



DISRUPTING THE FUNCTION OF IC A Global Perspective

Foreword by Professor Anne Gregory, PhD, FCIPR, CIPR

IC Kollektiv

DISRUPTING THE FUNCTION OF IC

A Global Perspective

With foreword contributed by
Professor Anne Gregory, PhD, FCIPR, CIPR

IC Kollektif

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This book is dedicated to the hundreds of thousands of internal communication professionals worldwide working tirelessly to deliver business results for their employers and clients, advance the profession and grow their knowledge and expertise.

For all your passion and commitment, we salute you.

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ABOUT IC KOLLECTIF

IC Kollektif is a Canada-based non-profit organization connecting communication professionals with knowledge and the community of expertise focused on internal and organizational communication globally. We are the only organization exclusively dedicated to aggregating and facilitating access to relevant IC knowledge, resources and research from around the world. As such, we play an active role in supporting and advancing the profession globally.

With a strategic mindset, our focus is on topics, issues and challenges relevant to the state and the future of the profession. We help connect communication research with practice by bringing relevant thinking and research to the fore and sharing it with a global audience.

Known for our global reach in the internal communication profession, IC Kollektif has gained industry, peer and academic recognition. Our website has an international following of professionals in more than 110 countries and our contributors span every continent. We are proud to have international partnerships with organizations in North America, the UK, Europe, Australia and in Africa.

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FOREWORD

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For too long internal communications was the Cinderella of the communication profession. It was the backwater where communication professionals toiled, often under-resourced and under-praised. No longer. Any number of surveys from corporate organisations and management consultancies state that employee engagement is right at the top of the priority list for senior executives.

So why the turn around? The obvious answer is that tactically, new channels like social media have made their impact here as in other areas of communication. It is easier and less expensive for management to communicate than ever before. Another is that these same new media channels allow employees to communicate more easily too, both to their peers and to management, who are finding it less easy to hide behind traditional gatekeepers and doors. Of equal importance, employees can and do communicate outside their organisations regularly and to many other people and organisations. This has caused alarm in corporate circles ... what if those employees spread rumours that are untrue, or cause damage by presenting a picture of the organisation that we would rather not have shown? Organisations behaving badly on the inside can be readily exposed to large numbers of people and influencers on the outside.

If social media has brought these things into sharp focus, there are other realisations that have also brought internal communication to greater prominence. First, if the organisational 'narrative' is different on the inside from that to the world outside there is an alignment gap which spells risk. An organisation with two stories that don't match lays itself open to all kinds of challenges. Second, employees are potentially the most knowledgeable and vocal advocacy group an organisation can have. Harness their goodwill by acting and communicating well and the organisation has an invaluable resource – brand ambassadors who live and breathe the brand every day and in every communication interaction.



Third, there is a new moral imperative at work: employers now demand more than a transactional relationship with employees and the reverse is also true. A fair days' work for a fair days' pay is too simplistic a descriptor. Employers would like employees to have an emotional engagement with the brand, who 'go the extra mile' and who deliver discretionary effort on a regular basis. Given that many jobs now require employees to generate intellectual and social capital and not just give their labour, the relationship is much more complex than when manufacturing jobs dominated western economies. There is emotional engagement at a deep level when employees give of their highest intellectual capabilities. In return, employees who commit their emotions and personal capital to their organisations like to be treated with dignity, respect, to have their intrinsic worth recognised and desire a partnership with their employer that allows for influence over their future including opportunities for co-design, co-creation, co-recognition and co-reward. Internal communication and engagement is the medium through which these rich and complex interactions take place. No wonder it has risen up the corporate agenda, because what is at stake is no less than the health and future prospects of the organisation and the well-being of those on whom they depend most – the people who constitute it.

This new book by IC Kollektif makes a major contribution to the exploration of the rich and complex work of internal communication. The collection of contributing authors is first class, drawn from across the world and all with a record of being thought leaders in the area as well as experienced practitioners. Their chapters range across the skills and knowledge that are required of the high-performing internal communication professional, to how internal and external relations need to be aligned, to the leadership role that IC specialists need because at the heart of organisations and organising is communication. A welcome chapter on the future of internal communication rounds off this excellent volume.

Organisations are a point of stability for many and at the heart of this is IC. For all these reasons internal communications has come of age, and not before time.

What comes across is the volatility and uncertainty of organisational life. Not only is this getting less predictable and the issues that have to be grappled with more slippery, but organisational form is changing too. Companies like Uber and AirBnB are totally different from traditional companies and their disruptive influence means that more traditional, established companies are having to respond in radical ways. Governments, too have to re-engineer the way they are interacting with citizens and this requires huge internal change programmes in the public sector. People want a level of constancy when all around is changing. This is driving a huge focus on organisations reexamining their purpose and values in ways that provide meaning for people who are not only coping with huge organisational change, but who are experiencing all the lack of certainty and turbulence that is present in the world. Organisations are a point of stability for many and at the heart of this is IC. For all these reasons internal communications has come of age, and not before time.

That this volume is available free is testament to the commitment of these authors of IC Kollektif to share their work and thinking widely for the benefit of the global internal communication community. For this, our professional community is deeply grateful.



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Professor Anne Gregory is Chair of Corporate Communication at the University of Huddersfield. She has written and edited over 20 books, including the globally available CIPR series which she edits. Professor Gregory is a former Chair of the Global Alliance, the worldwide body of over 60 national and international public relations associations, which is a recognised NGO by the UN. She works closely with many organisations, including being a Reviewer of communication by the UK Government.

Anne was awarded the Sir Stephen Tallents Medal by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) in 2010 for her outstanding contribution to the profession, made an Honorary Fellow of the CIPR in 2015 and was given the Pathfinder Award for her outstanding research contribution by the US based Institute of Public Relations in 2015. In 2016 she was awarded 'Outstanding contribution to global communication', by APCE, the Portuguese professional Association.

INTRODUCTION

The internal communication profession faces turbulent times and the role of IC practitioners may well be at a turning point. Caught between multiple, increasing challenges brought about by the impact of technology, the convergence and integration of communication disciplines and over-riding agendas like employee engagement and advocacy, the profession must dig deep for insights and new ways to define itself.

For the first time, a collective global effort attempts to address these questions. With responses from North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australasia, and thirty renowned senior communication professionals across age, gender, background and the in-house and consultant spectrum, *Disrupting the Function of IC: A Global Perspective*, offers a broad, actionable, global picture of where internal communication must be in the future by providing key pointers to help drive better business outcomes.

The book explores eight topics and offers insights and advice to internal communication professionals on how to deal with the inevitable challenges that they pose.

Readers will notice that the spelling of some words varies from country to country. We have chosen to use the local version of spelling out of respect for the authors and in recognition of the global community.



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Lise Michaud has more than 25 years of experience in senior communication roles across the public and private sectors in Canada. She served as VP Communication on the Board of IABC's Montreal chapter and she was named to the list of the 2017 Global Employee Engagement Influencers.



CHAPTER ONE

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES IN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

In turbulent times, what are the biggest changes and challenges that internal communication professionals face and how can they deal with those?

ROGER D'APRIX
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DELIVERING MEANING IN A TURBULENT WORKPLACE

Above all, turbulent times require meaningful messages. That would appear to be a truism, but turbulence also tends to create one of two reactions. The first is panic. The second is denial. Both are serious challenges to the clear thinking that turbulent times require of organizational leaders and the staff people whose job it is to help create and keep them on message.

ROGER D'APRIX

When leaders don't supply context around their pronouncements, they unknowingly trigger the choice for people to stand their ground, in short, to find a way to defend themselves against perceived danger or to run away.

Think about the internal audience for company messages. Their fundamental question is: What does this (event, decision or trend) mean to or for me? It's natural for people to look first at the threat or opportunity that turbulent change augurs for their personal circumstances. Evolution has determined the fight-or-flight response as the first human reaction to trouble . . . so we can't help ourselves.

