the results. Employees suffer at the experiential end at the outset, since functional turf wars reduce organisational effectiveness and generally damage the culture." Keohane blames the failure of these three functions working together on one thing – politics.

In his About Me section, Keohane says "What gets measured might get managed, but that model isn't going to inspire a changing workforce in the coming decade." **SH**

the communicators' NETWORK

A recent question on the Comms Network about the difference between marketing and internal communication implies that ambiguity continues to surround the latter function in some organizations. In response, one networker suggests an easy method to spot where the key synergies lie. Also, read about innovative ways to reinforce your company's business strategy and how to encourage managers to take ownership of new initiatives.



Q Does anyone have a definitive statement or view of the difference between marketing and internal communication?



Ken Milloy
Strategic Connections Inc
 Many people believe that marketing is just about advertising or sales.

However, marketing is everything a company does to acquire customers and maintain a relationship with them. Even the small tasks like writing thank-you letters, playing golf with a prospective client, returning calls promptly and meeting with a past client for coffee can be thought of as marketing. The ultimate goal of marketing is to match a company's products and services to the people who need and want them, thereby ensuring profitability.

Many people believe that internal communication is just about sharing information with staff and keeping them informed. Based on what we have seen in a number of organizations, many also believe that internal communication is about fancy newsletters that let us know who has been around for how many years and who plays what sport. An equal number believe internal communication is about disseminating information.

However, internal communication is about much more – it's about everything a company does to build awareness, understanding, commitment and alignment to the overall goals and objectives of the company; it's about everything a company does to build staff awareness and understanding which leads to an ability to live the behaviors associated with the service strategy and values of the firm.

The ultimate goal is to align and

engage people – from the very top of the organization to the very bottom – to the strategy and to ensure that the strategy reflects or at least considers the knowledge held by staff from the very bottom up to the very top – and to facilitate change on a daily basis – so as to ensure profitability that is sustainable.



Emma Lohmeier
People Passion

Often, getting each department to answer these questions will give you the opportunity to see where key synergies lie.

- **Audiences:** Who is the department's key audience? Marketing: The external, paying customer. Internal communication: The internal, paid employee.
- **Insights:** Who is the department looking to understand? Marketing: Customer segmentation. Internal communication: Employee surveys into work life quality.
- **Departmental strategy:** Where/what does the strategy of the department focus on? Marketing: To improve customer spend by £x. Internal communication: To improve employee retention, morale, performance.
- **Measures:** What are the key performance indicators for the department? Marketing: Gaining market share. Internal communication: Becoming the employer of choice.

Q How can the internal communication function help managers take ownership for change, new initiatives and new processes?



Aileen Ritchie
Pfizer inc.

What's worked well in my own organization is making sure that managers (and indeed colleagues) are "involved" in the change and decision making process; which in turn leads to "ownership".

For example we hold a leadership forum every six weeks. The leadership team and project team leaders (or indeed team members) present to the group on change topics. The team are then encouraged to "so what" the information i.e. ask themselves, what does that mean for me, my team and the organization? We also share some tough messages with this group i.e. step up and help embed the change or new culture.

The group were very quiet at first but the level of challenge, questions and debate has increased over the months. Our leadership team helped by facilitating the sessions and investing the time face to face.

In addition, we also have a comprehensive transformational change program currently in place. As such we have five "workstream leaders" (all are key managers in the business), each running several improvement projects. (Each workstream leader has a member of the leadership team assigned to them as sponsor – they also act as a coach.)

Each project has a manager who has the role of project leader and each team is made up of a cross-functional/diagonal-cut group of people (i.e. operators, administrators, team leaders and senior managers).

The purpose of this is to encourage many positive aspects of large change programs, for example:

- Ownership
- Involvement
- Engagement
- Building capability
- Culture shift
- Encouraging challenge
- Continuous improvement

The most difficult aspect of this approach is trying to ensure that those

who are not directly involved still achieve a level of engagement.

Q What innovative things have you done, or plan to do, to reinforce your company's business strategy during the year?



Aygun Suleymanova Azercell Telecom JV

We're having video interviews with key people in the company on our key priorities and placing them on our intranet and hanging information boards directing people to watch these interviews.

We're also planning to prepare a simple template of our 2008 strategy presentation and handing it to top management for top-down communication and then auditing whether the presentation was delivered and whether employees have a clear understanding of the strategy.

But the most important thing is including "strategy implementation status" into the agenda of all inter-departmental coordination meetings (which are held weekly), where implemented or on-going projects or processes' status – either within the department or company-wide – can be shared and presented, aligned to a specific strategic priority.



Kate Redfern Coca-Cola Amatil (Aust) Pty Ltd

We're new in the internal comms space and using comms in a strategic way to "reinforce business strategy" is a brand new way of thinking for us. But this is exactly the type of thing I'm focused on doing. Some ideas I've had around this are:

- Structuring our monthly MD e-newsletter around our strategic drivers i.e. all stories/all activity discussed in this must clearly link to a strategic driver.
- Having focus months – each month on a different strategy, for example: Branding. We could promote/reward/recognize initiatives/individuals/business units who are doing a great job at driving

one of these.

- Use a footer (based on that month's strategic focus) in all e-mail signatures asking people to think about how their day-to-day work contributes to this and submit nominations for themselves/peers to win prizes.
- Podcast/webcast something from the MD/executive team talking about this particular part of the strategy in the focus month.
- Invite guest speakers/external experts to give lunchtime lectures about this particular topic eg. if "Customer" is a strategy, there are plenty of interesting speakers that could give a fresh perspective on this.
- Make it fun and interactive – include an activity in all team meetings that emphasizes the importance of that particular part of the strategy.

Q What are the essential "laws" of communication?



Linda Doyle University of Salford

- Clarify your brief carefully before drawing up your comms plan.
- Identify the change required or call to action when preparing your communications.
- Communicate in ways to suit audience needs/learning styles/culture.
- Often you can never communicate enough, but you can also over-communicate – maintain the balance.
- Aim for "good-enough" communications. Often we don't have sufficient time to do the best communicating and have to settle for a "fitness for purpose" approach – or a "good enough" approach. Communication may result in a surprising or negative response, but the "good enough" communicator does not take it to heart and learns from this.
- Aim to engage not just inform.
- Communications is both art and science – utilize both left and right brain in the delivery.
- Aim to project WIFT "what's in it for them?" – most people won't bother reading unless you do this
- When the outcome is not as you intended, learn and move on.

LATEST ON THE MELCRUM BLOG

Want to engage people? Start having more fun

Creating a fun working environment can pay serious dividends, says Mandy Thatcher, Melcrum's head of content. Reporting from Melcrum's Comms Canada event, Thatcher was commenting on the presentation from one of Canada's top 100 employers, airline WestJet. They made clear how the values "fun, friendly and caring" are an integral part of the company's staff policy. This could go some way towards explaining how the company has survived some tough times that have caused other airlines to disappear off the radar. As a result of this happy ethos, staff remain engaged, motivated and committed to the company's aims, which shows itself in satisfied and loyal customers.

Forgot to say, "hello"!

Alex Manchester, editor of the Internal Comms Hub (Australia) and *KM Review* brought to our attention the existence of a day dedicated to saying "hello". On November 21, people around the world were asked to mark "World Hello Day", by saying hello to ten people. Not a task requiring intense amounts of effort, one would imagine, or is it? Manchester recalls his time working in a large organization where the reception staff would ignore colleagues as they entered the building. Even in the smaller office block where he currently works, says Manchester, people often fail to greet one another with a simple hello. Obviously a designated day is required after all.

www.melcrumblog.com

"Thoughts and revelations on internal communication and beyond"

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Initiating a major change program to help meet overall objectives

PROFILE : KATHRYN PALLANT

RENEWING WORKING METHODS AT DEFRA

As head of internal communications for the UK government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Kathryn Pallant communicates regularly with staff on topics as diverse as bird flu, foot-and-mouth disease and climate change. Here, she discusses her role in "Renew", a major internal change program that will impact on all core Defra employees.

Describe your role and responsibilities.

In my role, I'm responsible for helping staff feel informed about the department's aims and objectives, and the way we're working towards them, including any changes to the way we work. This can mean communicating about a range of issues from Defra's strategy to the introduction of new technology in the department. Our internal communication team has a great mix of skills, both editorial and advisory.

What are your current projects?

Exceptionally, I'm devoting all my time to Renew, a big internal change program. This will change the way we're organized, how we allocate people to activities, our method for ensuring our activities are helping us meet our overall objectives, and more. People in Defra are understandably interested, excited, anxious and everything in between. It's a major comms effort.

The internal comms team is also working on other projects including an internal version of our "Act on CO₂" campaign. This aims to establish the link between personal behavior and climate change. The internal campaign encourages staff to practice what we as a department are advocating to others.

What's your biggest communication challenge at the moment?

Communicating Renew is a big task. We're putting enormous energy into face-to-face communication, with our

senior team leading as many conversations as possible. Also, we're really striving to make the changes as real to people as we can, for example by communicating as widely as possible the outcomes of trials of our new way of doing things.

What are your most effective communication vehicles to reach employees?

We've got a diverse audience so we need to use a mix of channels to reach everyone, including events, briefings through managers, and electronic comms like our online news service. Our staff really don't like printed material for environmental reasons and we have to respect that.

Is your organization using social media tools?

We've used a range of them for both external and internal purposes. David Miliband¹ had a blog on our internet, for example. Members of our management board regularly have live online Q&A sessions with staff, and we'll use blogging to support Renew.

Renew will result in people moving around the organization a lot more too, so

I think social media tools are one way we can help build and support communities in the department. We'll soon be introducing the latest version of Microsoft's SharePoint, which includes online collaboration and social networking tools.

How would you describe the culture at Defra?

Like lots of government employees, our staff really believe in what they do – they'll readily say they come to work to make a difference, whether it's to climate change or animal health. That's a huge benefit, and makes comms here a rewarding job. We feel the challenges of working in a big organization, though, as much as anyone. And we're making headcount reductions (as are many departments), so while there are some really exciting changes coming up, there are difficulties too.

How does the internal communication strategy support that culture?

We keep our communications as environmentally sustainable as possible, using e-channels where they're effective. And we always try to represent the diversity of what the department does, so people working in one area have an awareness of their colleagues' achievements elsewhere.

What achievement in your current role are you most proud of?

I'm proud of building a talented – and rowdy – team that the Board has confidence in. I think a big part of my role is creating opportunities for them to show what they're capable of. They impress me regularly, so I hope that means I'm succeeding.

What are your future plans for internal communication within Defra?

Our priorities are to build on our channels from events to blogs, online content and our staff magazine, to help support staff through the cultural changes ahead. We also have some great data on employee engagement, so we'll be building more comms campaigns around the issues that really matter to our staff.

1. UK Secretary of State for environment, food and rural affairs, May 2006-June 2007.



Kathryn Pallant is head of internal communications for Defra. Previous experience in UK government departments includes working for the Department of Trade and Industry (now known as BERR, Department for business, enterprise and regulatory reform) and HM Customs and Excise (now known as HM Revenue and Customs).

**THOUGHT LEADER : JEREMY STARLING**

WHY ENGAGEMENT IS NO LONGER ENOUGH

Although employee engagement is an important hot topic, Jeremy Starling, managing director of INVOLVE argues that engagement alone is no longer good enough. He believes that in order to win today, businesses need employees to be not just engaged, but truly involved.

Involving employees in running a business isn't a modern phenomenon – the business world's first employee suggestion scheme was launched in 1771 by shipbuilder William Denny in a Glasgow shipyard.

More than 200 years on, too few businesses seem to have evolved beyond this fairly limited model of employee engagement, where people are asked to input perspectives, without truly being involved in making change happen.

In today's increasingly competitive business environment, the battleground is people power. The winners will be those businesses that find quicker, more powerful ways to help their people make a difference. True employee involvement is needed so employees get it, believe in it and get on with it.

Compelling numbers

The phenomenal gains made by businesses with involved employees have been highlighted by Collins and Porras in their book *Built to Last*. Their research showed a massive 16-to-1 long-term stock market differential between those organizations that sought active involvement from employees and those that didn't.

Similarly, Buckingham and Coffman at Gallup, authors of *First, break all the rules* surveyed over 1 million employees and 80,000 managers worldwide and found that positive employee involvement correlated directly with business profitability.

Involvement is not a soft issue, it's about profit, share price and results.

Why, then, aren't more businesses actively encouraging it?

Engagement versus involvement

One reason may be the profusion of jargon. Definitions are key and it's important to differentiate clearly between engagement and true involvement.

Engaged employees have bought into the direction of the business, feel positive and motivated, but won't do anything differently.

Involved employees, however, are active in the business, participate in change and own initiatives.

Engagement is passive, involvement is active.

The "What? Why? How?" see-saw

Businesses are often unclear on when to involve. Getting the right balance between What, Why and How is key. Employees will come up with great answers and, more importantly, they'll take ownership. Undersell the What and the Why and you get loose cannons. Tell people How and they won't own it.

Not a matter of choice

Too many excuses are put forward for not actively involving employees, including:

"it's unreasonable to expect all people to want to", "it would take too long", and "it would cost too much".

But how can you afford not to have involved employees? Customers expect your employees to take personal ownership of their problems and solve them. CEOs need their strategy to be brought to life globally; managers want to be empowered to own change; employees want to feel they can make a difference. This will only be achieved with an involved workforce.

