

Internal communication - not a short-term solution

 By [Daniel Munslow](#)

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Internal communication (IC) is often viewed by organisations as a campaign that runs for a defined period of times and produces short-term results. The problem faced by such organisations is that this will rarely, if ever, contribute to a long-term increase in engagement or brand equity - which is what the CEO wants to see.

Perhaps because campaigns are generally conducted in this fashion, leadership in most organisations see internal communication as something that falls into the warm and fuzzy realm of marketing and PR. Times are changing, as we have witnessed in some multinational organisations, but there is still a disconnect between what CEOs say they feel is important, and their view of effective delivery.

When Deloitte & Touche Human Capital conducted a survey among CEO in the US and asked which HR issues were very important to the success of the organisation, 95% said effective internal communication. Sadly, only 22% said they felt the delivery and execution of IC was effective.

Reasons for disconnect

What are some of the reasons for this disconnect? We often find that IC activities are limited to the vision and mission statements of a company, and only seek to translate external communication messages into a form of messaging within an organisation. Further, for many, internal communication is about internal newsletters, annual reports, and videos that are delivered from the top. While all are important, they represent only a small percentage of the tools available and do not address the key reason internal communication is important. That reason is corporate culture.

It takes effective internal communication to ultimately bridge the gap between written, spoken and non-verbal communication and create a culture of communication and trust.

In environments where internal communication is run at a strategic level, focusing on brand engagement, leadership is viewed as the most important link in the communication change. More importantly, it is recognised that communication is not just a nice-to-have, and is not limited to traditional communication tools. In fact, in progressive organisations, newsletters and posters (etc) are used as catch nets, where the key conveyers of information are the leaders.

Cost is very high

The most important mind shift is to acknowledge that internal communication is in fact about the softer issues. Have you ever stopped to think about the cost an organisation incurs due to poor communication? Most organisations don't. And the

cost is very high.

Balance sheets never take into account the number of hours lost due to poorly run meetings, for example; or missed business opportunities because people were not on the same page; or even the cost of hiring large numbers of people because of turnover due to poor leadership.

It's easy for companies to conduct a survey and ask if people understand the brand promise and receive the monthly newsletter; it's another thing to find out if they care about it, and buy into the idea enough to want to change their behaviour to deliver the brand promise - both internally and externally.

Business point of view

To make internal communication strategic, it needs to be viewed from a business point of view. The 'soft' issue of trust, or lack thereof, should be translated into real business speak - loss of share price. Conflict between management and employees, or at least the lack of communication between the two, can be seen as an inability to deliver on external brand promises. That means a distrusted brand is being created.

No matter how big or small your organisation is, communication can create a positive culture that ensures engaged, aligned, and motivated employees. This translates into a productive organisation that can provide sound tangible and intangible brand equity and better market-to-book ratios. And communicators, in the same way as the financial director, must understand and use these terms to secure board-level buy-in.

Few experts on organisational development, management, leadership, and human capital practitioners would disagree that effective internal communications is a cornerstone for a productive and successful organisation. So what is the obstacle to raising the bar of internal communication, and making it an indispensable asset in any company, an asset that contributes to bottom-line profits and can prove it through sound engagement research?

ABOUT DANIEL MUNSLOW

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