When leaders don't supply context around their pronouncements, they unknowingly trigger the choice for people to stand their ground, in short, to find a way to defend themselves against perceived danger or to run away. In the case of corporate threats to one's security, the fight response is to seek understanding as a means of determining the danger as well as arriving at a defense. When turbulence rains down confusion and doubt, the company audience collectively seeks answers. "How and why did this happen? Who is to blame for what went wrong? Let's find them and punish them for their neglect or their mistakes in not recognizing the threat sooner or not having a strategy to cope with it now." Much of that reaction is not articulated except in private and hushed conversations about the common dilemma that the audience feels in their helplessness to fight back.

A contemporary example is the backlash from people who have lost their jobs from globalization or automation or simply the overwhelming reality of change. Their ultimate response is to wish to retreat to a simpler time before



Above all, change severs the comfortable connections we all need to explain the meaning of our existence not only in life generally but also in the workplace specifically. In turn, that need requires the professional communicator to see the delivery of meaning as his or her number one job.

change disrupted the routine and entitlement of their lives. It is the classic flight response on the heels of an inevitably failed fight against change.

So the question is what can the communication professional do to explain turbulent change in terms that his or her audience can absorb and adapt to? It's not an easy question by any means. The best answer is analogous to the question of one's personal health, namely, a life style that enables and nurtures the habits that prevent disease and illness. In this case it is an ongoing leadership explanation and discussion of the environment in which a company must operate and the opportunities and threats that company faces.

We call that the marketplace, and it is the determinant of company strategy and success or or failure. In short, the fundamental need is to turn all eyes outward to the marketplace trends and forces that shape the organization's fate as well as its response. The organization's particular marketplace with its threats, opportunities and forces is the first cause of all leadership decisions and actions. That means that the leadership task in the face of change and turbulence is to develop the context that illuminates and explains *the*



why of both strategy and results. The reason is that, above all, change severs the comfortable connections we all need to explain the meaning of our existence not only in life generally but also in the workplace specifically. In turn, that need requires the professional communicator to see the *delivery of meaning* as his or her number one job.

The complexity of today's change makes it close to impossible for people to, in the parlance of our time, connect the dots. That metaphor incorrectly requires people on their own to sort through all the news and noise and assemble a coherent view of the organization's reality and what that reality is likely to mean to and for them.

We lament the lack of employee engagement in so many organizations today. A good part of the reason is that engagement requires an understanding of the organization's DNA before one can decide whether or not to engage. What is the organization's strategy for addressing the trends and opportunities as well as its history? What values shape its culture? What does the leadership regard as its goals and aspirations? These are the relevant questions that both the leadership and their staff advisors must engage with the internal audience.¹

Which brings us to the current and future challenge of traumatic change. The most basic of those challenges is getting the organization's leadership and staff on the same page. The means to do that is research that yields information on the aforementioned marketplace, the assumptions and beliefs of the workforce, the vision and goals of the organization's leaders and the tissue that should connect the whole. So the work begins with research and revelation that is candidly shared with the leadership. In that dialogue the various staff functions like human resources, communication and any and all functions with a human-talent leadership role must put aside their parochial views and

their turf jealousies to deliver a common message to the leadership. No one of these functions acting alone can tackle this vital task. Collaboration across these functions is essential to success.

In turn, the leadership must listen non-defensively and trust the professionals they have charged to help them lead people through the turbulence. It's the way that all organizations work in theory. But theory must be translated into practice. Once consensus is reached on the necessity to answer that all-important question of *what does this mean to and for ME*, the rest is a matter of coordinated and excellent collaboration among all parties.

The velocity of change in a global economy is never going to slow down, and the human need to adapt is only going to become more urgent. In that scenario the communication professional must be an active, imaginative and thoughtful partner able to convert complexity to simple and clear explanations that comprise the meaning and context that people desperately long for.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ In turbulent times the most important employee question is what does all of this *mean* to me? How will events affect my life and fortunes?
- ▶ Therefore, the communication challenge is for the leadership to provide a coherent and honest description of the forces that affect the organization and its members and their likely implication(s). It requires turning all eyes outward to the marketplace and its market demands as context for both decisions and strategy.
- ▶ Turbulence is an act of life in today's volatile global economy. To ignore its impact is to court chaos and disengagement as the likely outcomes.

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He is a recipient of the 2014 Communication Leadership Exchange's President's Award for his impact on the evolution of organizational communication, and in 1978 was named as IABC Fellow, that organization's highest honor.

He is the author of seven books on internal communication. The best-selling work "Communicating for Change: Connecting the Workplace and the Marketplace" (Jossey-Bass) has become a classic in change communication practice along with "The Credible Company: Communicating with Today's Skeptical Workforce," also a Jossey-Bass imprint.

A NEW PURPOSE FOR CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Flourish or languish? The ability to engage in authentic dialogue increasingly determines the agility and resilience of an organization. The new meaning of life for communication professionals is to help create a culture of vibrant dialogue with internal and external stakeholders, both on strategic issues and in daily collaboration.

MARC B. DO AMARAL

Despite the unavoidable challenges, in the long run and when well-managed, a dialogue-driven communication strategy will generate far more trust and support, better decision-making and more effective execution of these decisions.

Different playing field, different rules

The playing field for corporate communication professionals is not what it used to be. The world out there has become a very unforgiving place for old-school bureaucracies. Bureaucracies lack the agility to change course and innovate, which undermines the appeal of their products. A zero-sum game mindset inclines them to prefer short-term gains over sustainable, mutually rewarding relationships, undermining their license-to-operate. Bureaucracies have little to offer their employees in terms of growth opportunities, voice and autonomy, making them unattractive places to work.

In the fast-paced, information-rich world of today, bureaucratic organizations look like a fish flopping around on dry land. The age-old information monopoly that used to serve the powers that be so well, has all but been torn down by the rise of the internet and social media. Any kind of wrongdoing, whether real or fake, is bound to surface in the public domain sooner or later. In short, we are living in times of unprecedented transparency and organizations have nowhere to hide. Ignoring this reality, either in the form of a deadly lack of responsiveness or by denying the plainly visible facts, comes at the peril of ruining one's reputation and credibility.

The key challenge facing communication professionals in this new playing field is a very strategic one. It is to help the organization develop mutually rewarding relationships with key stakeholders, internally as well as externally, through targeted conversations rather than by trying to keep stakeholders in line by sending well-framed messages.

A pleasant side-effect of all this is that where once the principle of the carrot and the stick reigned supreme, a massive shift is taking place towards more positive and sustainable forms of motivation, neatly captured in the trinity of purpose, autonomy and learning.