An involved culture

The culture change challenge of the last 20 years continues in many businesses, where the leaders continue to ask, "what culture do we want to be?" The simple answer is "an involved culture".

This requires businesses to build an involving culture – one that encourages and supports active participation from the top down and bottom up. This means:

- Making involvement a key part of the leadership agenda.
- Encouraging employees to be involved in defining and delivering the How. Making it their right.
- Committing to the long-term – it takes time, effort and commitment to deliver a truly involved culture

One example – the GE "Work-Out"

Former General Electric CEO Jack Welch frequently cited his employee action plan, "Work-Out", as a key catalyst in the turnaround that increased GE's market value from US\$14 billion to US\$410 billion in two decades. Overnight, thousands of ailing processes changed with solutions entirely proposed, scoped out and driven through by the 290,000 employees.

No more middle ground

So, with business decisions increasingly focused on the current financial quarter, can the longer-term benefits of involvement ever be achieved?

The answer is yes, but only if business leaders stop opting for the middle ground of employee engagement, with its limited results and unknown business impact. Instead, there needs to be commitment to more workforce participation in a true involving culture.



Jeremy Starling is managing director of INVOLVE (previously The Eventworks). Clients such as GE, AXA, RBS, and Mars use the team to get employees to believe, own change, commit and act. Starling speaks regularly in the UK, Europe and US about the power of involvement. For more information visit: www.involveuk.com



BETH GLEBA AND KARLA SHAFER

Why coaching, not controlling, intranet contributors results in great material

COACHING YOUR INTRANET CONTRIBUTORS

The intranet is a popular method of communicating with employees and easily facilitates the sharing of information and best practice. Beth Gleba and Karla Shafer from IKEA North America Services discuss the most effective ways they've found of coaching contributors to ensure the publication of consistent and user-friendly material.

If your organization publishes its intranet using a content management tool, then the chances are you've got subject matter experts, instead of professional communicators, on the front lines of your information quality and usability.

While working in a decentralized way does have benefits (such as providing a pipeline of information direct from senders without a bottleneck), it can create a fragmented user experience. To successfully change this, you can't control, you have to coach.

It's impossible to lock down your intranet and control every piece of information that gets posted. Instead, as communicators, we can set-up supportive training programs and offer a strong people-driven process to manage the issue.

At IKEA we use a content management tool to publish our intranet. In the US retail part of our business, we estimate that upwards of 90% of the content on our US intranet isn't produced by our professional group of writers and designers. Instead it's published by more than 50 "publishers" or subject matter experts. Publishers are co-workers from every part of the company who have taken on the task of publishing intranet content in addition to their daily roles. Very few have professional writing or editing abilities, let alone web publishing skills, yet every one of them plays an important part in producing a quality intranet.

Focusing on people

Many communicators recognize the paradigm of "People, Processes, and Technology" when it comes to working with their intranets or other technology.

While there is certainly more that can be done, here are some coaching tactics that have worked for us:

1. Begin with the right training

We find that short, one hour or less, one-on-one training is best. Focus on what the publishers need, rather than teaching them every aspect of the tool. New publishers leave the session with a customized video clip showing the process, step-by-step.

2. Regular communication

We produce an e-newsletter updating US publishers on tool upgrades and coming changes, and what effects they will have on their everyday publishing. The newsletter is also a place to share good publishing ideas.

3. Annual "seminar"

We host an annual, one-day "seminar" to get all our publishers on the same page. Some of this year's sessions included "Publishers Unite!", an interactive session where publishers told us what they found

rewarding and frustrating about being an intranet publisher. This helped us understand what they need, and helped them recognize that together they make a strong network.

The session "Think like a User" brought in an external expert to share the basics on web usability. These basics can't be skipped when working with groups who have little experience.

In the "Consistency" seminar, we defined 10 simple areas (such as naming conventions and use of links) that we want all of our publishers to be using. The real goal of the session was to help publishers shift their thinking from "This is how I've always done it" to "This is how we'll all do it going forward."

An evaluation at the end of the day revealed overwhelmingly that it had been beneficial and there was a demand for similar events in the future.

4. Audit/measurement and steering

Annually, we assess sections of our intranet to get a snapshot of its overall health and necessary improvements. The process includes using a "scorecard" of five simple criteria and a rating system that gives the site a green (good), yellow (some caution) or red (needs immediate improvements).

The results are then used to drive discussions with the individual publishers, helping them recognize where strengths and weaknesses lie.

5. Recognition

We recognize that our publishers are taking on an additional role and we appreciate it. Publishers receive a copy of their scorecards and audit to share with their managers at performance evaluation time. Publishers also receive from us, on behalf of our intranet users, a small token of our thanks around the holiday season.

Don't forget how people will support your channel management

In working with these five coaching tactics, we've started to see for ourselves the power of focusing on people, rather than simply the content we write, edit, and publish ourselves. The learning has opened our eyes to the bigger impact that we can have within our organization.



Beth Gleba is the US internal information manager and Karla Shafer is the US intranet editor for IKEA North America Services, LLC. Further information on developing practices to engage your intranet publishers can be found by contacting Beth.Gleba@memo.ikea.com

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

NISSAN LAUNCHES “N-SQUARE” FOR STAFF

Global car manufacturer, Nissan, is to launch a new social networking site for its employees. The site, called “N-square”, will connect up to 50,000 of the company’s 180,000 employees globally. Users will be able to create online profiles, blogs, communities and discussion groups and share data files.

Innovating and formal channels

In an interview with website BusinessWeek, Simon Sproule, the Nissan USA executive overseeing N-Square, says the site will provide employees with a way to avoid bureaucratic channels and create new partnerships, citing the inefficiency of traditional tools and channels as a main reason for launching the site.

“If you want to talk to your boss or your boss’s boss or your boss’s boss’s boss, you set up meetings, you ‘cc’ everyone, you lay out an agenda and maybe even have a pre-meeting to discuss the topic. There’s an enormous amount of time spent just to get to talk to somebody,” says Sproule.

The basis for N-Square developed from a visit to IBM’s headquarters in New York, where Sproule saw IBM’s web-based software that allowed employees to share ideas. He believes the social networking site will be worth it because it will connect employees with others who can provide expertise so they can do a better job. “IBM was the biggest inspiration,” says Sproule. “That, and the 100 million people using MySpace.”

Improved job engagement

N-Square could also offer further indirect benefits, such as making employees feel more connected to their jobs. “What we know from research is that one of the primary reasons people stay at the same company is that they’re well tied into the social fabric of the place,” McKinsey & Company consultant Leigh Weiss told Web Pro News. “Companies will often lose top performers because they aren’t sufficiently mentored or connected.” **AW**

<http://www.internalcommshub.com/open/news/nissan.shtml>

CEOS STAND DIVIDED ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Melcrum’s recent report, *21st Century Leadership Communication* finds that CEOs greatly differ in their opinion on social media.

The report, based on interviews with 18 senior leaders across various organizations in the US, Europe and South Africa, found that although some leaders are enthusiastic about the potential of social media and keen to know how to use new channels, others are skeptical. Perhaps more surprising is that some still barely know what common social media tools such as blogs and podcasts are.

Technology is limited

One such skeptic is Rona Fairhead, CEO of the Financial Times Group, who said: “There is, particularly in global organizations, more of a need to reach out and touch in a personal way. You can make it feel more personalized through technology, but technology has its limits and nothing beats people being in a room together.”

However, Jean-Pascal Tricoire, CEO of Schneider Electric, feels that leaders need to get on board the social media changes, “I don’t think it’s possible anymore to have CEOs using three pages of paper to say what they want. It has to be done now with things like intranet videos and live webcams, because people are just bored by the old methods of communication,” he says.

The report does acknowledge the generational aspect of these findings. Today’s CEOs are likely to be of an older average age, which means they’re also likely to be better accustomed to traditional communication channels, and less so to new technologies that are more familiar to younger age groups. **SH**

www.melcrum.com

“TECHNOLOGY HAS ITS LIMITS, NOTHING BEATS PEOPLE BEING IN A ROOM TOGETHER.”

WORKERS NAIVE OVER ONLINE PRESENCE

New research by recruitment firm, Manpower, has found that over half of all social network users would consider it unethical for employers to use the sites, such as Facebook and Myspace to research potential and existing employees.

- Manpower’s research has found that:
- 43 percent would feel “outraged” if an employer used a social networking site to find out more about them.
 - 56 percent consider it unethical for employers to research them using social networking sites.
 - 28 percent of social networkers have limited their personal information available on the internet, 78 percent expect to do so in the future.

In contrast, the research reveals that a significant number of people are using social networking sites for work-related tasks:

- 17 percent use the sites to research potential employers;
- 10 percent for networking and generating new business;

Employers must beware of online conduct

The data suggests a worrying level of naivety among those surveyed and a lack of understanding about online visibility when participating in such networks. In turn, this also presents problems for communication teams concerned with the way employees are conducting themselves online and what they may be saying about their organization.

Blurring the line between work and play

There were some positive points from the research, however. Jason Greaves, director of commercial staffing at Manpower UK, says the world of work is changing. “The explosive growth of social networking sites provides a new way for people to communicate with each other and, although the primary use of these sites seems to be for personal reasons, employers and employees alike are now using the sites for work purposes, which can save both time and money.” **AW**

<http://www.internalcommshub.com/open/news/manpower.shtml>



CATHERINE EASEY

Act on key learnings to unite a diverse internal audience

MEASURING TO ACHIEVE A COMMON AIM

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) was founded in 1884 in the UK and has since grown into a large, high-profile charity with 2,500 staff and 1,500 volunteer workers. The internal audience is very diverse, explains Catherine Easey, and keeping colleagues engaged and informed is key to ensuring staff remain tuned in to the organization's shared aim of ending child cruelty.

Although staff surveys have run since 2002, the NSPCC has just begun to properly measure engagement. Called *It's Your Say*, surveys take place every two years, interspersed with mini online "pulse" surveys to monitor how the organization is doing on the issues staff identified in the full survey. Each full survey is followed by a series of focus groups to further explore areas of concern or celebration.

The most recent survey, our third, was run in October 2006, hosted and facilitated by ORC International. Having decided on our set of questions – mostly tracking, some to help us measure our ability to achieve Investor in People status, and some for benchmarking purposes – the timing of the survey was debated. In 2006, the NSPCC was undergoing great change as ChildLine joined us and a number of reviews and refocusing of services was underway. Some people were naturally unsettled and demotivated as a result, even though the changes were ultimately for the better. The decision to test the water was right – the survey achieved a higher response rate than before, along with some very useful comments.

Looking deeper into colleague responses

The benchmarking aspect was new to us for the 2006 survey. We chose a number of specific organizations we wanted to be benchmarked against, from the private, public and charity sectors, ones of similar

size, or geographical spread, or values, or range of departments. Of the questions in our survey, some were direct matches for other organizations, and some were just similar – the remainder were particular to the NSPCC and so irrelevant for benchmarking. The comparisons highlighted through the benchmarking process were very illuminating, and vital for identifying what is important to colleague engagement.

Putting value to scores

A very low score from staff in any question had previously drawn our attention and concern, and similarly a high score had encouraged us to celebrate. Benchmarking enabled us to put a relative value to those scores. A low score may be low across most organizations, and therefore not such an area of concern for us, but the same goes for a high score – somewhat deflating! However, even with the relative values identified through this method to some of the results, we still couldn't be sure which of those elements really contributed to staff feeling engaged with the NSPCC, and made them want to stay and strive. This was further explored through statistical analysis, resulting in a grid explaining the

key areas for our staff in terms of engagement, and how we were doing in those areas. This narrowed down the focus for the senior management team and enabled them to look at what really mattered, such as communications and people feeling valued. Some aspects were excellent, some not. The focus groups, led entirely by ORC International to allow for more freedom of speech from NSPCC colleagues, were divided into managers and staff and held in every geographical division. Discussions were based around the engagement factors, as well as a couple of results that the senior management team had wanted to understand better, and these sets of comments supplemented the data already collated.

The final set of results was broken down by division, by department and by level of staff. Any cross-section was possible providing it contained more than 10 staff to retain anonymity, all of which helped individual managers understand their own particular issues and successes.

Addressing the issues

So now the senior management team was in a position to create its action plan. They wanted to look deeply into how to respond to the results and any underlying themes. *It's Your Say* results took over the topics for discussion at a management conference early this year, featured in all departmental management meetings and were a focus at the annual series of staff roadshows. The plan of action developed is not isolated from other initiatives underway across the NSPCC – it feeds into Investor in People news, updates on reviews and restructures, and a new pay scheme being introduced, and is woven into many other communications through the staff magazine, intranet and e-mail.

We want colleagues who feel valued and appreciated and we will continue to listen, measure and communicate to ensure we attract and retain the most motivated and talented staff to help realize our purpose of ending cruelty to children.



Catherine Easey is head of internal communications for the NSPCC. This role involves supporting senior management with internal communication and the change management program, managing the production of a staff magazine, communication for volunteers, a daily news service via the intranet and staff roadshows.

**ANGELA SINICKAS**

How to fix cross-department communication breakdowns

BREAKING DOWN DEPARTMENTAL BARRIERS

Corporate communicators typically focus on top-down and upward communication. Here, Angela Sinickas describes how to influence the bottom line by identifying and fixing communication breakdowns that occur as information tries to travel horizontally through an organization.

Cross-department communication is usually the territory of operational management, not corporate communications. Yet, while other managers are responsible for single-department “silos”, our work takes us across and through those silos. This helps identify any missing connections between units that might be cutting into potential revenue or increasing costs.