Management by learning-by-doing

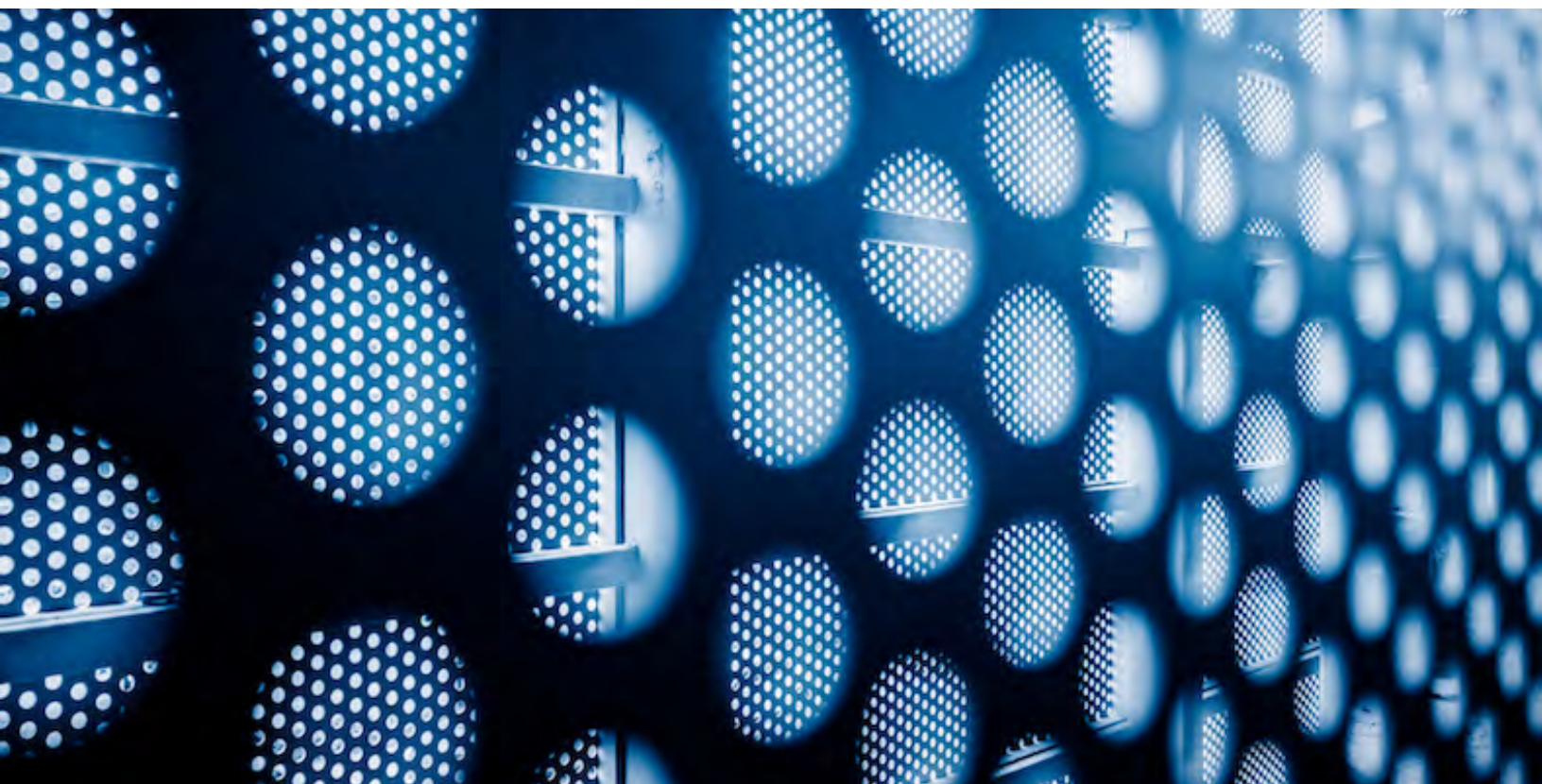
Internally the playing field is shifting as well and communication departments often struggle to keep up. Pushed by the demands of a changing external environment, organizational bureaucracies are almost frantically seeking to become agile and resilient, in other words, to become far more responsive. One way to make this happen is by pushing decision-making power down the hierarchy. Employees and teams are encouraged to take responsibility and apply learning-by-doing in short feedback loops. A pleasant side-effect of all this is that where once the principle of the carrot and the stick reigned supreme, a massive shift is taking place towards more positive and sustainable forms of motivation, neatly captured in the trinity of purpose, autonomy and learning.

Besides doing a better job in motivating people, another advantage of distributing power more evenly is that information and ideas spread far more easily, thus improving the quality of decision-making and accelerating innovation.

Shared meaning through strategic dialogue

Strategy used to be top management's prerogative. Today, strategy increasingly takes the shape of a conversation, sometimes involving the entire organization. IBM has repeatedly mobilized the brain power of tens of thousands of its employees across the globe in so-called "strategy jams". In a well-designed dialogue, the odds of mining really innovative ideas increases with the number of participants.

Creating a strategy is one thing, executing it is another. How is daily work impacted? Is team-X on the same page as team-Y when it comes to interpreting the strategy? What obstacles are frontline employees running into that may undermine effective execution of the strategy?



Fostering a culture of dialogue and feedback is key in addressing these internal and external challenges. Indeed, dialogue can be cumbersome and does not necessarily always result in the best decisions. Engaging in authentic dialogue inevitably means giving up a certain degree of control over the process and the outcome. Despite the unavoidable challenges, in the long run and when well-managed, a dialogue-driven communication strategy will generate far more trust and support, better decision-making and more effective execution of these decisions.

Building the communicative organization

“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

Communication professionals need to focus more on supporting others in communicating and less on message crafting and channels and media. Which is not to say that content production and channel management will become obsolete. They will just reflect more points of view and play their part as vital pillars of a constructive, organization-wide dialogue.

Conducting the orchestra

An important job to be done in agile environments is the initiation and orchestration of strategic dialogue, for example any exchange of thoughts that could impact strategy formation and its execution. Purpose, content and structure of the dialogue need to be carefully designed, taking into account different views and interests. Participants must be provided with all relevant information in a timely manner. The dialogue itself should be conducted both efficiently and effectively, and the outcomes need to be shared promptly. And all this needs to be perceived by participants as fair process.



Four areas of attention

In the turbulent world of today an organization's ability to adapt to its environment has become a key survival skill. As a consequence, organizations need to let go of the paradigm of asymmetric corporate communication and become truly communicative. Communication professionals can make a priceless contribution to this transformation by focusing on four key areas of attention:

1. Fostering a communication climate that encourages employees to speak freely, raise problems and concerns, bring forward ideas and support colleagues.
2. Building an infrastructure that enables people to share information and provide feedback, both vertically and laterally. Channels, media, tools and apps, as well as supporting processes are the main pillars of this infrastructure.
3. Supporting skill development by providing training, education and coaching opportunities, aimed for example at improving listening skills, giving and receiving feedback and handling conflicts constructively.
4. Designing and orchestrating strategic dialogue events and trajectories. Such dialogue can serve to gather input for strategy formation, identify shared interests (or intractable conflicts) between organizational silo's or improve communication within teams and between managers and team-members. Dialogue can also be used to support knowledge-sharing and crowdsourcing initiatives.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Traditional top-down corporate communication has become obsolete.
- ▶ The added value of corporate communication professionals is no longer to impose corporate truth but to facilitate authentic dialogue with stakeholders.
- ▶ Key focus areas are communication climate, communication infrastructure, dialogue skill development and strategic dialogue.

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Marc B. do Amaral is a communication strategist with a passion for employee communication and framing. With SPUP, his agency for organizational dialogue, he works with leaders who aim to unleash their organization's potential through employee empowerment. Besides developing customized dialogue and co-creation events, he helps organizations to foster openness, trust and shared purpose. He is also a keynote speaker and guest lecturer.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS IN AN EMERGING MARKET: HOW TO WIN OVER ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

There's a wealth of literature on internal communication in markets and regions such as North America and Europe. However, there's little to none on internal communications in emerging markets such as the Middle East. Organizations in regions such as the Gulf often lack internal communications positions. Their internal communication is either irregular at best, or at worst it is absent. And yet, as internal communicators we understand why the function is essential to organizational performance.

ALEX MALOUF

Effective employee communication is the best investment any organization can make during a recession.

The challenge that we face is two-fold. Firstly, many communicators in emerging markets aren't specialists in internal communication. They're generalists, whose main focus is on external communications and public relations. Secondly, organizations in regions such as the Gulf don't understand internal communication. Many leaders consider internal communications to be top-down messaging such as promotions and strategy announcements. Add to that today's economic climate across the Middle East, and it means that communication budgets are increasingly under threat and that in-house teams have to do more with less.

For many communicators in emerging regions, they look to ride out these difficult economic conditions by going back to basics and cutting back on outputs. Like in more mature markets, communication budgets in the emerging world are often scaled back during a recession. However, a tough economy presents communicators with the ideal opportunity to introduce internal communication, giving employees a clear picture of the organization's future and providing them with the information that they need to not only reassure them about performance, but also improve motivation and engagement. Effective employee communication is the best investment any organization can make during a recession.

A key to understanding your organizational dynamics is to immerse yourself in the organization and listen to every organizational layer. In a region such as the Gulf, face-to-face engagements are essential to both understand and build relationships within organizations.

For many communicators in emerging regions, the first step is to understand the differences between external and internal communication. The latter focuses on a single stakeholder, namely employees. The outcome that internal communicators prioritize is to understand and improve engagement within organizations, which benefits employee perception of issues such as personal, operational and strategic issues.

After they have a grasp of what internal communication entails, the next step for communicators in emerging markets who are new to the internal function will be to bring that experience to bear. Firstly, communicators need to understand their internal organization and its dynamics. It's simple enough to know who the management is (both executive and line), but do you know who the organizational influencers and gatekeepers are?

A key to understanding your organizational dynamics is to immerse yourself in the organization and listen to every organizational layer. In a region such as the Gulf, face-to-face engagements are essential to both understand and build relationships within organizations. I've personally found that individual informal face-to-face meetings are the best method to break down barriers, not only in terms of understanding what internal communication can be used for but also what is happening in the organization.