To conduct an operational communication assessment, map out the chronological flow of your products or services through the various work units. Then interview or work beside individuals in those units in the same sequence as the work flows. Ask questions about what information needs to be sent and received at each stage. Ask how well it’s currently working and what could make it better.

Case study

In employee focus groups at a home health care company, I asked which subjects employees wanted to know more about. Few mentioned traditional communication topics like strategy or financial results.

Branch employees wanted to know what happened to the patients’ paperwork they express mailed every day to the corporate billing department, so they could invoice insurance companies for reimbursement. Yet each week, faxes would arrive from nameless persons in billing asking branches to immediately fax a number of documents that the branch had already sent days earlier. Then, inevitably, the next week new

faxes asked for the same information to be sent for yet a third time.

Corporate billing office staffers wanted to know why the branches didn’t send paperwork to them on time.

Enjoying a good mystery, I explored further to understand where the communication breakdowns were occurring. I started by watching paperwork be inserted into express mail packages, waited for the delivery at corporate, and followed the paper trail as far as I could.

The problems

Branch paperwork was being processed at least a week after it arrived by express mail, which made daily deliveries an unnecessary expense.

Temporary file clerks receiving the paperwork often threw away documents when they couldn’t find a relevant folder in the file room. A particular patient’s file could be on a tall pile on the desk of any one of 200 billing and collection clerks.

Faxes from the branches came through on three different fax machines. The paperwork requested by a single fax was needed by a number of different billing clerks, who were never identified by name, so they never knew if their documents had arrived. Plus, no one monitored the incoming fax machines. Pages were literally

falling to the floor and being mixed up.

Employees in corporate weren’t allowed to phone or e-mail branch employees without a signed permission slip. This was apparently an over-reaction to a previous problem when field employees were being bombarded with requests from too many corporate employees.

The solutions

The company hired regular-status filing staff and moved the fax machines to an attended location. It also reorganized the billing and collection departments so individuals working on the same patient pool sat together. The billers could have files on their desks only if they were actively working on them, otherwise they needed to be returned to the file room. The company abolished permission slips and encouraged conversation between billing clerks and branches.

The outcomes

Here, the most easily quantified outcome was about US\$100,000 saved in annual express mail charges when the daily packages to corporate were reduced to twice a week.

More importantly, “days sales outstanding”, or DSO (the average number of days between the service being provided and the payment being received) dropped from a high of 186 to under 100. DSO has a significant financial impact in terms of cash flow and the ability to earn as much return on “banked” money as possible. Plus, the longer it takes to send out a bill, the less likely it will ever be paid.

When putting together findings from an operational communication assessment, you should work with operational managers individually to identify possible improvements. This way you’re working together to solve a complex issue, rather than publicly pointing out problems that make other managers look bad.

Identifying and straightening out costly, dysfunctional organizational communication processes across silos can provide another benefit. The communicator’s role begins to be viewed by senior leaders as one that directly contributes to the bottom line. Projects like these give substance to the “business” part of being a business communicator.



Angela Sinickas, ABC, is president of Sinickas Communications, Inc., an international communication consultancy specializing in helping corporations achieve business results through targeted diagnostics and practical solutions. For more information visit: www.sinicom.com



JOB VAN HARMELEN

Let engaged employees convert the cynics among the workforce

INVITING TNT'S EMPLOYEES INTO THE CEO'S VIRTUAL OFFICE

At TNT, the CEO knows that open dialogue with front-line staff is crucial if the business strategy is to be understood and delivered well. Here, Job van Harmelen explains how the CEO runs a virtual office – offering interactive chat sessions, a blog and his strategic agenda to ensure clear communication with the 157,000-strong workforce.

After the report of our annual alignment research, where clear intent, transparent communication and decision making came up as areas for improvement, our CEO was looking for ways to close the gap. He wanted to engage colleagues in a dialogue on building capabilities for the future and facilitate continuous feedback. He was especially interested in the people beyond his direct line of sight who are executing strategy on a day-to-day basis. CEOs are busy people and we needed to leverage his time as best as possible.

In addition to the regular cascade management meetings and “tough questions – straight answers” sessions, we developed a virtual CEO office on the group intranet. The office was named “In Touch With Peter” and became the second most popular section of the site. Following our first live-chat at the end of 2003, our virtual CEO office still combines the following applications:

CEO agenda

At the beginning of each year, following the annual senior management meeting, we publish the priorities for that year. These priorities are based on strategy and the results of the alignment and engagement surveys and are the center of the virtual office.

Online 90-minute chat sessions

Every two months, we'll select one of the items from the CEO agenda (for example: embedding values or growth in China) and

organize a 90 minute on-line chat session. These chats always follow a rigid process. Before the chat, people are invited to participate in a short on-line pulse check which serves two objectives:

- 1) It gives us the chance to get feedback from the company and prepare the main focus of the chat session.
- 2) We stimulate people to think through the implications of a specific issue and enable them to prepare for it.

Eighty percent of a typical chat consists of discussing questions from the CEO and 20 percent answering questions from employees. It's basically a real-time qualitative survey. A week after the chat, a complete transcript and summary is published on the virtual CEO office and highlights, actions and next steps are shared.

Personal blog: “On my mind”

Given our CEO's busy schedule, we manage to get an entry out every other week. People have the ability to reply and are enthusiastic about the process. Every Friday our CEO receives an overview of all responses and often on Monday we can see his responses online.

Running the blog and chats for so many



Job van Harmelen is principal consultant at MeyerMonitor and currently works as senior communications manager for TNT Group Communications. He's responsible for the Virtual CEO Office on the Group Intranet and Internal Communications of Planet Me: the global initiative of TNT and its employees to radically reduce CO₂ emissions.

years has taught us a few tips that are good to keep in mind when managing a truly interactive environment.

Focus on the content

Although the processes of internal blogs and CEO chats (hundreds of concurrent participants) are very energetic and engaging to employees, it's paramount to manage the content and get the outcomes of virtual dialogues back in to the real-time business. This doesn't mean that after the chat you need to chase people to deliver on promises or actions, but that you invest in communicating (or better still – enable participants to communicate themselves) what came out and what has been done.

The day the cynics stop saying that people should “get back to work instead of spending their time in the blog section”, you know you've succeeded.

Engage the less engaged

These tools appeal to those already engaged. Engaged employees are willing to go the extra mile and get involved in blog discussions and chats. More importantly, they communicate (on a personal level) and speak their minds. Disengaged employees tend to put their ambitions in anonymity (surveys) and refrain from speaking out in the open.

That is why special care is needed when cynical or complacent remarks enter into the discussion. Only by dealing with these remarks with openness and respect for the individual can you set the example that there really is room for a constructive dialogue, paving the roads for other less engaged or cynical colleagues to join the dialogue in the future.

The influence of the engaged

I'm always surprised to see the relief when we report our findings of (pre-chat) surveys. “Some 88 percent of the employees understand and support the new strategic direction” or “People's biggest concern is the impact XYZ will have on our growth objectives instead of job security”. As communicators and managers, we tend to focus too much on small negative groups. In a constructive dialogue, engaged employees will share their engagement with the less engaged.

**DARREN BRIGGS**

How to become the star coach of a winning leadership team

COACHING YOUR LEADERS TO COMMUNICATE WITH IMPACT

How many communicators want to find themselves in the position where they have to take on their CEO and risk providing feedback that may not be wholly positive? But being able to coach senior leaders to improve their communication technique is an encouraging step forward for a component of the internal communicator's role that has previously faced resistance. Darren Briggs explains how best to approach the challenge.

In the world of business, Dale Carnegie, the well known American communication training guru once said "there are four ways, and only four ways in which we have contact with the world. We're evaluated and classified by four contacts: what we do, how we look, what we say and how we say it."

Equally in the sports world, winning coaches have a way with words, whether educating or motivating. They never fail to let their players know what is expected, what they've done right and where they can improve their performance. They can move individuals and teams to great heights with a few chosen words spoken at the right time. The interesting fact is that a great coach is also an effective communicator.

The coaching challenge

Over the years, internal communicators have struggled to take on the role of communication coach for business leaders. This may in part be down to resistance from managers who see no need for coaching. The normal response is that they wouldn't be where they are today if they were a poor communicator. Or it could be down to the fact that some internal communicators aren't seen as credible communicators themselves.

The encouraging news is that our recent CEO research with Melcrum¹ has highlighted that many senior leaders are now seeing the virtues of being coached on

their communication. Our evidence suggests that they want feedback and that they're prepared to listen; though we all know that saying they want to listen and then actually listening can be two different things. Sadly though, we found that internal communication continues to face an uphill battle. It's a fact that many CEOs and senior leaders primarily get their communication counsel and in turn their coaching from their direct reports and not their internal communication professional.

So the big question is: what can you do to become the communication coach for the leadership team?

The principles of a successful coach

In our experience being a coach doesn't mean being the best at what you do. It helps of course, but it isn't a pre-requisite for success. Going back to the analogy of sport, great footballers don't always make the greatest coaches.

Being a good coach is about painting a clear vision of success, challenging performance and motivating people to realize their full potential. In other words, the same principles of good leadership. We'd say communication leadership.



Darren Briggs is partner at The Company Agency, where he advises and coaches senior leaders to be more effective communicators. He has 20 years' corporate experience working at chief executive and board level with companies such as British Airways, Microsoft, Nike, PepsiCo and Vodafone.

So what can you do?

Unless you've already built up a strong relationship with your CEO, it's never easy to go into the lions den with an aim to give feedback and provide coaching – unless it's been asked for in the first place.

Whatever the circumstances, you need a good reason to start the coaching dialogue and in my experience, having sound qualitative feedback is always helpful. Getting this feedback is not as hard as it may seem. Next time your CEO communicates to your employees, think about the kind of feedback you need in order to prompt a coaching conversation. Whether it's an e-mail or a town-hall style address, try and avoid using "happy sheets" to gain quantitative data but consider more open questions that will give you the meaningful insights about the effectiveness of the communication.

Another technique is to get leaders to see and hear themselves so that they can witness what their audience has experienced. It's a powerful way of illustrating strengths and weaknesses. Few people like seeing themselves perform and rarely hold a mirror up to themselves. It's part of an approach that The Company Agency uses when we coach CEOs. On one hand you can find leaders who engage immediately with this approach and on the other (certainly the minority) there are those who find it extremely uncomfortable.

The golden rules of feedback

In summary, coaching people and in particular leaders is never easy. Within an organization, there are very few people who are brave enough to give tough feedback to their boss, let alone their CEO. Hence it's often easier to leave it to a third party to give the tough messages. If you do find yourself in the privileged position where your relationship with your leaders allows you to coach them with their communication, just remember the golden rules of giving feedback. Always start with the motivational stuff first ("you did a really good job here by...") and close with the formative comments last ("next time, why don't you try it this way...").

Good luck!

¹ For more information about the report *21st Century Leadership Communication*, please visit: www.melcrum.com



SUE DEWHURST AND LIAM FITZPATRICK

How your words and actions shape how others perceive you

SELF ANALYSIS: WHAT SIGNALS DO YOU SEND TO LEADERS?

As the role of the internal communicator is still in its infancy compared to other functions in the workplace, you may often find it a challenge to be understood and appreciated. Here, Sue Dewhurst and Liam FitzPatrick suggest ways of clarifying to your stakeholders, including senior leaders, how you add value to your organization.

Internal communicators are often frustrated that their customers don't appreciate them or understand the value they could add, if they were given the opportunity. We all have times when we wish people would ask for advice earlier or realize we can do more than correct PowerPoint slides and write e-mails.

But, when you think about it, it's not really surprising that colleagues might have a problem understanding our role. Internal communications is a relatively young profession. When we've asked practitioners on training courses what friends or relatives think they do at work, answers have ranged from "organize office parties" to "read the news".

So it's really up to us to help stakeholders see what our role is about and how we can add the most value.

Choosing your words carefully

First things first, what do you say when people ask you what your role is? One of our favourite exercises is to pair up internal communicators and ask them to pretend they've just met at a social event. Their new acquaintance knows nothing about the internal communication professional and asks them what they do for a living. What do they say?

Usually, it reminds everyone that we ourselves often struggle to explain what we do. No wonder other people have a problem. So if you don't yet have a 60 second (maximum – time yourself!) explanation you can use next time

somebody asks you what your role is all about, now's the time to develop one.

Setting out your stall

Taking it further, do your senior leaders know how you plan to add value to their organization this year? Do you have a written strategy that sets out the business priorities you'll support and how you intend to go about it? Have you involved your stakeholders in putting it together, through asking simple but pertinent questions about their priorities and what would help achieve them?

An internal communication strategy doesn't have to be a weighty, complicated document. There are no right or wrong ways of doing it. What's most important is that it's built on conversations with stakeholders about how you can support the business priorities, it sets out clearly where you plan to focus and why, and your stakeholders have seen it, debated it and signed up to it.

So the next time they try to drag you off in the opposite direction, you can remind them what they said the priorities were and offer them the choice about how you spend your time and where you will add the most value.



Sue Dewhurst and Liam FitzPatrick run **Competent Communicators**, a company specializing in professional development for internal communicators and Melcrum's official training and development partner. For more information go to: www.competentcommunicators.com

Action stations

Of course, actions speak louder than words. If you say you'll focus on one set of priorities but stakeholders permanently see you fill your days doing something else, that's what they'll think your role is really about. Building credibility comes through demonstrating through your actions that you can make a difference.