In emerging markets it's often a struggle to get a full picture of what is happening inside the organization. Winning the support of management and key personnel within the organization, those internal communication heroes, will help you in your goal of understanding organizational activity and how information flows between organizational members and various parts of the organization.



The next step to consider when introducing internal communication is where to focus your output and what channels should be introduced. Globally, internal communicators are faced with the question of how to best prioritize communication activities and, as Ruck and Welch state (2012, p. 67),¹ “Strategy and measurement are often sacrificed to the demands of communication tools.”

Internal communicators need to have the confidence to engage with senior management and to educate them on how to achieve effective internal communications. This is easier written than done, especially in organizations where the leadership views internal communication as an exercise in creating and disseminating a top-down narrative only.

The challenge communicators have is to balance the expectations of management with the needs of employees. At its most basic, an internal communication approach will need to be aligned with organizational strategy (Grunig et al., 1992).² Put simply, this means that communicators need to formulate organizational goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed (SMART). This can be a struggle, particularly for public relations practitioners in an emerging world where measurement beyond advertising value equivalents is still a rarity. Developing SMART goals in partnership with functions such as human resources and management will further help in both raising awareness of what internal communication can do as well as raising your own profile with individuals who will support and contribute to your internal communication.

Strategy isn't the only question you'll be faced with. Those who are new to internal communication will also need to consider and decide on the channels that will give the best reach to and engagement with employees. For organizations that are new to internal communication, this can prove a major dilemma.

For example, digital is the channel of choice for many employees in the Middle East region but management often prefers to employ more traditional channels such as print. It's easy to get stuck on communications tools, and those new to internal communication would do well not to measure their performance by their output. However, communications tools are solely a means to an end. There's one aspect of being in an emerging market which is incredibly exciting for those new to internal communication, and that's the ability to leapfrog to use new communications technologies. I've seen internal communicators use a variety of tools in innovative ways, for example instant messaging groups on WhatsApp or Telegram to communicate seamlessly with different groups across organizations. Those new to internal communication in regions such as the Middle East shouldn't be afraid to experiment, as long as they stick to their overall strategy and measure the impact of their work.



In summary, those new to internal communication in markets where the discipline isn't well established should look upon the transition as an opportunity for the organization to improve engagement with its employees. Begin by understanding what internal communication theory means, followed by developing an intimate understanding of your own organization. Look then to craft an internal communications strategy that is SMART and which aligns with the organizational strategy. Finally, utilize communications channels that are the most impactful for your employees. Continue engaging with management, influencers and gatekeepers to earn their trust and involve them in your strategy and execution.

Internal communication provides communicators in an emerging market the opportunity to further the understanding of what we do as a function. Use this opportunity to embed communications in your organization, and you'll see the resulting benefits both internally and externally.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Communicators in emerging markets should see the economic downturn as an opportunity to strategically introduce internal communication into the organization.
- ▶ Understand both the organizational culture and study internal communication best practices to develop a plan that is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed.
- ▶ You must measure the impact of your internal communication work, and use this measurement to prove to your leadership the return on their investment in you and your team.



ALEX MALOUF

Corporate Communications Manager
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Alex Malouf is a marketing communications executive who has spent the last 15 years in the Middle East and lived across the region, in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and the United Arab Emirates.

A journalist by training and with a cultural mix that is both European and Arabic, Malouf's expertise spans communications and media, public relations and marketing for both multi-nationals in the energy, technology and FMCG space as well as several Gulf-based government institutions.

His experience includes both internal and corporate communications, media relations and outreach, content development, crisis/reputation management, and digital and social media.

THE BIGGEST CHANGES AND CHALLENGES FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Every profession is facing a number of challenges and changes in our turbulent times. This is of course true for internal communications as well. I'm limiting myself to address three in this essay: posting vs. hosting, consolidation of functions and ignorance to new research.

PER ZETTERQUIST

We operate in a field where many people consider themselves to be experts. A function like this, unable to prove its unique value to the business, runs a risk to be merged with or moved under another function. Or even made extinct. All together this means that internal communication is at risk as an independent function.

Post or Host

Posting content has always been part of the job description for internal communication. It comes from a tradition of journalism and putting together employee magazines. The opportunities to post have now exploded with the entry of social media on the corporate scene. New channels are available, new ways of expressing yourself are introduced and we encourage our leaders to blog and involve in the internal social media flow. As a result, communication functions are reorganizing to produce smarter content and meet demands.

This is all fine, but we need balance to avoid a situation where posting of content is more important than supporting leaders and facilitating true conversations in the organization.

This is because leaders have by far the biggest impact on attitude and behaviors in an organization. And the conversation is key to build mutual trust, understanding and engagement in every organization. No app, or on-line tool will ever replace the impact of the leaders and the intimacy and mutual understanding that comes out of a conversation. These conversations build the necessary trust between leaders and team members that is so fundamental to drive and succeed with change.

The way to manage this is to continuously strive for the position as a communication business partner to senior management. One element of this is to make sure that the opportunities for real face-to-face conversation remains in



The most mind-blowing discoveries currently are made in neuroscience where we continuously learn more about the human brain, how it works and how it can be influenced. These discoveries have just started and signal a revolution about how we will define successful communication and how we will work in the profession.

various forms and that internal news posting and on-line interaction is well-synchronized with the face-to-face conversations carried out by management.

Prove or Move

Internal communication is a small function in a world driven by consolidation of units where senior management look for various ways to find synergies, align processes and cut cost. It's also a function with a tradition of very few hard facts and KPIs to prove its value to the business. We operate in a field where many people consider themselves to be experts. A function like this, unable to prove its unique value to the business, runs a risk to be merged with or moved under another function. Or even made extinct. All together this means that internal communication is at risk as an independent function.

The way to manage this is to make sure that the function can prove its value and relevance to the business. One important element is to identify tangible and measurable targets to anchor with senior management. These KPIs have to be relevant for the business leaders. They tell how communication helps achieve the goals of the organization. With targets identified and agreed to the next step is to secure resources and work hard to meet them. Another important step is to educate management about the relevance of internal communication and what the offer includes. Make sure to use the language and reference points familiar to the organization. Our own lingo that we use between ourselves as communicators runs a definite risk to distance the audience.

Intact or Impact

Many people in internal communication came to the profession for their love of writing or a background in medicine or natural science. This is a pity since the areas



where the most mind-blowing discoveries currently are made is neuroscience where we continuously learn more about the human brain, how it works and how it can be influenced. These discoveries have just started and signal a revolution about how we will define successful communication and how we will work in in the profession.

For too long we have been captured in the model with a sender and receiver, and hence built infrastructures to make sure messages can reach out. But very little time has been spent on what happens when a person receives a message or is subject to external influence. With more knowledge about how the human brain works and process information, communication plans and advice to senior leaders will surely look different in the future. We can choose to embrace this knowledge and make an even bigger difference or ignore it and remain in the business of distributing content.

The way to manage this is to learn what neuroscience is telling us. A first step is to orient yourself to the latest research in this field. There is plenty of leadership literature for laymen available on the topic. A second step is to sign yourself and your team for training and include reflections about how to work differently with the new insights. A third step in larger organizations might be to hire someone with competencies in the field, or engage a consultant that can help apply his or her knowledge in the field. This new knowledge can then be turned to tremendous opportunities and increased influence for the internal communication function. That will be very good for the function and the organizations we serve in our turbulent times.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Respond to the demands for internal social media and learn how to master the opportunities, but make sure to continue to strengthen the role of the communication business partner to senior management.
- ▶ Agree to clear and business relevant KPIs for internal communication with senior management, and tell the leaders in the words of the business about the difference that internal communication can make to business success.
- ▶ Let's put our professional training and experience aside for a while, and instead look at what neuroscience can tell us about how to make a true impact on people from learning more about how the human brain works.

Sweden



PER ZETTERQUIST

Senior Communication Professional
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SWEDEN

Per Zetterquist is a senior communication professional and leadership communication specialist working out of Stockholm, Sweden. Per has more than 20 years of experience in the field including the positions as VP Internal Communication for Ericsson and Electrolux. His experiences include strategy implementation, change management, coaching of senior leaders and communication planning and execution.

He approaches communication as a means to an end with a specific result in mind. He appears as speaker at industry events, and enjoys facilitation of groups and running training sessions with teams. He is an APMG-certified Change Management Practitioner and training to become a certified coach.

CHAPTER TWO

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONALS

What do you see as the main skills and talents that will drive
internal communication going forward?

CLAIRE WATSON
CANADA

LIAM FITZPATRICK
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ALEJANDRO FORMANCHUK
ARGENTINA

DEBORAH HINTON
CANADA

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION COMES OF AGE

Not long ago, sharing vital business information with employees was often an afterthought, and typically came via email, if at all. Employees learned what their organization was up to through an unreliable grapevine, customers or the media.

CLAIRE WATSON

Convergence and integration demand collaboration to develop common strategy aligned with business needs. Research and audience analysis is shared, key messages are consistent and the binding ingredients, a strategic approach and jointly delivered implementation plan, means that internal, corporate and marketing communication focus their resources on the same objectives to drive results.

Enter the age of employee engagement and change management. Willis Towers Watson studied the impact of internal communication and change management for over a decade. Their 2014 Change and Communication ROI Study¹ demonstrates that best practice companies are highly effective at both communication and change management, and 3.5 times as likely to outperform their peers. It became crystal clear that not only are employees an important audience, they are the most important audience.

The value of internal communication took a giant leap forward, no longer playing second fiddle to its sexier sisters, corporate communication and marketing. When strategically aligned, managed and measured, the often overlooked sister bloomed, casting a halo effect over all business results, including employee engagement, customer retention, revenue, profit and social impact.

The evolution of internal communication as a key business driver presents opportunity and challenge for communication professionals. Beyond the ability to write, the menu of knowledge and skills needed to deliver solid business results has grown exponentially, rivaling the degree-laden marketing profession.

Be an expert at strategic communication management

The ability to manage communication strategically is a mainstay for all communication professionals, but in particular for those working in the internal communication space. The lines that once separated internal and external



Effective communication is rooted in the fact that we are human. We thrive on emotional connection. If that emotional connection is missing, your message gets lost among others competing for attention. How messages are presented matters a great deal.

communication are converging, and within organizations communication functions are increasingly integrated.

Convergence and integration demand collaboration to develop common strategy aligned with business needs. Research and audience analysis is shared, key messages are consistent and the binding ingredients, a strategic approach and jointly delivered implementation plan, means that internal, corporate and marketing communication focus their resources on the same objectives to drive results.

Competent strategic communication management stretches beyond communication planning, although a solid plan is still the backbone of success. The all-encompassing management function embraces creativity, stakeholder and change management, alignment of vision, mission and values with business needs, mentoring leaders and influencers and inspiring audiences to take action.

Know the business inside-out

Communication professionals cannot deliver results without intimately knowing the business. Far beyond reading the latest annual report, understanding business needs means looking at it from all angles. Study the competition, the

market environment, customers, media and other external audiences. Analyze the internal environment and culture. What influence will culture have on communication? How does the executive team measure success? Understanding business and audience needs relies on more than your ability to read and analyze research. It means having your feet on the ground, listening skills finely tuned and creating opportunities to learn from the audience.

Learn to read between the lines. Talk with executives, managers, department heads, employees in the office and employees on the front line. Make a point of identifying any gaps in knowledge, perception and attitude. Put yourself on the invitation list for meetings and strategy discussions held across the organization.

Be a trusted advisor

Trust is earned based on the confidence that you will deliver on your promises to a high level of excellence. When trust exists in a relationship people listen intently, allow their assumptions to be gently challenged, are open to new ideas and work with you toward a common goal.

Cultivate strong relationships with decision-makers, and take advantage of the opportunity to educate them about the power of internal communication to influence business results. Be ready with empirical data demonstrating ROI. People support what they help to create, so encourage informed conversation across the organization. Omni-directional dialogue opens communication channels, creates understanding and motivates changes in behaviour. It has a significant impact on employee engagement and business results. Listen, respond and incorporate your understandings into the internal communication strategy.

Trusted advisors have a place at the table that creates the buy-in needed to implement communication strategy and a gateway to work with leaders building communication skills.

Set clear, meaningful objectives, track, measure and share

It's surprising how many communication professionals still don't understand the differences among goals, objectives and tactics. This fundamental understanding is critical to demonstrate business value. Still, if objectives are set and not tracked or measured, everything else is academic. You won't have anything to share with stakeholders that builds their confidence in strategic communication.

A good objective is:

- ▶ Measurable in quantity, time, cost, percentages, quality or another criteria
- ▶ Realistic and meaningful
- ▶ Aligned with business needs
- ▶ Can be a combination of output-based statements (volume, increases), and outcome-based measures (attitudes, opinions, behaviours, and business results.)



Tactics, approaches, and supporting strategies describe the vehicles, channels and activities used to achieve objectives. Make sure you understand the differences, and above all make sure you track and share results.

Be creative

"I love corporate-speak and obtuse, long-winded messages," said no one ever. Internal audiences are no different than external audiences. People respond to clear, consistent, creative messages that connect at an emotional level.

Effective communication is rooted in the fact that we are human. We thrive on emotional connection. If that emotional connection is missing, your message gets lost among others competing for attention. Unless we are delivering messages related to safety or crisis, messages without creative flair are more likely to go unnoticed, never registering in the mind of the audience. In short, how messages are presented matters a great deal.

Maya Angelou once said, "People rarely remember what you say, but they always remember how you made them feel." Make this your mantra. Learn to play on imagination and tell compelling stories that touch emotions. Bring the audience into your message and your ability to influence results will skyrocket.

There is change coming and lots of it for the profession and internal communication professionals. With a growing reputation as a critical business driver among CEOs and senior executives, opportunities to build a robust career across disciplines couldn't be brighter.



Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ The lines that once separated internal and external communication are converging, and within organizations communication functions are increasingly integrated, presenting both challenge and opportunity for internal communication professionals.
- ▶ Trusted advisors have a place at the table that creates the buy-in needed to implement communication strategy and a gateway to work with leaders building communication skills.
- ▶ Internal audiences are no different than external audiences. People respond to clear, consistent, creative messages that connect at an emotional level.



CLAIRE WATSON, ABC, MC

Vice President
Strategic Communication Management
Cropley Communication

CANADA

Claire Watson leads global teams to think strategically, act creatively, implement precisely and exceed customer expectations that deliver meaningful business results. Her broad range of experience includes research and measurement, internal communication, public and media relations, advocacy, change management, branding, event management, advertising and marketing.

She has managed multi-faceted communication programs for government, private sector companies and associations, earning her 30 international and over 150 national and provincial awards of excellence for her work. In 2012 she received the IABC International Chairman's Award for leadership and dedication to communication excellence. In 2015 she was awarded IABC Canada's highest designation, Master Communicator, and in 2016 she received a Lifetime Achievement Award from IABC Regina.

ASKING WHY: THE FUTURE-PROOF COMMUNICATIONS SKILL

We communicate in turbulent times. We're in the post-trust era and the age of instant workplace information. Many of the skills we needed yesterday will be redundant tomorrow, with one certain exception. Focusing on results rather than process will never go out of fashion.

LIAM FITZPATRICK

Increasingly, the mark of success in our field is the ability to get business results.

My career started in an office where you had to ask if you wanted to use the telephone. Permission was rarely granted except in emergencies and only after 1 pm when cheap call rates applied.

Now, I hardly ever use my phone to make voice calls. I seem to learn a new tool or app every month or so. No sooner do I get to grips with a new way to communicate than I am told that the jungle of progress has overgrown it. Spending time mastering SharePoint or Snapchat seems futile when a replacement is probably waiting in the wings. But surely there must be some enduring communication capabilities?

Are there base competencies?

Some years back, with Sue Dewhurst, I developed a model of the base skills, knowledge and experience a communicator would need to do their job. The results can still be seen on the dedicated website.¹

Surveying several hundred colleagues around the world, we noticed a consensus that good practice needed competence in relationship building, networking, understanding the organisation, consultancy skills, developing others, innovation and creativity, listening and evaluation and the ability to make things happen.