Every day brings unplanned activities and crises. That's life. But once you've set out your priorities, it's important to keep coming back to them. Time management is all about making decisions about what activities are more or less important, relatively speaking. If the activities from your IC strategy keep falling off your priority list, take a look at the decisions you're making about how you spend your time.

Gathering evidence

When you achieve good results, make sure you gather the evidence. Consultants regularly put together case studies showing how they helped clients achieve business results. They set out the clients' objectives, the strategies and tactics used to achieve those objectives, and the measures demonstrating the results.

When you're under pressure, it's tempting to run straight from one project to another, but take the time to document your own successes in this way and use them to show internal stakeholders you can do the same thing for them too.

Educating stakeholders

It's easy to blame stakeholders for chaining you to the e-mail and PowerPoint treadmill and not allowing you the freedom to add the value you'd like to. And yes, there will be certain people who probably just never will "get it".

But before you set the blame completely at their door, take a look at how your own words and actions could be helping them to form their opinions. Little by little, you'll probably find ways to start turning things around.

**LIZ GUTHRIDGE**

**Sink or swim, but
don't stay on the
shore if you want to
get ahead**

TAKE TO THE WATER FOR CAREER SUCCESS

In order to propel your career to the next level, an element of bravery is required. Liz Guthridge explains why remaining on the shore as an observer is unlikely to help you reach the career heights to which you aspire. Instead, says Guthridge, you have to summon your courage and enter the fast flowing channels of the communication ocean.

If you want to improve your skills and further your career today, you can't stay on the shore, you've got to get into the water.

Consider taking these three actions simultaneously and see if you can effect change as a result.

1. Dive deeply into your industry

Situation: C-suite executives appreciate and expect their communication counselors to know the business as well as their communication specialty.

Your actions: Besides immersing yourself in on-the-job training, take advantage of formal training, such as company classes, industry trade shows, professional meetings, continuing education and technical seminars. Also, join professional associations geared toward your industry. Even if you don't have a formal speakers' bureau at your organization, invite subject-matter experts to your communication staff meetings. You and your staff can learn industry and company specific information while the speaker gets presentation skill practice with a new audience.

Other tips: If you've not been in the job market lately, be prepared that many recruiters prefer talking to potential candidates with industry expertise. If you're contemplating switching jobs, think hard about your commitment to your industry. If you like it, assess the depth of your knowledge and determine if you have any gaps. If you want to switch industries, think how you'll apply

your expertise to a new industry.

2. Swim across lanes

Situation: Your colleagues in other functions, in all likelihood, also count on you having more than a superficial understanding of their area.

You may not be in their "swim lane" in their official process map, but if you're working with them you need to "pass the baton" at some stage. You and your staff members are more valuable if you understand their work, can easily swim between lanes and make the proper and timely hand-offs.

Your actions: Spend time with colleagues in other functions. Ask them not only about their work, but also about what trade publications they read, what professional associations they belong to and what training programs they attend. And consider taking part in one or two that interest you.

For example, my clients include communication professionals, as well as HR and IT leaders. As well as belonging to the usual suspects of professional associations (IABC, PRSA and CCM [Council of Communication Management]), I'm a member of SHRM and the Organization Design Forum. I



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also subscribe to www.SearchCIO.com.

Other tips: Consider job rotations, if not for you, then for your staff members. A three to six month assignment in another department, either communication-related or sales, HR or IT can be very mind-expanding for the individual as well as the department that's hosting the individual. Many organizations are so committed to their silos and the status quo that they often don't think about job rotations as a low-cost, high-benefit way to train and retain key staff members.

3. Play in water fountains

Situation: Other worlds besides business and the communication profession can offer ideas as well as introduce you to a broader network. You'll also improve your peripheral vision, which is critical these days. For example, Mark Parker, CEO of Nike, turns to interior design, cuisine, art and music for inspiration. He consults his global network of friends and associates for tips on who can help him maintain Nike's standing as the "influencers of influencers," as recently reported by the *Wall Street Journal*.

Your actions: Follow your interests and passions. Track experts and trend-setters who are pushing the boundaries in those areas. Also take time to seek out diverse friends and associates with whom you can discuss a range of topics and participate in different activities.

Other tips: Be focused first on enjoyment rather than career advancement. The more open and curious you are, the more you can learn and make connections. And be sure to ask for help and introductions.

Reap the rewards

The benefits from these three actions can help you regain your energy, give you new perspectives and equip you with new skills that will help you in your current role or in any new challenge you want to take on next. And remember, you can't just wade in. Jump and be buoyant!

Leadership communication – the AstraZeneca way

Coaching leadership teams to engage employees during change

BY DOMINIC WALTERS AND DAVID NORTON

Faced with major and sustained change, the Research & Development organization of pharmaceutical giant, AstraZeneca, decided to coach, equip and support its leadership teams to engage employees in what was happening. To achieve this, they worked in tandem with communication consultancy Synopsis. Here, Dominic Walters and David Norton explain the process and the lessons learned on the way.

- Engage leaders in being effective communicators.
- Raise communication up their leaders' agendas.
- Work with leadership groups to align them, help them understand their roles and responsibilities and play to their combined strengths.
- Show leaders how communication can help achieve real solutions to key business problems.

The whole pharmaceutical industry is facing change – cost pressures, new markets, outsourcing and changing regulations are just a few of the factors. Like its competitors, AstraZeneca is responding to these broader changes in the industry and research and development (R&D) is a key area of focus. Pharmaceutical R&D requires a huge amount of investment and effort to bring about greater innovation, greater productivity and new discoveries will result in real and worthwhile savings.

Engaging employees in this change, particularly after earlier waves of productivity improvement, constant process improvement and change was a key task for Alex Kalombaris, global head, R&D Communications. Working with leading European communication specialists, Synopsis, he and his team adopted an approach which focused on coaching leadership teams and equipping communicators to support them.

This case study will help those communicators looking to:

What did AstraZeneca R&D do?

“It’s extremely important that we strengthen our leaders’ capabilities in how they communicate,” says Alex Kalombaris. “They recognize that being a leader requires more than just technical ability. They’re our most important channel and the best way to engage and inspire our employees, especially during times of change. Our leaders knew they had to get this right but they needed some tools and training to help them. Employees look to their leaders to inspire and engage them. Our leaders in AstraZeneca R&D had to step up to the plate in a consistent way. The tools and training we provided through Synopsis helped them do just that.”

AstraZeneca R&D based their approach on the Synopsis FAME model of effective leadership communication. FAME is based on Synopsis’ experience of successful leaders in all aspects of life. It concentrates on four key communication skill areas that make leaders effective:

1. *Focus* – effective leaders identify clearly what they want people to think, feel and do and



AstraZeneca is one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies, with a broad range of medicines designed to fight disease in several areas of healthcare. It's active in over 100 countries including the UK and the US.

- plan how to achieve this.
2. *Articulate* – effective leaders can turn a vision into compelling words that people remember and repeat.
 3. *Model* – effective leaders lead by example, know their weaknesses and can flex their natural communication style to play to their strengths.
 4. *Engage* – effective leaders help people see how they fit into the bigger picture and involve people effectively.

Practical workshops

Each leadership team in R&D participated in a one day workshop. A total of 200 senior managers took part.

The workshops were practical and focused each team on what they needed to do to bring about the necessary changes in their area. The entire day looked at how each group of leaders should articulate the direction for their teams, align behind the messages to their people and prepare to engage their people in the changes ahead. Many participants were delighted that not only did they acquire new skills and techniques but also practical approaches to real communication situations that they were due to face.

A major aspect of the workshop was helping leaders understand their preferred communication style. A key distinction was whether the leaders were extroverts – lively, persuasive and entertaining, or introverts – accurate, logical and factual. We used a detailed analytical tool to help leaders understand their natural styles and what this meant for the way they communicated.

Looking at communication styles helped the leaders in three ways. Firstly, they could plan to make the most of the strengths of their preferred style and minimize the impact of its downsides. Secondly, they could spot other people’s preferred styles and shift their approach to match and therefore increase their chances of getting onto the other person’s wavelength quicker. Thirdly, looking at communication styles helped them understand that different people were likely to react differently to the messages they were putting across, and that more than one approach was needed to reach everyone.

Early in the program, we also ran a workshop for the R&D network of communicators who would be working alongside the leadership teams. In this workshop, communicators learned the key leadership communication skills, and practiced ways to support their leaders long after the workshops were over.

Ten lessons learned

1. Understand different communication styles

Communicators and their clients often have different styles which can cause misunderstanding. At AstraZeneca, communicators tend to have a different set of values and priorities from their internal clients. Whereas the communicators tended to be upbeat, spirited and considerate, their clients, most of whom were trained scientists, were by nature more likely to be lower profile, systematic and considerate.

Understanding more about communication styles helped the communicators change their approach to get onto their clients’ wavelength and achieve common ground from which they could agree a way forward. Without this understanding, it was easy for the scientists to dismiss the communicators as “all show” and for the communicators to see the scientists as too fact-focused and both parties coming away from meetings frustrated.

2. Leaders should cater for their audience

Members of leadership teams have different styles which can result in mixed messages. In one team in particular, different styles were reflected in different strategies for communication. A spirited and direct, energetic and charismatic member of the team was keen to talk to people in an unscripted and interactive way. More introverted members of the team were, however, uncomfortable with what they saw as an unstructured and undisciplined approach. The risk here was that different members of the team might take different approaches. The inconsistency that was likely to result could undermine alignment, and send mixed and confusing signals.

This was addressed by working with the team to agree the key messages and the “story” and also reinforcing that the leaders needed to consider the preferred communication styles of their audiences and flex their approach to cater for them. They should be energetic and upbeat for those in their audiences who were extrovert, but also make sure



Dominic Walters is a senior consultant with Synopsis. He leads on coaching and training and has coached leaders in a range of international clients to be more effective communicators.



David Norton is a consultant with Synopsis. His work includes coaching and training leaders and communicators, helping clients put in place the most effective communication channels and measuring their return on communication investment.

KEY POINTS

- The pharmaceutical industry is undergoing major change and as a leading player, AstraZeneca embarked upon coaching its R&D leadership teams in engaging employees during the change process.
- Working with communication consultants, Synopsis, leaders and communicators took part in practical workshops to focus on their own and others’ communication styles to establish the most effective method of transferring information.
- R&D leaders are now more confident with their own communication style and better appreciate the value of their communication teams.

“LEADERS AND COMMUNICATORS MUST UNDERSTAND THEIR COMMUNICATION STYLE AND THE STYLES OF OTHERS, AND HOW THIS INFLUENCES WHAT THEY SAY, THE WAY THEY SAY IT AND HOW OTHERS REACT TO IT.”

- ◀ they clearly link what’s happening with business objectives and have detail and evidence for the more fact-hungry introverted types.

3. Communicators should use their preferred style

Communicators have different styles which can result in mixed messages. At AstraZeneca communicators came from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines and had different styles themselves. Several communicators had been scientists themselves, and moved over to specialize in communication. Others came from journalism and some from PR.

Communicators were helped to understand their preferred style and think through how to get the most out of it. They also had the chance to assess the preferred styles of the leaders they supported and how they could use this information to provide them with an even more effective service.

4. Being collaborative is not enough

R&D leadership teams focused on collaboration. Many of the teams were successful because their leaders were skilled in building strong teams, bringing together functional and technical experts, and fostering co-operation. Their natural style was to be considerate and collaborative.

In many ways, this style is useful during times of change – people expect greater empathy from their leaders, and to be reassured that they understand the pressures they’re under and the pain they’re feeling. On the other hand, the collaborative approach can also bring problems during change. Leaders have to provide a strong sense of direction, and to be able to engage and motivate their people around the context for change, the compelling reasons for it and the need to summon up another burst of energy for the new challenges ahead. Doing this means a shift to being more direct and upbeat.

5. Consider the best approach

Scientists like fact and process. Many appeared to be uncomfortable with emotion and story. The more introverted audiences such as many of the scientists do not like “arguing from analogy” – they don’t want images and metaphors of how one thing is like another. They believe that a thing should rest on its

own merits and be tested for itself. Scientists may also want time to reflect on information, to process through its implications and to have a later opportunity for challenge and discussion. They’re used to informed argument, to establishing hypotheses and then gathering data to test them.

6. Leaders may be affected by proximity to info

Leaders can be too close to the information and too far ahead in their thinking. Many of the leaders were so close to the information that they forgot what their people did and didn’t know. This can cause difficulties when communicating change as an unwise word, or unhappy choice of phrase could trigger concerns that had not existed before. Leaders can also become impatient with teams that are grappling with facts and detail they themselves digested some time ago and misinterpret their slow take up as resistance.

7. Leaders can project their concerns onto staff

For many leaders, the toughest objections to answer were those with which they privately agreed. Sometimes leaders would raise issues and concerns which their people may not have considered because the leaders didn’t want to be seen as corporate propagandists, or because they had their own concerns about how change has been rolled out, and the degree of detail which was available to them. Often, the end result can be extra confusion and concern.

8. Consistency is achievable, despite mixed views

Consistency is possible even when people see things differently. One of the group heads was especially worried about consistency of message. He knew this would be difficult to achieve because his department was spread across three sites, each of which had a distinctive identity and their own strong local leader.

Also, each of the sites were likely to be affected differently, and therefore would need not only different messages, but a different approach. For example, a site that was being severely affected by changes would not welcome an upbeat recounting of the benefits of the change to the organization.