I have seen other models in recent years but none are based on such extensive research and they tend to over-stress tactical abilities like working with social media or



Smart communicators will keep asking “why are we doing this?” or “what results do we want?”. Smarter ones will ask “what business need are we trying to meet?” or “what do we actually want people to do when they get our message?”

understanding digital tools. Interestingly, in our findings, craft skills such as writing or editing were overwhelmed by the list of softer attributes.

Whilst no one can deny the value of base skills such as writing or project management, it seems that these are taken for granted in a regular IC professional. Our study hit on an enduring message. Effective communication people need to understand their organisations, develop an intelligence-gathering mentality and be able to give advice.

Output mindedness

Increasingly, the mark of success in our field is the ability to get business results. Once, IC was the domain of the harmless creative. No one had high expectations of what we did as long as it looked great or was fun! Now, we support leaders who know exactly what they want from internal communications and where it fits into business planning. Sure, our work has to be well produced and attractive, but it has to deliver results in the form of outcomes, not just outputs.

If we can't make the link between the needs of the business and the communications we produce it becomes hard to

justify budgets, resources or management attention. IC managers who enjoy access to senior colleagues get two things right. They make the connection between activity and impact and they bring data. And it all starts by constantly asking “why?”

“Why?” is the key whatever the technique

The only safe prediction that can be made about IC is that our tools and techniques are not going to stay the same. The speed of change in our practice is getting faster.

The change is being driven not just by technology but by factors such as globalisation. Once we said that face-to-face was the supreme channel; now Webex and Skype connect colleagues on the other side of the world. Once we focused on building trust in our leaders; now social change and better connectivity mean that people listen to their peers more readily than to their bosses.

Confronted by so many different ways to communicate and so many different pressures, communicators need to keep dragging plans back to the fundamental question of what are we trying to achieve. Tomorrow’s professionals, like their colleagues of the past, will not start with the tool. We’ll start with the end in mind.

Smart communicators will keep asking “why are we doing this?” or “what results do we want?”. Smarter ones will ask “what business need are we trying to meet?” or “what do we actually want people to do when they get our message?”

Dumber ones will keep looking for an excuse to use the latest tool or trick regardless of whether their organisation really needs it. While they get excited by the magic powers of a particular app or a new piece of software, the value they bring to their employers or clients is always going to be tenuous at best.

Whatever the future brings, the only skill we all need is the ability to keep linking great ideas to real results. That’s all there is to it, and all there ever was.

Skills take development

Few of us start out as rounded professionals. It’s one of the joys of our calling that we never stop learning and growing. There is always a new challenge to master. But when we need to grow a specific skill how do we set about the task?

Formal training is only part of the answer. Research suggests that, although important, education through courses and workshops has the least impact on our professional growth.



Our skills evolve most when we seek out opportunities to test ourselves; opportunities to rise to a fresh challenge. When we do the same things year in and year out we stagnate and fall behind our peers.

So what are the best ways to practice the skills needed to ask challenging questions and link programmes to results? The answer lies in finding fresh projects and situations in which to practice.

Communicators committed to professional growth should identify projects that need planning and shaping. Actively seeking out situations or programmes such as introducing new HR initiatives, supporting a transformation or helping remedy a quality problem will give ample occasion to ask the “why” question. Being seconded out of communications altogether will hone an instinct for the things that matter apart from well-crafted copy or emails that get a high open rate.

In future, the leaders of our profession will be marked by the same traits that define today's leaders. There will always be demand for people who invest time in growing soft skills and are not afraid to keep asking “why?” It's the question everyone else in leadership asks every day.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Stop worrying about the next big thing in IC. Whatever it is will come and go before you've got to grips with it.
- ▶ Focus on making sure all your plans are based on a significant business result. When you are focused on outcomes rather than outputs everything becomes simpler.
- ▶ Build your skills by restlessly searching for new projects and programmes. Foundational training is important but its experience and exposure that grows your career.



LIAM FITZPATRICK

Managing Partner
Working

UNITED KINGDOM

Liam FitzPatrick is a consultant who advises organisations going through change. He has worked around the world across aviation, government, higher education, manufacturing, NGO's, pharmaceuticals, transport and infrastructure.

Liam is a well-known writer and the co-author of Internal Communications, a manual for practitioners. In partnership with Sue Dewhurst he wrote a definitive competency model for internal communicators. He was one of the founders of the Melcrum CEB Black Belt programme and is a strong advocate of learning and development in the profession.

When he is not working he is probably cycling and organising ultra-endurance events like London Wales London.

CO-CREATION, DECENTRALIZATION AND LEADERSHIP: THE NEW INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Internal communicators are losing the monopoly on internal communication management. The absolute governance we had on the preparation, spreading and permanence of the messages that circulated within organizations is coming to an end.

ALEJANDRO FORMANCHUK

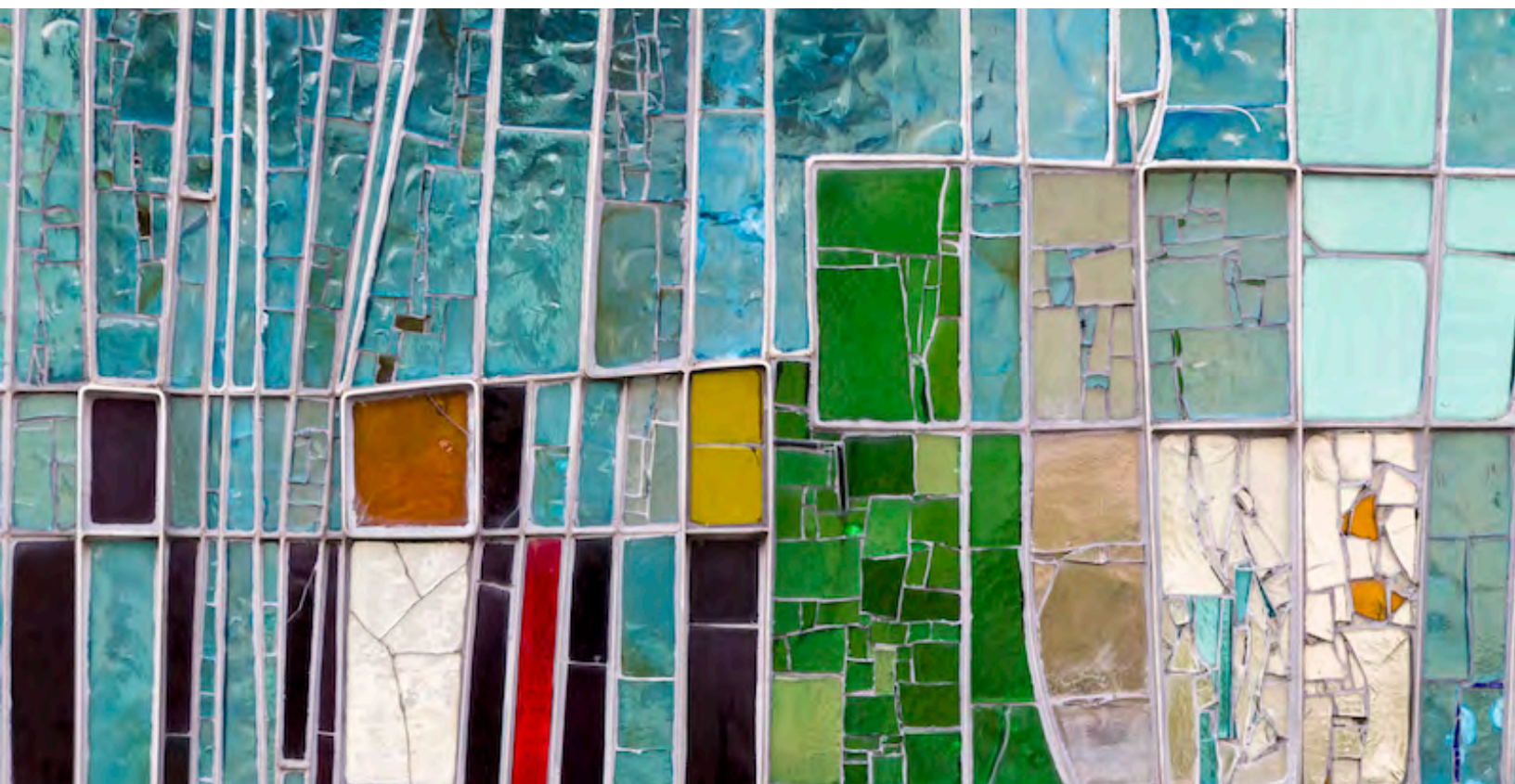
We are going towards a redistribution of internal communication power; someone's power to raise an issue, set an agenda, send messages and make them circulate and last.

A few months ago, we worked with a client from Argentina who was worried about the fact that the main internal communication channels used by his employees had not been created by his company. Therefore, he did not have governance over them. Can you guess what those communication channels were? Yes. A Whatsapp group and a Facebook group.

Basically, people spent more time on these two informal groups than on the internal social network developed by the company itself. Thus, an employee, without investing a single penny, had created two internal communication groups everyone could access, which had more impact and participation than a medium that had cost thousands of pounds.

This example shows us that we are going towards a redistribution of internal communication power; someone's power to raise an issue, set an agenda, send messages and make them circulate and last.

This may be seen as a threat, however, I consider it an opportunity for organizations to own internal communication and for their members to help to feed and improve that communication. I have always thought that the best thing that could ever happen to internal communication is to be removed from the Internal Communication business unit so as to be significantly owned by all the company.



From now on, apart from being able to produce, spread and circulate content, internal communicators should learn to manage communication generated without their intervention.

I know it is hard because informal communication is usually associated with rumour, and rumour is usually associated with something negative, chaotic and destructive. However, today it is impossible to fight against the informal media that show up all the time.

To face these trends, I believe that we, internal communicators, should strengthen our skills:

- ▶ We should know how to take advantage of the conversations that circulate outside the formal network.
- ▶ We should learn to join these conversations without imposing messages. We are not giving the party. We are just guests to that party.
- ▶ We should be able to detect, enrich, highlight and improve the significant conversations the company members are already having. We should be able to develop the skill of curating content.
- ▶ We should become dialogue facilitators instead of just being multimedia message broadcasters. We should be better listeners and deliver fewer messages.

- ▶ We should know how to generate co-created, shared and collaborative internal communications that enrich the conversational dynamics in a company. And very importantly, we should know that the change is not technological but cultural.
- ▶ We should show all the company members that they are internal communicators. That every person (particularly leaders) is responsible for communicating, and that the impact of their actions is stronger than the messages we deliver.
- ▶ We should be able not to manage one, two or ten media, but thousands of them, since everything (and all of us) may be a backup for meaning and significance – from office space, salary, cleanliness of a place and leadership style, to the car used by the CEO to get to work.
- ▶ We should be able to know how to coordinate, train and encourage leaders and employees to be excellent internal communicators. And in that sense, it might even be convenient for us to change our job position and stop being seen as “IC Directors” and become “IC Articulators”.

To sum up, from now on, apart from being able to produce, spread and circulate content, internal communicators should learn to manage communication generated without their intervention. The same thing happened to brands. They have learned to co-exist with and take advantage of people who have more firepower (more followers, visits, likes, subscribers or retweets) than themselves.

Leaders are the most important players in internal communication

Ninety percent of internal communication received by an employee is neither delivered by the IC area nor circulated through IC media. It is produced by leaders, employees, directors and others.

Within this ecosystem of internal communicators, leaders are the most important players because their messages reach more people, have more impact and are better remembered than anybody else's messages.

That is the reason why I believe that internal communicators have to get more and more prepared to manage internal communication by transcending the classic media universe. By transcending I do not mean getting rid of or eliminating media. The idea is not to stop creating media but to enrich our practice.

But how can we do that? In our agency, for example, we do not create internal communication media. We diagnose, plan and strengthen IC by working with leaders in particular.

This is a radical change because most companies think that creating internal communication means creating internal communication media. However, it is necessary to show them that creating media is necessary but not enough.



There are two main actions that we should take to make progress toward change:

1. To make all the people in an organization (particularly leaders) understand that they are the main IC media and that their actions are the most powerful message. In fact, I always say that nobody quits their job because they did not like an article in their company newsletter or because the internal social network takes too long to load or because the pictures used in notice boards are pixelated. What makes you choose a company is not what you read in a message but what you see in a leader.
2. To make organizations not see internal communication as an internal news agency or a media editor, but as a crossover communication strengthener.

To sum up, our goal is not to do internal communication but to achieve things through internal communication. Internal communication is not an end to itself. That is why, to go on achieving things, we should be ready to generate co-created, decentralized communication models where the people (and not the media) become the heart of our practice again.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ We are going towards a redistribution of internal communication power.
- ▶ Internal communicators should learn to manage communication generated without their intervention.
- ▶ Our goal is not to do internal communication but to achieve things through internal communication. Internal communication is not an end to itself.



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He is a Staff member of the Imagine Creativity Center³, a lab based in Silicon Valley where he trains entrepreneurs from all over the world in communication issues. Alejandro holds a Bachelor in Social Communication with an Honours Diploma by the University of Buenos Aires.

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GETTING FUTURE READY: THREE STEPS TO BUILDING YOUR IC SUPER POWER

Internal communicators know a lot about the craft of communication. You can't get past the gate without knowing how to write key messages, create FAQs, develop competent communication plans and design eye-catching campaigns. But we all know that craft alone isn't cutting it. And, growing expectations for seamless, transparent communication combined with new technologies is increasing the pressure. It can feel like we're just "Hailing on all frequencies!"¹ delivering a never ending stream of tools and tactics through a growing range of channels to an amorphous employee audience. Employees are crying out for mercy: "Stop the information overload."

DEBORAH HINTON

Empathy is the art of seeing the world as someone else sees it." It's about "walking in someone's shoes" and being aware of their feelings, thoughts and experience without having those feelings.

It's time to start working on our super power: "... in an era of rapid technological change, says Krznaric, social philosopher and author of *Empathy*, ... mastering empathy is the key business survival skill because it underpins successful teamwork and leadership."²

Edwin Rutchsh, Founding Director of the Centre for Building a Culture of Empathy, asserts "Empathy competence is a predictor of excellent performance ... and essential ... in the complex globally-focused communications profession. Indeed, excellent communicators are typified by their ability to apply empathic skills in the creation of solutions to meet organization audience objectives."³

What is empathy? "Empathy is the art of seeing the world as someone else sees it."⁴ It's about "walking in someone's shoes" and being aware of their feelings, thoughts and experience without having those feelings.⁵

Empathetic internal communication professionals "... understand the way [different employees] do things and why, their physical and emotional needs, how they think about world, and what is meaningful to them."⁶ Internal communications professionals that have, and continue to develop, empathy have a distinct advantage over anyone else in the profession and beyond. It builds our capacity to:



Internal communications professionals that have, and continue to develop, empathy have a distinct advantage over anyone else in the profession and beyond.

- ▶ More accurately segment internal stakeholders and prioritize and assess key relationships
- ▶ Generate insights and implications for action
- ▶ Participate in strategic discussions and speak credibly and with authority about how C-suite messages will play
- ▶ Anticipate and avert potential problems and disconnects
- ▶ Advocate for employees when and if the need arises
- ▶ Position key decisions and messages to increase effectiveness and build momentum
- ▶ Improve efficiency and increase impact

Given all this, it may surprise you to discover that “Research indicates that [communication] professionals rarely demonstrate empathic competence in practice.”⁷ Communicators are seldom “... trained or taught how to cultivate empathy in our lives and work as a daily practice.”⁸ And that, “... current higher education communications curricula do little to develop these integral skills.”⁹

So, what is a poor internal communication professional to do? Here are three steps to get you started building your empathy muscle:

1. Test your thinking.

- a. Start by discovering your empathy baseline by using Dr. Simon Baron-Cohen's¹⁰ recognized tests for empathy¹¹ and social Intelligence¹². Iterate after six months of mindful practice. See below.
- b. Question your assumptions about employees. For example, do you have a tendency to assume that all employees are like you and your local peer group? Or, that all employees will be equally interested in and motivated by the next corporate initiative? It may be subtle, but in all my years in internal communications these are definitely underlying assumptions I've seen and experienced, especially when the pressure is on.