Each of the team clearly had different styles and different mixes of how much telling and discussing they were likely to follow. Therefore, even when the messages and slides handed out to the team were identical and consistent, they would inevitably be used and delivered in different ways, to audiences who were themselves different and distinctive – and who would start selecting different elements of messages that they might remember and pass on to others.

Faced with what looked like an almost inevitable guarantee of inconsistency, lack of control of what people might take out of the

sessions, selective memory and decaying recall, the leader was naturally concerned. He was able to reduce his concerns by:

- Preparation – spending time together working through what the members of the leadership group actually thought, believed and felt confident saying.
- Agreeing as a group an elevator speech, key messages and answers to tough questions.
- Rehearsal – in which they could challenge each other, simulate tough situations they were likely to face and develop responses together, rather than coming up with something on their feet when delivering “live”.
- Summaries – rather than leaving their answers in the Q&A sessions dangling, giving summaries of what they believed to be positive aspects of the changes and why they personally felt confident about it.

9. Leaders should develop their own Q&As

Rather than having the communication team develop FAQs, leaders responded better when they challenged each other with tough questions, developed their answers and tested out how real, credible and reliable these responses were.

It was also very helpful to challenge leaders to raise the questions they feared they’d be asked. In part this helped them prepare to deal with their fears, and it also helped them investigate what they were concerned about, get to the underlying issue and try and address and resolve it.

10. Meeting format matters

The leaders were especially interested in how best to put across their messages. The traditional way of communicating is to run large site events in which 200–300 people get the message at the same time. This minimizes the grapevine, as everyone hears the same message from the same person in the same way.

However, these leaders also needed to ensure high degrees of engagement in order to maintain productivity and keep people focused. Therefore, they believed it was important to have discussion with their people, flush out their issues and increase their sense of confidence about the change.

This meant they couldn’t rely simply on the one off large scale events, since interaction at these would be low, and there would be little time or room for discussion. Indeed, it was more likely at any Q&A session the vocal minority would dominate, even if their views did not represent those of the majority.

Many leaders therefore decided to follow up larger scale events with smaller group discussions in which people could discover what the changes meant for their particular area of the business, raise their concerns and ask questions. They

would also be able to challenge how well their leaders had created the vision for change, defended their interests and developed a feasible plan for successful implementation.

How did this help AstraZeneca?

“The main achievement,” says Alex Kalombaris, “is that we now have a group of leaders in R&D who are a lot more self-aware, and confident in their own communication style. They have a better idea of how to maximize their strengths and work on their weaknesses. The feedback we have received from the leadership team has been very impressive. Following the training, leaders see communication in a different way, as a discipline that requires time and effort to get it right. Finally, it allowed the communication business partners to work closer with the leaders they were supporting and give the communication team the opportunity to show their value.

Summary

In summary, AstraZeneca R&D found that:

- Leaders and communicators must understand their communication style and the styles of others, and in particular, how this influences what they say, the way they say it and how others react to it.
- Leaders should learn to flex their styles to maximize their chances of getting onto other people’s wavelengths quickly.
- Leaders need to think about the message from their audience’s point of view and avoid assuming knowledge they don’t have and projecting onto them issues and concerns they don’t feel.
- Consistency of approach is more likely where a team of leaders gets together to agree the key messages – the elevator speech – and develop and answer their own questions.
- Meeting format is important – large scale gatherings ensure consistency of message but they should be followed up by smaller scale discussions to let people digest what’s been said, challenge and ask questions. *scm*

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The communication climate change at RCMP

Linking engagement factors and internal communication at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

BY DR. ELI SOPOW

The human research team of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has recently completed a major study into the correlation between specific engagement factors and internal communication methods. Here, the leader of that research, Dr. Eli Sopow, details why it was carried out, what the results highlighted and its relevance for functions outside of communication.

While ecological climate change is receiving global attention, weekly headlines and demands for action, another form of climate change is also shaking up our perceptions of the world around us. I'm referring to the organizational climate, and these changes and challenges are no less profound than those affecting the natural environment.

Numerous workplace engagement studies show that employees place a very high priority on inclusive communication, on recognition for a job well done, on the ability to influence organizational actions and various other factors associated with the workplace climate. When such factors are not scoring well, there can be a stormy workplace environment.

Over the past few years there have been many studies showing the link between various workplace engagement factors and overall corporate productivity and organizational effectiveness. However, there has been far less research examining how engagement factors are affected by internal communication, and especially if there's a correlation between specific

internal communication actions and specific engagement factors such as levels of morale, job satisfaction and employee recognition.

For example, is it possible to raise the tide of overall employee satisfaction and morale with just a few key internal communication actions? Do some internal communication activities provide richer results than others? And is there a quantifiable cost-benefit to internal communication targeted to certain workplace engagement factors? In other words, if I take the time to actually listen to you, if I let you know when you're doing a great job and if I make it clear how what you're doing fits into the bigger picture, will you be a happier person? And which of such actions by me will make you happier?

Personnel surveys

To find answers to the above and other workplace climate issues, our human research team at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in the province of British Columbia, Canada, conducted a series of in-depth personnel surveys in 2007. The research asked respondents to rate the effectiveness and quality of 25 workplace engagement factors in addition to various internal communication activities and sources of information. The results from 1,080 respondents were cross-tabulated to specifically drill down into the impact of internal communication on workplace engagement.

The study is proving to be a major resource to not only strategic communication planning, but to human resource development, leadership training and especially to the setting of broad corporate



The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is the Canadian national police service and an agency of the Ministry of Public Safety Canada.

goals and objectives. For example, the survey results were rolled into the provincial organization's annual environmental scan and served to kick-start the senior executive's annual strategic planning session in November 2007.

There's a powerful metaphor in chaos theory called the Butterfly Effect (Lorenz, 1961). Simply put, it states that the flap of a butterfly's wings in South America can create a thunderstorm in Texas. It illustrates that even the smallest of actions can create a ripple effect leading to profound change. What the RCMP workplace engagement study showed was that managers and leaders can indeed create a positive wave of change with only a few, low cost, easy to do communication actions. Here are some of the key highlights from our research.

Research finding 1: The importance of communicating a job well done

Organizational culture and climate research is rich with examples of how we all want to be treated well in the workplace, and especially have a well-developed sense of self and pride of accomplishment. This not only gives us personal confidence, it also helps us be creative, productive and happy. What our research showed is that feeling good about the job you're doing also produces many positive ancillary benefits.

Employees who said they had a high level of recognition for a job well done also had much higher overall workplace engagement scores than those who felt they had low levels of job recognition. For example, those who thought they were often recognized for a job well done also had higher scores for overall morale, for feeling treated fairly in the workplace, being satisfied with their job and being able to balance work and their personal life.

Indeed, the study showed that employees who felt they were recognized for a job well done had four times higher the morale than those who felt their good work was left unrecognized. What this shows is that even an informal acknowledgement of good work (when it's deserved) to an employee can generate positive brain chemistry that spills over into attitudes far beyond just the task at hand.

Research finding 2: The need for managers to communicate often and openly

It's often said that communication is the glue that binds organizations together and this was borne out in the RCMP study. The survey showed that employees who felt that important information was openly shared with them by managers also had significantly higher scores for all 25 key engagement factors tested in the study. For example, those who gave a high score to organizational communication sharing had four

times the level of feeling their rights and values were respected than those employees who gave low marks to important information being shared.

In addition, those who scored organizational information-sharing as high, as opposed to those who scored organizational information-sharing as low, also gave much higher scores to questions concerning fair treatment, to help being available, and to believing that organizational actions matched promises.

Our conclusion from this result is that ongoing, honest communication is strongly symbolic to employees. It shows that the organization has a "corporate personality" that values sharing, listening, consensus and cooperation. We further conclude that even if the information isn't always immediately relevant to an employee, the fact that the organization is making an effort to be continually communicative says a lot. To slightly twist the words of Marshall McLuhan (author of *The medium is the message*), the medium here is the process of communications. And the message from this process medium is, "we care about you."

Research finding 3: The importance of listening to employees

We all have a natural tendency to want to try and control events in our lives. As psychologist Daniel Gilbert points out in his book *Stumbling on Happiness*, we humans are also the only species with the ability to envision the future in great detail, which also means we have a great penchant to try and manage or control it. The workplace is no different. All personnel, regardless of title or rank, have an inherent human need to try and influence events. Indeed, the presence or absence of such influence shapes our sense of self, our feeling of empowerment and our perception of self-worth.



Dr. Eli Sopow spearheads human research and development within the strategic communication section of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Pacific Region Headquarters. He is also an outside consultant to organizations and is the author of the recently published book *Corporate Personality Disorder: Surviving & Saving Sick Organizations*. He holds a PhD in Human & Organizational Systems and has more than 30 years experience in strategic communication and organizational development.

KEY POINTS

- A series of in-depth personnel surveys were carried out by the human research team at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in British Columbia, Canada.
- The research participants were asked to rate the effectiveness and quality of 25 workplace engagement factors, as well as internal communication activities.
- The results were divided into four areas: praising employees, the openness of manager communication, the need to listen to employees and the dangers of information overload.

“EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO EMPLOYEES FEELING VALUED AND HAVING A POSITIVE SENSE OF SELF.”

- ◀ Employee engagement and organizational effectiveness are inextricably linked to employees feeling valued and having a positive sense of self. One way to ensure that this occurs is through internal communication processes that not only encourage employee feedback, but also make it a management priority to share back with employees what impact their feedback has made, if any. The RCMP research study showed that the ability to have a say in decision-making can produce a big difference in how employees feel about many other workplace issues. In addition, knowing that such input is actually being taken seriously can make an equally big impact on how employees feel about many other workplace engagement factors, an example, again, of the Butterfly Effect.

The study showed that those employees who felt they had an opportunity to often provide feedback to supervisors, as opposed to those who thought there was little opportunity for feedback, also had significantly higher scores on all 25 engagement factors used in the study. For example, those who often had a chance to provide feedback showed morale levels up to eight times higher than those who felt they rarely had a chance for feedback. In addition, those employees who felt they often had a chance to provide feedback were more than twice as likely to believe they were treated fairly than those who thought there was little chance for feedback.

Providing feedback on feedback

Giving feedback to managers is one thing, having it taken seriously is another matter. In many organizations employees feel a disconnect between their being encouraged to offer ideas and comments to managers, and the comments actually leading to specific action. The RCMP study showed that organizations that don't take their employees' ideas seriously risk creating a negative ripple effect of workplace disengagement.

For example, the RCMP study showed employees who don't think their suggestions make any difference to organizational decisions have up to five times lower morale than those who think

their suggestions even sometimes make a difference; they are up to three times more likely to feel unfairly treated; and they are up to three times as likely to have low job satisfaction.

There is also another angle here for communication specialists, managers and leaders. It's possible that an organization indeed takes employee feedback very seriously, with such feedback ultimately being part of a decision-making process – or at least it's thoughtfully reviewed and then rejected for good reason. But the problem is, employees never hear back. And so they naturally assume that their feedback is not taken seriously.

A lesson learned by many progressive organizations is that it's even more important to let employees know what's become of their feedback as it is to ask them for feedback in the first place. Such a process of providing feedback on the feedback creates what management scholar and author of *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of The Learning Organization (1990)*, Peter Senge calls “double loop learning,” allowing employees not only to feel empowered within the decision-making process, but to learn from it as well.

Research finding 4: Too much useless information reduces morale and effectiveness

We all complain about too much useless information, especially from e-mails, and about drowning in data 24 hours a day as our BlackBerries buzz away and our cell phones ring multiple tones. The RCMP study showed that such an info-glut is more than a nuisance – it also has a major negative impact on key workplace engagement factors.

The findings showed that in most cases personnel were not getting the amount of information they wanted from the source they found most useful, which they identified as senior leaders and managers. Also, almost half of personnel (41 percent) agreed they were getting too much information not directly related to work, while only 20 percent agreed they were getting the right amount of information. The sources of such information ranged from internal publications and memos to the ubiquitous organizational e-mail.

The most revealing part of the study, and a huge impact on organizational development, was the correlation between those suffering from info-glut and their feeling about other major workplace engagement questions in the survey. Here are just a few of the findings:

Those who agreed they were getting the right amount of information had twice the job satisfaction of those suffering from info-glut (35 percent versus 19 percent).

Morale was 10 percentage points higher for

those getting the right amount of information than for with too much useless information (35 percent versus 25 percent).

Info-glut negatively affected the chance to communicate upward, a key factor in positive workplace engagement. Some 69 percent of those who agreed they were getting the right amount of information also said they often/very often had a chance to provide feedback to supervisors, compared to 45 percent of those getting too much useless information.

Attitudes about supervision of work were negatively correlated to info-glut. While 52 percent of those getting the right amount of information felt they often/very often had adequate supervision, only 38 percent of those getting too much information felt the same way.

The findings show that being buried with too much information not directly related to work is far more than a nuisance. The study shows a direct, negative correlation between info-glut and key workplace engagement factors that are essential to successful organizational development. But the solutions are not simple.

Managing info-glut goes beyond technology

At the RCMP, efforts are being made by technology experts to dramatically reduce, or at least manage and prioritize, the flood of daily internal e-mails – a problem common to every major organization in the world. But some of the solutions to info-glut go beyond technology.

Efforts are also currently underway to improve internal communication to ensure that more information is reaching personnel from sources they want that information to come from, and how they want to receive it, rather than from where they commonly receive it. In some cases this means enhanced and more frequent communication from senior leaders, and in other cases more opportunities for bottom-up communication.

What the study has underscored is the insidious nature of info-glut. It's far more than a nuisance – it's also a major impediment to successful organizational development initiatives. But the good news is that once sources of info-glut are dealt with there can also be a positive ripple effect on a wide range of key employee engagement factors.

Changing the internal communication function

What the workplace engagement survey showed was that even a few “simple” internal communication activities can go a long way to increasing morale, workplace satisfaction, and ultimately the level of overall workplace engagement within an organization. The study showed the linkages and synergies that exist

between strategic communication, human resource management and strategic planning – including management and leadership models.

What the study is influencing is the managerial perception of internal communication. There's a growing awareness that communication is far more than a technical and tactical function (newsletters, websites, etc.); it's a strategic function that requires an understanding of what drives and influences human awareness, behavior and attitudes.

Today the RCMP is working on enhancing its internal communication, especially targeting those managerial skill sets essential to raising employee engagement levels. Those skills include effective listening, timely feedback, workplace recognition, information sharing and collaboration.

Such “social intelligence” skills all involve communication, which again underscores the vital importance of the strategic communication function within organizations.

There's also a great urgency for such communication training and execution – not just at the RCMP but within many institutions and organizations worldwide. The changing demographics of the workplace mean wide swaths of the Baby Boomer generation are heading for retirement, creating opportunities for rapid promotion and a new cadre of managers and leaders – not all of which have the necessary communication skills to deal with the rapidly changing workplace climate. scm

“THERE’S A GROWING AWARENESS THAT COMMUNICATION IS FAR MORE THAN A TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL FUNCTION; IT’S A STRATEGIC FUNCTION THAT REQUIRES AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT DRIVES HUMAN AWARENESS.”

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Inspiring colleagues to make Sainsbury's great again

Creating brand advocates through communication, involvement and feedback

BY JACKI CONNOR

Getting colleagues to be true brand advocates is the ultimate goal in the journey of engagement. Here, Jacki Connor describes how – following challenging times at leading UK retailer Sainsbury's three years ago – the leadership team came together to re-engage the workforce and encourage true brand advocacy across the organization.

When Justin King joined Sainsbury's as the new CEO in 2004, we had experienced challenging times. Keen to get the business back on track, plans were soon unveiled for the recovery of Sainsbury's. Known as "Making Sainsbury's Great Again" (MSGA) the aim was to grow sales by £2.5 billion by March 2008. This would be achieved by a combination of lower prices, better product quality, improved product availability and great customer service.



J Sainsbury plc is a leading UK food retailer with interests in financial services. It consists of Sainsbury's Supermarkets, Sainsbury's Convenience stores, Sainsbury's Online, Sainsbury's Bank and store support centres. It has 150,000 colleagues.

Instilling pride in colleagues

Delivery of great customer service was going to play a critical role in meeting our targets and we knew that to do this we needed to re-engage all colleagues across the entire business – a sense of pride in the brand had to be re-awakened internally. In 2005 we introduced an external brand campaign that would help reposition Sainsbury's in the eyes of customers. "Try something new today" became the external brand concept that would drive growth by encouraging every customer to put one additional item in their basket every week, as

well as livening up the shopping, cooking and eating experience.

Aligning internal and external brand values

The challenge for the internal communication team was how to bring this rejuvenated Sainsbury's brand to life through our colleagues. As successful as the external marketing campaign might be, if the customer experience in store did not live up to expectations then we would fail.

The attitudes and behavior of colleagues would play a huge role in our ability to be great again. We needed to enable colleagues to grasp our vision for a great business and understand what part they could play in that future. We needed to enthuse them about our new brand and provide ways in which they could contribute to the realization of that, while at the same time being very clear about the values that would lie at the heart of the delivery of that brand.

The task lay in creating powerful brand advocates in our colleagues – this would require inspiration, education, and engagement.

Moving away from faceless communication

A key step in the development of the colleague communication and engagement strategy was the simple realization that if we wanted colleagues to think, feel and behave differently, then we needed to treat them differently.

The way we communicated with colleagues needed a fundamental rethink. We needed to give communication the personal touch, and ensure that colleagues understood who Justin and the senior leadership team were. We also needed to

ensure that they fully understood the part they had to play in Making Sainsbury's Great Again.

We tried to reduce the amount of operational communication that was sent out to store and place a far greater emphasis on engaging information.

Connecting colleagues with Justin

The first step in this change was the creation of the all colleague letter – a bi-monthly letter from Justin, which was sent to every colleague. Written in an informal and open style, the letter covered the latest business performance, significant product news and provided colleagues with information about corporate responsibility initiatives. This very direct communication showed colleagues that Justin believed in them and appreciated their need to know how the business was performing and what else was going on.

Overwhelming feedback from colleagues meant that the letter soon became monthly and this has become an invaluable tool for communicating with colleagues directly, especially when there's a high degree of business activity. Now colleagues actively seek out his letters at times of uncertainty, because they know he'll keep them fully informed. He has built trust with colleagues through this regular and consistent communication.

Introducing manager briefings

Direct, face-to-face communication between managers and team members was also seen as a vital tool for the engagement and mobilization of colleagues. So in 2005, a decision was taken to introduce the Monthly Briefing – a chance for teams to have face-to-face time with their managers, ask questions and voice concerns or suggestions.

The first of these briefings launched our Making Sainsbury's Great Again plan to colleagues. Using a video of Justin and presentation materials the communication team ensured that every colleague understood the big picture and had a dialogue with their peer group about the part they would play in its realization.

Now, the subject matter focuses on general business, corporate responsibility initiatives and ways in which colleagues can actively contribute to the wider value of the business. The content has continued to develop, as has the use of video to bring the messages to life – slides and lively video material are provided to every store and depot each month to enable the delivery of the briefings by busy managers.

The value of video

The videos add value because they introduce members of the senior leadership team to colleagues in the stores and depots. More

recently, shop-floor colleagues have been invited to participate in the video and this has increased the credibility of the messages, especially when colleagues are talking honestly and openly about their involvement in different business initiatives.

It's worth mentioning that although colleagues gave overwhelmingly positive feedback about the introduction of the video, managers were less positive. We investigated this with the management teams and discovered that in a store environment, where a colleague presence is required at all times – especially at key service points – it was difficult to take colleagues off the sales floor and into the training room to show them a video.

As a result of this feedback we issued an "Amazing Monthly Briefing Box" to all sites which contained at least one hand-held portable DVD player, dependent upon the size of the store and the number of colleagues. The premise was that, if they couldn't bring the colleagues to the communication then, by introducing a portable option, they could take the communication to the colleagues on the sales floor.

Creating a new communication culture

A hallmark of the new communication culture created as part of MSGA is the desire to really listen to and engage with colleagues. Garnering their feedback and taking action has been a key tenet in our striving to be a "great place to work".

Wherever possible, active listening has been built into communication. For example, the approach to conferences and events has become much more of a two-way experience. Time is set aside on the agenda for unscripted "Question Time" sessions with members of the executive board. These sessions are generally hosted by an external facilitator, or on occasion Justin himself, so that his fellow directors can't "duck the issue" and offer a vague response.



Jacki Connor is director of customer service at Sainsbury's. Connor joined the company as head of internal communication in 2006, a role which has since merged with her current role, reflecting the organization's philosophy that the way leaders communicate with, lead and engage colleagues, has a direct link to how they engage with customers.

KEY POINTS

- In 2004, Sainsbury's new CEO introduced a strategy for the recovery of the business, known as "Making Sainsbury's Great Again".
- Customer service was a key part of this strategy. In order to deliver the best service, colleagues needed to be highly engaged with the new external branding campaign "Try Something New Today".
- This was achieved by revising the internal communication strategy to involve more personalized communication, increased visibility of senior leadership, more two-way dialogue and more action on colleague feedback.
- Involving colleagues has been fundamental to the improved communication culture and business performance of Sainsbury's.

- ◀ We know from feedback that colleagues get a great deal out of this element of the session. All questions are captured and those that are not answered due to time constraints are answered after the event.

Encouraging leaders to listen

It has also become routine for the executive board to hold regular listening groups with managers and colleagues at regional events, providing colleagues the opportunity to talk face-to-face with their directors. They can ask any questions and share their opinions and views in a safe environment.

The benefits are two-fold: directors often comment on the amount that they personally learn from these sessions, hearing about what works well and where we can improve our business, and colleagues really feel they have a voice. Again, it's vital that colleagues' feedback and questions are widely shared.

Acting on feedback

Whilst we know that listening is important, we know that it's equally important to show that we are *acting* on the feedback that we receive. This is why we put so much emphasis on sharing feedback and answering any questions that are unresolved. In addition, if there's significant feedback on one particular subject, we invite the relevant colleague from the store support center to attend the next set of meetings so that they can respond face-to-face to their colleagues.

This focus on listening has proved to be a powerful engagement tool with colleagues, particularly when they see where their feedback has provided learning for the business. Recent examples of colleague feedback driving change includes improvements in the cleaning and guarding of stores (see side box, right).

A day for colleagues

A new addition to the Sainsbury's event calendar is the Colleague Council Big Day. Colleague Councils exist in every Sainsbury's location and comprise colleague representatives that look at everything from colleague facilities to charity fundraising activities. This annual event allows colleagues to raise questions and concerns directly to the Board who all attend the sessions. The events also give colleagues a chance to see first hand any significant developments that are going to affect them (see side box, right).

Bringing the brand strategy to life internally

Informing colleagues through communication was a challenge, but we knew we needed to inspire colleagues to feel positive about the brand and

bring it to life for them.

It was vital that the new brand was brought to life internally and we needed to help colleagues understand exactly what we were trying to communicate to customers. For example, through customer research and analysis, the brand team discovered that many customers "sleep shop", i.e. they subconsciously walk through a store picking up their usual items, and rarely try out new products. This was the seed for a new marketing campaign built around the concept of "Try Something New Today".

To dramatize the campaign, we arranged for a man in a gorilla suit to shop in a store on a busy Saturday morning and the results were filmed. Amazingly, customers didn't notice the gorilla's presence, as they were too stuck in their routine. The film was shown as an advert on national television, but we also used it internally in our Monthly Briefings so that colleagues got the message that sleep shopping was stopping customers from trying something new.

Involving colleagues in external campaigns

We also wanted colleagues to change their own shopping behavior to become brand advocates in the truest sense. To inspire and involve them in this we gave colleagues samples of some of the products associated with the externally focused "Try Tips" campaign, which encouraged customers to try new products and recipes. To accompany the launch of Try Something New Today, all colleagues were sent a pack of sausages and apples and the relevant Try Tip with their letter from Justin so they could give it a try at home. Further waves of colleague sampling are used to maintain momentum.

Once inspired, it was important that we continued to involve colleagues and tap into their creative potential. To do this, a Try Tips competition was launched, seeking the best suggestions from colleagues. Following masses of suggestions, the best were turned into Try Tip cards for customers and were featured in the stores and in our colleague magazine.

Rejuvenating the values – starting at the top

We're absolutely passionate that what we deliver is only half as important as how we deliver it and in the context of all of this change it was also important that colleagues felt sure about how they should behave. This meant demonstrating clearly the values and style that should lie at the heart of the delivery of our new brand.

Sainsbury's already had a set of values, however over time focus had wavered and these were not necessarily as well embedded as they could be. It was important that these values were refreshed and brought to life for colleagues.

The rejuvenation of the values had to start at the top, with the senior leaders. New leadership behaviors were developed in line with the values. These behaviors are now part of the appraisal process and when any manager is assessed on performance, the way that the results have been achieved is given the same importance as the results themselves.

The leadership behaviors were created by the Board and they all played a part in delivering these through a series of two day workshops for the top 1000 managers. In turn, another 9,000 managers have been through a one-day version of the course. In total, 235 workshops were held across the country in around 12 months.

Sharing the values with colleagues

Simultaneously, we reminded colleagues about our values. A new approach was taken to explain the values, using video involving actual colleagues. This focused on how colleagues live the values in their home lives as much as their work lives, following colleagues through various real-life scenarios.

We wanted to show colleagues that we didn't expect them to act differently when they came to work: we recruit friendly people, because we want friendly people in our shops. We know people don't change when they walk through the front door of our shop or depot and we don't want them to. We want sincere, authentic colleagues. The approach was all about reminding people to just keep doing what they do everyday.

Monitoring progress

The commercial impact of the internal and external MSGA campaign and associated measures is clear. By October 2007, we had seen eleven quarters of consecutive like-for-like sales and market share growth, and we are close to our £2.5 billion target.

But what about a measurable impact on colleague attitudes and behaviors? Sainsbury's regular colleague perception survey, "Talkback", measures colleague engagement, leadership and commitment.

The results taken from 2004 compared with the latest results show a marked improvement in the Colleague Engagement Index. Some of the key questions have moved up over 10 points.

In addition, new questions were added to the survey in 2005/2006 to test the impact of our brand communication. Significantly, the top five highest scoring questions out of 56 included:

- I understand how what I do impacts on the shopping experience for customers – 93 percent favorable.
- I recommend Sainsbury's products – 91 percent favorable.
- I am aware of Sainsbury's long-term goal and values – 90 percent favorable.

GIVING COLLEAGUES A VOICE

The Colleague Council Big Day was introduced to give Sainsbury's colleagues a voice. At the first event, 500 colleagues – one to represent every store – came together and reported on the concerns raised by fellow colleagues back at their particular branch.

One of the most prominent pieces of feedback was that people didn't feel that the stores were guarded effectively, and consequently felt unsafe when leaving the stores at unsociable hours. People also felt that not enough time was being allocated for the cleaning of stores. Colleagues raised these issues so frequently it was clear that action had to be taken.

As a result, the company decided to invest £1 million in improving the security around stores at night and cleaning them in the run-up to Christmas. This was communicated back to colleagues with a clear message explaining that "following the feedback from your colleague council representative, this is the decision that we've taken as a business." It's small but significant decisions such as these that have been a key driver in the new communication culture at Sainsbury's.

Involvement at the heart of change

The creation of the new communication culture with colleague involvement at its heart has been a key driver for greater engagement and support of the brand. This case study demonstrates how rebuilding the foundations of communication by providing greater mechanisms for open and honest dialogue and involvement internally, can make a real difference to the financial performance of the business. [SCM](#)

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Lights, camera, action: A fresh start at ITV

Communicating a major leadership change under the scrutiny of the public eye

BY PENNY LAWSON

After receiving heavy criticism from the media and public alike, ITV, the UK's largest commercial television company, hired new executive chairman, Michael Grade to change its fortunes. The internal communication department, explains Penny Lawson, played a key role during this time in managing the transition and changing how the function was perceived by ITV's demanding internal audience.

In television, we expect to see ourselves written and talked about daily in red-tops, broadsheets, pubs, clubs, in the playground and around the watercooler. We can feel very – perhaps too – important; as a new joiner from advertising said recently, “television matters” and that’s one of the reasons so many young people want to join each year and so many of our employees indicate, year after year in opinion surveys, that they’re proud to work in the television industry. But what happens to employee sentiment when the praise turns to censure and the pride to embarrassment? When your company is never described in the press without the adjectives, “beleaguered” or “troubled”?

This article describes 18 months in the life of ITV, the UK's largest commercial television company and a growing force in the online world, and some of the actions we took to help manage, and then change perception internally.

Our target audience

Let's start with our people. ITV has almost 6,000 permanent employees in more than 85 locations

up and down the country. As well as permanent employees, there's also a large body of freelance writers, artists and technical staff.

Whilst the majority of our staff are UK based, we also have a worldwide presence with offices in Los Angeles, New York, Sydney and Cologne, as well as some smaller offices in Rio de Janeiro, Hong Kong and Beijing.

We employ a wide range of people with a wide range of skills: from journalists and news presenters to producers, craftspeople and highly skilled technical operators, such as camera, sound and lighting crews. Around 15 percent of our staff base can be out on location at any one time and many of our production crews don't have regular access to PCs.

Our office-based staff include the revenue driving customer relations, sales, international distribution and marketing teams, together with the commissioning teams, shared services operations (HR, finance, legal etc.), and our rapidly growing new media arm, ITV Consumer.

To ensure we reach everyone in the company, we deploy a wide range of communication methods.

The cloud of pain

It's January 2006 and we've just re-branded all our channels, our online services and the employer brand. We've already had a difficult few months after a summer of the reality show “Celebrity Love Island”, which was critically panned externally and internally; many regarded it as a sign that our 50-year reputation for quality programming had gone south. However, after a huge employee engagement exercise involving



ITV is the biggest commercial television network in the UK, broadcasting a full range of genres, including drama, entertainment, news, current affairs factual, sport and children's programming.

around half the company in workshops and surveys to nail and re-create a brand and set of company values for the digital age, there's more optimism – and some cautiously positive press comment.

Internal communication has been centrally involved as partners with marketing and HR to bring the process and the new brand itself to life for everyone in the company. We have completely redesigned our intranet to embody and reflect the new brand and values. Internal feedback has been exceptional, with high scores for recognition and approval (76 percent) and a flow of comments such as, "I feel excited about what's ahead".

Then, not long after the champagne bubbles have settled, we receive the first of two hostile and ultimately unsuccessful takeover bids. The fragile recovery of our reputation is swiftly undone; our CEO, Charles Allen, is frequently and increasingly under fire. Almost regardless of the viewing figures, our schedule is dismissed as falling behind that of the BBC or our commercial competitors Channel 4, 5 and BSkyB.

Employees read, or have quoted to them by friends and family an almost daily diet of negative comment on the company, its leadership, its products and prospects. Added to that there's a downturn in advertising spend in the media and the schedule is not performing as it should; the recently appointed director of television in charge of commissioning new UK material, buying imports and scheduling will take another 12-18 months to make his mark, as the lead time for new TV material is considerable.

What our current executive chairman Michael Grade calls "the cloud of pain" had well and truly settled over ITV.

Stay open, build knowledge, increase affiliation
What could we do as internal communicators? As a FTSE company, we had to take the greatest care with comment and rebuttal and couldn't be seen to make any form of forecast. But of course that's exactly what people craved. We did three things.

1. Kept communication flowing

First of all, we kept all channels of communication as open as possible, including senior management briefings and full strategy debriefs for all employees. Via electronic newsletters, our daily intranet news service – and occasional e-mails when external noise became very extreme – we explained and explained again that we would give staff the facts first; but that anything else they read or heard had to be regarded as rumor until we could confirm it. This commercial reality wasn't always fully understood but the flow of comment was appreciated.

2. Educated people on our programs

Next, we focused on giving people something to help them through the dispiriting conversational attacks on ITV: better understanding of our programs. A short weekly e-zine was launched. *Have You Heard?* summarizes a must-watch program on each channel and on the internet, with a short explanation of the kind of audience it's aimed at, and the job it's there to do in the schedule.

3. Invested in new CSR initiatives

Then with two major charity-related events coming up in the summer: the Prince's Trust benefit concert and Soccer Aid, a charity football tournament, we drew attention to a great tradition of the company: using the power of the camera and of entertainment to help effect social change.

From the previous staff opinion survey, we knew that belonging to a company that cared about social issues mattered to some 90 percent of staff. We'd taken for granted and underplayed this emotional capital, and now encouraged people to be aware of the range of corporate social and environmental action taking place across the organization.

We ran an awareness week on the intranet, with competitions to win tickets to Soccer Aid and the Prince's Trust concert. We also ran features on carbon-offsetting and added a carbon calculator to the homepage in the run up to the summer holiday season. This wasn't simply a tactical distraction from larger woes; we continued with focused moments, such as the rollout of payroll giving and the creation of a charity fund-raising e-Christmas card.

This program of reinforcing affiliation with ITV's core traditions helped, if it could not greatly boost morale. Staff awareness of ITV's social commitments rose and remained high when reassessed towards the end of the year.



Penny Lawson is director of internal communications at ITV. After a spell in the City and then TV journalism, Lawson worked as a change and communication consultant with private and public sector organizations ranging from the Metropolitan Police Service and the BBC to Norwich Union, Sainsbury's and British Airways.

KEY POINTS

- In 2006, ITV, the UK's largest commercial television company came under fire from the media and public, accused of failing to meet the broadcasting standards set by its competitors.
- Prior to the appointment of new chief executive Michael Grade, only 29 percent of staff felt confident with the existing leadership team taking the broadcaster forward.
- The internal communication department spearheaded a successful campaign to restore employees' pride in ITV and foster an open and honest dialogue with the new leader.

“MESSAGES ABOUT CONFIDENCE, BOLDNESS, RISK-TAKING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR REGIONAL SERVICES WERE ALL LANDING AND THE EXCITEMENT WAS PALPABLE.”

◀ **The low point**

In the summer of 2006, chief executive Charles Allen announced he was stepping down and there was a period of nearly three months of rumor and uncertainty before Grade's surprise appointment was announced in November.

Prior to Grade's appointment, confidence and readiness for change were at an all time low. In the staff opinion survey we ran shortly before Grade's appointment, only 29 percent felt that ITV's leadership was clear about how to take ITV forward in the changing broadcast marketplace.

Our people had lost sight of the company's underlying strategy so it was vital that we re-energized the entire organization to get everyone behind it again.

Communication objectives and desired outcomes

Internal communication was ready with a planned campaign to address this and achieve the following objectives:

- To make people feel more positive about the future.
- To foster their bruised pride in being part of ITV.
- To develop confidence that communication with and from the new leadership is open and honest – an essential pre-requisite if Grade was to turn the company around and bring people with him.
- To spread Grade's key messages early so that people felt better-informed.

Our strategy

It's said that the CEO contributes around 50 percent of a company's reputation, so we were clear that our task would be to articulate and develop "Brand Grade". Having spent the inter-regnum encouraging more communication between the leadership team and staff, we had their approval and then the CEO's to achieve maximum impact as quickly as possible to:

- Communicate first with employees – not easy in such a heavily scrutinised company.
- Make face-to-face contact with Grade the cornerstone of the plan – ITV management had become known for remaining in Fortress

HQ in London.

- Create and capitalize on moments which would become stories embodying the new optimism.
- Deploy citizen journalism – make local staff rather than internal comms the mouthpiece of change.
- Involve a critical mass of 30 percent of employees.
- Continue to use TV/film as a key medium for communication throughout the campaign (to remind everyone we're a TV company).
- Harness the rollercoaster of goodwill that accompanied Grade's appointment.

It should be said that our strategy was aided by some gradual but significant improvements in on-air performance and this has continued.

Summary of our approach and methods deployed

A campaign was built around some key facts about the incoming executive chairman that correlated with the destination he was driving towards. We drafted and repeated, in different forms, a set of lines on his:

- Background
- Personality
- Vision
- Personal credo

Using each of the elements at our disposal: playing to Grade's sociable strengths, TV, intranet, staff skills and innate curiosity, we created as complete an experience of the new man, new era as possible, for the maximum number of people.

Speed

On the morning of Grade's appointment, the announcement e-mailed to all employees was accompanied by photos and a detailed biography on the intranet, emphasizing his pedigree as a program-maker. Within an hour of his arriving, we had Grade's approval for a message to all employees and later gathered some 80 senior managers to meet with him for an informal Question and Answer, audio-linked to the rest of the management community around the UK.

Build up

In the two month gap before Grade re-joined ITV, we agreed a plan with him which would include visits to all regional offices in a 100-day "listening and learning" period. We also involved all the leadership team in delivering an informal and personal end of year video message, picking up on the warmer tone and "we all need a period of stability" message that Grade wanted to convey. It was also very funny.

A new world

When people arrived at work, they found a personal letter from Grade, expressing his pleasure at being back home in commercial television and setting out some of his early themes, as well as promising to visit each location.

On the intranet, eminent news presenter Alastair Stewart grilled the new boss to camera about his pedigree, his views of ITV and his techno-savvy, asking the questions that we knew our bright, skeptical workforce would want to ask. We were delighted to be asked permission by the Financial Times to quote from this in-house interview and the personal letter the next day (*Brace Yourselves* by Clay Harris, 9 January 2007).

Staff were pointed to a new area on The Watercooler (our intranet) called “First 100 days”, which set out the dates for Grade’s visits to each region, staff blogs, a news section and an invitation to write to him.

Visibility during the first 100 days

The first three months were characterized by visits to each region, where we arranged for local management to take the CEO on a tour to meet people in their place of work – on set during filming, at desks in the newsrooms, in finance and marketing – reaching more than 2,000 staff in the process (approximately 30 percent of the total staff population).

A Q&A with groups of staff took place in each centre and Grade’s skill in uncovering problems and announcing a solution were all reported immediately by staff in commissioned blogs on The Watercooler – allowing many more people to track his progress online. Messages about confidence, boldness, risk-taking, the importance of our regional services were all landing and the excitement was palpable.

Other key focuses were publicizing Grade’s praise for/comments on programs; publishing employee letters and personal responses, introducing podcasts (For example, Grade on his vision for leadership), starting monthly lunches for a cross-section of managers and staff and ensuring transparent coverage of the senior management conference and full year results.

Measurement and outcome

The outcome was a ringing endorsement of the new leader, a new confidence and real understanding of the key messages by a dispersed workforce. The campaign involved and engaged managers; enabled more than 2,000 people to have some direct contact with new leadership and many more to track his progress.

The campaign was evaluated in two stages. Firstly, via an audit carried out in-house across ITV at the end of January 2007 and secondly,

Figure One: Influence of the internal program against objectives and desired outcomes

Influence of the internal program against objectives and desired outcomes	%
To make people feel more positive about the future	84
To foster their pride in being part of ITV	64
To develop confidence that communication with and from the new leadership is open and honest	75
To spread Michael Grade’s early key messages and make people feel well-informed	72

through a series of focus groups with managers and staff in London and Manchester, in April/May 2007.

In the April/May focus groups, there were consistent unprompted comments on the professionalism and impact of communication around Grade’s arrival: “Inspiring”, “Breath of fresh air”, “We like this approach”, “A new dawn” and “Well-handled” were some of them.

Of course the corporate story doesn’t end there. The next few months were a time of listening, learning, repeating core messages and then Grade announcing his strategy for the next five years, to an expectant internal and external audience. Thanks to a joint communication effort from corporate communicators, HR and internal communication, we had helped to create a receptive environment for a new and more confident era. What we do from now on will, of course, depend on everyone in the company. As Linus warned Charlie Brown, “There is no heavier burden than great potential”. scm

“THE CAMPAIGN INVOLVED AND ENGAGED MANAGERS; ENABLED MORE THAN 2,000 PEOPLE TO HAVE SOME DIRECT CONTACT WITH NEW LEADERSHIP AND MANY MORE TO TRACK HIS PROGRESS.”

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New Year's resolutions for the progressive communicator

Tips from thought leaders in internal communication to prepare you for the challenges of 2008

BY MARTHA I. FINNEY

The new year will undoubtedly pose some fresh challenges for communicators, forcing them to evolve and adapt as the profession itself continues to change. With this in mind, Martha Finney interviewed some leading practitioners to create resolutions that will prepare those internal communicators who realize that pushing themselves to be the best they possibly can, will contribute to raising the value of their function as a whole.

If the concept of New Year's resolutions is too hackneyed a habit to stomach, consider this: the first quarter of the financial year is upon us. Now is as good a time as any to consider steps you can take to establish the indispensability of your function within the company. And, in the process, move your own career forward.

The year 2008 carries with it crisis and opportunity. We're seeing layoffs, economic shifts of weight around the world, new clients rise to the surface with new demands, while old clients and projects drift and sink away. Some organizations and their senior leaders embrace the value of corporate communication. Others are more skeptical, and see it as an unneeded expense or the last vestige of cushy corporate living.

Even if you're not especially feeling the heat to save your job, the challenge before you is to still keep your work relevant. If the skepticism hasn't already begun, it might start in soon. So this seems like a pretty good time for resolutions. Resolutions for cultivating and sustaining a relevance – an essentialness, for that matter – that

will see you through many quarters to come.

To prepare this article, I sought out successful corporate communication leaders inside global companies, as well as thought leaders from the consulting side of communication. Here are their suggestions for the best resolutions of 2008.

1. I will embrace my inner business person and own responsibility for meaningful and measurable ROI.

The good news is that the statistics are showing that what you do really does make a measurable difference to your business. According to Watson Wyatt's newly released *2007/2008 Communication ROI Study*, firms with highly effective communication boast a 15.7 percent increase in market value.

They also experienced a 91 percent total return to shareholders from 2002 to 2006 versus a 62 percent return for low effectiveness companies, and are four times more likely to report high levels of employee engagement.

According to Kathryn Yates, Watson Wyatt's global practice director, communication, "The study confirms that effective communication is a leading indicator of financial performance."

"Good writing is important; it's not that you leave that skill behind," she says. "But you have to understand that in and of itself, it's not going to be what moves the business ahead. What you're really doing is signing up to deliver meaningful results to the organization."

2. I will consistently remember that what I do *must* tie into corporate objectives.

“Today’s big business needs to add value,” says Jim Shaffer, leader of the Jim Shaffer Group. “Customers are pressuring all of us to deliver speed, high quality and more value. Supply chain management used to be “purchasing”, marketing has moved from transaction management to relationship management, HR has moved from administration to workforce capability building. Most of the different functions have reinvented themselves except for the internal communication function today.

“Corporate communication professionals have to know that what they can do for a company will materially affect the stock price or improve quality, service, cost or speed,” he says. “If they don’t do this, they’re going to end up looking for jobs. CEOs don’t take away budgets that generate acceptable returns; they take away budgets when they don’t perceive that those dollars are generating appropriate value for the enterprise.

“No one’s fighting the communication people to take over their magazines, newsletters or intranet,” he continues. “That has to tell you something. You don’t have turf battles with your newsletter because no one else sees it adding value.”

3. I will start now because I don't have to start big. But I do have to track it.

Terry Simpson, manager of Express Communications for FedEx, says, “You don’t have to eat the whole elephant to prove your point. Once you prove your potential as a productive, results-generating member of the team, your credibility is much higher and people will be more open to adopting your ideas and strategies, even if it’s one plant or one city at a time.”

Simpson, along with others interviewed for this article, says that the best way for corporate communication professionals to assert their value to the company’s bottom line is to sign on for specific problem-solving projects with measurable results. While she and her colleagues haven’t jettisoned the traditional corporate awareness and information-disseminating projects, her department also seeks out opportunities where it can provide solutions that will either generate revenue or reduce cost. In both cases, there is very often a communication component to the solution, and the return on the communication investment can be measured.

One communication-generated solution, for example, returned US \$14 for every dollar spent on the project. FedEx wanted drivers to help the company build its export package business. Simpson’s department, upon interviewing the employees, discovered that the drivers were rewarded for the number of pick-ups and drop-offs they did daily. And asking them to slow down and chat with customers about FedEx’s

international service actually represented a real financial cost to these employees. So Simpson’s group created a program in which the company offered US \$10 for every lead that drivers brought in for international business.

“We were able to track the success of the program because the leads were physically brought in and documented,” she says. “Consequently we were also able to track how much revenue was increased. When you prove that your ideas work, it’s much easier for executives to commit millions of dollars to what you’re doing.”

4. I will create a team of colleagues, peers and advisors who represent other functions in the company.

Simpson credits much of the credibility of her operations to the fact that there is a financial expert assigned to her teams.

“Get them to help you do the numbers,” she says. “It gives you more credibility because you are personally one step removed.”

5. I will participate in other teams.

Make sure that a member of corporate communication is assigned to major teams, departments and functions throughout the organization (or at least where they will let you in to start with). From this insider’s vantage point, you can discover opportunities to offer and apply communication-based solutions while everyone else is still staring at the actual problem.

As your collaborative successes accumulate, your credibility and bottom-line value to the company builds as well.

6. I will not try to convince people of the unconvincible.

There’s a gut-check test that I sometimes run when talking to potential new clients. Thankfully, I have had to run it only a handful of times in my



Martha I. Finney, president and CEO of Engagement Journeys, helps companies tell the story of their employee engagement initiatives. For a free copy of the Intuit white paper that she wrote with Craig Ramsay, Intuit’s director of workforce and people experience research, e-mail: martha@marthafinney.com

KEY POINTS

- One of the main challenges that continues into 2008 is that of demonstrating the value of the internal communication function to CEOs.
- To achieve this, communicators need to be more knowledgeable about the wider business and how their work contributes to its financial goals.
- With the emergence of several new channels, Roger D’Aprix urges communicators to resist using them if it’s just to keep up with trends.
- The massive increase of information resources means that internal communication must strive to establish itself as the one source of honest and unbiased information about the company.

◀ career. But once I feel the test in play, I already know that this is probably not the client for me. I call it "Dancing Bear". Everyone in the creative fields has been made to feel like a dancing bear at least once in their professional lives. They know they have all this power and potential, all this ability to make significant changes. But somehow they find themselves on a short leash, tied to a manipulator who derives his or her own power by demanding more and more – and won't be satisfied. Ever.

Don't be the dancing bear in your organization, clumsily hopping around to other people's power tune. Even if the prevailing opinion throughout your leadership is that communication is a "nice to have", there is likely to be someone in the organization who really needs your help. And who will cherish it. And who then will tell others how essential you were to that department.

Seek out champions within your organization who will at least give you a chance to show the value you can bring to the company. After one successful project, word will get out about what you can do for their envious colleagues. And no one will have the nerve to put you on a short leash again.

"YOUR WORLD-CLASS CEOs GET THE VALUE OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION, BUT IN ORGANIZATIONS WHERE THIS IS STILL NOT THE CASE, CONTINUE TO TRY AND RAISE THE BAR BY OFFERING STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES TO PEOPLE WHO WILL AT LEAST LISTEN TO YOU."

"If all you have is the opportunity to show your stuff in one place, do it and do it really well," says Leila Siman, director of internal communications for Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide Inc. "Cultural change takes time, and you have to find a place where your value to the organization is demonstrable. As you do that, it's amazing what happens. Other internal clients begin to say 'Me too, I see how you increased sales over there, I want you to do the same for my business.'

"Your world-class CEOs get the value of corporate communication," she says. "But there may be organizations where this is still not the case. In those situations, continue to try to raise the bar by offering strategic perspectives to people who will at least listen to you." (See side box, right.)

7. I will remember that sizzle is not steak.

There has never been such an array of delightful

information delivery tools and culture-building toys. We have gone beyond newsletters and even the intranet into podcasts, webcasts, blogs, video blogs and company-sanctioned social networks. Each of these alone is a terrific tool for achieving certain organizational objectives. But it's also important to remember that it's not the whiz-bang that creates the change in beliefs, behaviors and understanding necessary to achieve organizational goals. People inform people.

These technological goodies can actually diminish the effectiveness of any single communication campaign, says Roger D'Aprix, vice president of ROI Communication. "This profession is running the risk of taking its eye off the most important objectives and going off in pursuit of trendy features. The people I talk with are already stressed and information-overloaded. To talk about diverting their attention even more with internal blogs is nonsense.

"Communication technology is a fine tool, but it's far from being the end in and of itself," he says. "It's being oversold."

8. I will equip our people to be the company's ambassadors throughout the community and the world.

People are talking, and saying what they want to say about your company. You already know that. But you have more control over what's being said about your business than you might think you do. You can recruit all your company's employees to be ambassadors of your business throughout their community and even the world. You must give them the information they need to get the story straight.

It's essential that what you tell your employees and what the outside world knows about the company is consistent, says Mark Arena, head of communications for the Americas for UBS. "We live in a dispersed information age," he says, "and having employees act as ambassadors for the firm is extremely important to us. We must be sure that what people are hearing externally is the same as what they're hearing internally."

Trust breaks down when there is a disconnect between the internal messages and the external ones. That's a given, says Arena. But it's important to also remember to equip your ambassadors with the understanding of the context of company news and developments.

When you release information on how the company is performing, what is the world, industry and economic framework in which you can help your employees understand the meaning behind the news? Once they understand it in general terms, can they then understand it thoroughly enough to articulate it in their own words to their friends, neighbors, family and banker?

10. I will not give in to the spin.

This corollary resolution cuts straight to the credibility of your company and your department. Because employees have access to such diverse channels for news and insights about your company, your channel must be the one they can count on to deliver unvarnished, unmassaged, unfinessed information – even when that information is unpleasant.

Because of the new employment contract, individuals must be informed managers of their own careers. And employers owe it to their people to give them the knowledge that they need to make wise decisions. Bad news won't necessarily drive your people away. But breach of trust will.

11. I will remember that engagement starts with me.

Employee engagement programs traditionally start within HR and corporate communication departments. This is somewhat ironic, considering that these two functions often have some of the most disengaged employees in the company. It's not uncommon for people in these functions to score very low in the conventional engagement factors such as feeling appreciated and valued by their supervisors, and understanding how their work ties directly to organizational objectives. When it comes to whether they would likely recommend the company to their friends and family, it's not uncommon to hear the word "no". These employees are the most closely tied to knowing how the people side of the business is run. And, just as knowing how the proverbial sausage is being made, it's often not a pretty picture.

Still, there is so much to love about corporate communication. You get to help solve the expensive problems that keep your executives up at night. Consequently, you get to save more jobs than you probably even realize. If you have claimed the power and potential that reside within corporate communication, you can serve as the binding force that keeps teams together and pushes forward dynamic programs that offer huge returns on the company's balance sheet. And, if you stop to think about it for a minute, what you do every day does serve to make the world a better place in some significant way.

You must take care of yourself first, before you move to help the company lurch or surge or fly into the future it has chosen as its destiny... at least as far as the next quarter is concerned. **SCM**

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UNDERSTANDING THE CEO'S EXPECTATIONS

In a recent joint study conducted by Melcrum and The Company Agency, a group of 18 CEOs and other senior executives were interviewed to gain insight into how they view and utilize internal communication in their role as leaders.

The good news for internal communication specialists is that corporate leaders now see their area of operations as essential for business success. A significant number of those interviewed identified communicating with their staff as one of their primary roles as CEO.

However, the interviews also revealed that the priorities of CEOs when communicating to employees may be very different to those of their communication professionals. So perhaps resolution number 12 should be: *I will try to understand my CEO's expectations of internal communication in 2008.*

To help you find common ground, here are four CEO communication priorities that emerged from the research:

1. A CONSISTENT, CORE BUSINESS MESSAGE

In all the interviews conducted, one of the most consistent themes could be summed up as: "The most important role of internal communication is to make sure every single person working in this company understands our business strategy and knows what they need to do personally to deliver it."

CEOs are typically not advocating the value of messaging in general. Their focus is quite specific and quite fervent: the one, central, core business story, and making sure it's well constructed and well communicated. The implication of many of the CEOs' comments is that internal communication departments too often become sidetracked from this by the messaging for too many other projects and campaigns.

2. LINE OF SIGHT

The CEO's focus on the central business message isn't about one-way communication and simply trying to indoctrinate the workforce with "the company line". Rather, it's about their largely intuitive understanding of what they believe that central message/story produces: a workforce that understands what it's supposed to be doing (in the company's terms) and then is empowered to do it. The drive to focus, above all else, on getting the company story into a digestible, locally translatable and repeatable synopsis is all with the aim of providing every employee with the context for intelligent, autonomous self-management.

3. A SINCERE AND AUTHENTIC MESSAGE

Clearly, communication lacking in credibility or truthfulness will fail. But, the fact that words like "authenticity", "believability" and "genuineness" cropped up again and again in the CEO interviews when they talked about what they thought was good communication suggests that these issues are at the center of the CEO's communication approach.

4. THE MOBILIZATION OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT

The CEOs interviewed were concerned about the current ability of the extended leadership to take on their communication mantle – and the need for them to do so more in difficult situations. They pointed out the strong link they believe exists between being a speaking, listening role model of the company and very positive communication outcomes. They believe then that their managers need to have a natural understanding of, and exhibit, these leadership behaviors.

Source: *21st Century Leadership Communication: Best practice internal communication through the eyes of the CEO.*

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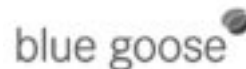
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