Think about employees who aren't like you and your colleagues. Find out what you can about the employees in other locations, at different levels, different functions, at different stages in their careers, those that are fans and those that are cynics, informal leaders and influencers, those who are white collar and those who are not, the unionized and the non-unionized. Then ask yourself what might they know, feel and do in relationship to a decision you are about to announce or a change that will be rolling out. Test your conclusions with employees who aren't like you. Iterate.

2. Get out of the office and into the field.

Create opportunities for site visits even if they are just down a floor. Look and listen objectively. Ask the people you meet questions: What do they do? How do they do it? Why do things happen the way they happen in their part of the organization? How do they make decisions? What do they think? Why do they think it? And, then think about what the implications are for your communication plans and test these implications with your peers. Adjust your plans.

3. Job shadow or job swap.

Meeting and speaking with employees on site is a start but, "You can never understand someone unless you understand their point of view, climb in that person's skin, or stand and walk in that person's shoes."¹³ Budget for at least a few days per year to job shadow and take that opportunity to dig deep to understand different parts of the organization, the people that 'live' there, their work and their customers. What are the implications from a communications point of view? Then, build pilot plans to reach and involve these employees like they never have been before. Test. Evaluate. Adjust.

Start building your empathy super power today!





Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Empathy is ICs super power.
- ▶ It is an important skill today and will be essential in the future.
- ▶ Empathy is learnable and in just three steps you can start building your empathic muscle today.

Canada



DEBORAH HINTON

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Phil Communications

CANADA

My passion is for communications from the inside out. As Director, Global Internal Communications at Alcan and then at Bombardier Aerospace and then as a consultant, I've seen first hand how internal communications helps deliver outstanding results while creating significant value for employees and the customers and communities we serve.

As an experienced specialist in the design and implementation of human-centred communication strategies I help my for-profit and non-profit clients, energise their leader, team and organizational plans, and find innovative ways to achieve their organizational and professional goals. For more about me and the work I do, go to LinkedIn: [deborahhinton](#).

CHAPTER THREE

IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON THE PROFESSION

To what extent will changes in technology drive and/or impact on internal communication into the future, and what role IC professionals should play in this context ?

SEAN WILLIAMS
UNITED STATES

BRAD WHITWORTH
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SIA PAPAGEORGIU
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THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION ON INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The impact of electronic communication on internal communication in general has been momentous, apart from the obvious tactical considerations. Whether organizations fully understand it or not, the advent of email, intranets, text and instant messaging and enterprise social networks have changed the way that organizations and employees build relationships.

SEAN WILLIAMS

Internal communication strategic planning remains a critical first step, regardless of what technological advances present themselves. Just as with external constituencies, organizational strategy must lead communication strategy, let alone communication tactics and tools. Without a clear set of expectations, interim measures and definitions of success, communicators run the risk of succumbing to fads.

As Moore's Law¹ implies, technology continues to advance. Many organizations get caught up in the bright, shiny object syndrome, adopting technology with little strategy for how to implement it. Technology definitely has changed internal communication. The pendulum swings, from print and face-to-face, to email to enterprise social networks and instant messaging. Each swing reveals externalities, as the law of unintended consequences alters the employee-organization relationship.

Internal communication strategic planning remains a critical first step, regardless of what technological advances present themselves. Just as with external constituencies, organizational strategy must lead communication strategy, let alone communication tactics and tools. Without a clear set of expectations, interim measures and definitions of success, communicators run the risk of succumbing to fads.

That said, burgeoning communication technology does offer exciting implications. IC thought leaders and academics could be able to lead on these topics, provided they can keep up with the pace of change.

Finding a better mousetrap

If "Selecting the optimal internal communication approach rests as much on expectations and beliefs of employees as on potential efficiency of message delivery," as White, Vanc, and Stafford (2010, p. 69)² observed, then the embrace of



As the workforce continues to age and younger workers assume leadership positions, we should expect that email will decline in preference in favor of text messaging and instant messaging. Bots may then be at the cutting edge in 2017, but may be as ubiquitous as email in just a few years.

electronic communication technology can be premature, or poorly thought out. Initially, intranets brought the end of print magazines, saving composing, printing and mailing costs. We did not foresee that there were neurological differences in how people process information online versus in print that might cost us in understanding. (Jabr 2014, Dooley 2015, Raphael 2014).³

Outside of our organizations, technology revolutionized mass and personal communication. To illustrate the point, "... a USB memory stick today is more powerful than the computers that put man on the moon." (Saran 2009)⁴ The iPhone 6 has more than double the processing power of a 1985-vintage Cray supercomputer (Apple.StackExchange.com, n.d.). Employees have access to virtually all of the sum of human knowledge in the palms of their hands.

The decisions on what communication tools to use are complex. Ajjan, Hartshorne, Cao, and Rodriguez (2014)⁵ include several antecedents to employee decisions to use enterprise instant messaging. Employees' perceived usefulness of the tool and perceived enjoyment of using it affect their personal attitudes about the tool. So does the opinions of

Skype if your boss and co-workers do. Your own sense of control over your ability to use it also influences your decision to keep using it. Is the technology causing the change, or vice-versa?

The role of technology and face-to-face communication

White, Vanc and Stafford (2010) cite several scholars to conclude that face-to-face communication is superior to other tools. There's a connection between communication channel type and building organizational community. The latter is related to building culture, and the culture influences the style and channels of communication. White, et. al., also find that in an electronic environment, electronic communication "can flatten the traditional, hierarchical structure of internal communication and give employees at all levels the sense of receiving information first-hand, from the top" (p. 79). Their study is now a few years old, and as noted above, many technology advancements may produce different conclusions, especially given video messaging.

Microsoft's acquisition of Skype and its induction to the Office 365 infrastructure makes it possible for people to connect by video in real time, person-to-person. Does this herald a different perception of face-to-face communication? The SharePoint universe now includes the means for employees to self-generate text, audio and video and share it broadly within the organization, in much the same way they do outside it. Because social media has enabled people to build relationships outside of their existing personal circle, why wouldn't technology within the organization have a similar effect?

Jacobs (2006)⁶ concludes that the formal and informal communication networks that emerge from the course of workers' activities should include peer communication for knowledge-sharing, and a broad managerial communication strategy. When your workers are driving between assignments and strongly scheduled when on them, there's not much time for checking any sort of electronic bulletin board. The recommendation? Phone calls and actual face-to-face meetings at least twice per year. Unexamined, however, is enterprise social networking and video that might be made available after hours. Neither is whether Skype might augment the community-building effort.

It's apparent, too, that technical innovation in communication will continue. The use of bots is a case in point.

New developments bring challenges

Bots are computer programs that operate via artificial intelligence. Many are using messaging applications such as Facebook Messenger, Skype or SMS to deliver information automatically, drawing from a reservoir of material in the cloud. Bots combine the best attributes of curation – having an expert choose relevant information to share and automation, removing as much as



practical people from the labor of information provision. Holtz (2016)⁷ offers the example of an international company that tends to offer headquarters-related news on its intranet, but more localized news via bot. The subscription process doesn't rely on email and firewalls, just the user's mobile phone number. How might this work? You get a text from Corporate Communication offering a selection of topics. You text back the ones you're interested in and the bot automatically sends you the material. Non-wired workforce? Small communication team? No problem.

McGrath (2016)⁸ sees bots as the future of internal communication because of information overload, the irrelevance of HQ-centric intranet content and email overuse. Holtz (2016) trumpets the ability of bots to micro-target on demand.

Because employees tend to evaluate communication channels based on their expectations for those channels (Cameron & McCollum 1993, cited in White, Vanc, & Stafford 2010) current preferences may work against the use of bots. For example, according to Cubbage (2005, cited in White, Vanc, & Stafford 2010), employees say they prefer email, even as they decry the volume of messages they receive through that channel. As the workforce continues to age and younger workers assume leadership positions, however, we should expect that email will decline in preference in favor of text messaging and instant messaging. Bots may then be at the cutting edge in 2017, but may be as ubiquitous as email in just a few years. As messaging platforms increase in capabilities, why couldn't bots offer other types of content than just text?



Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Embrace bodies of knowledge that encompass knowledge management and organizational learning, general business management, communication theory and practice, and measurement and evaluation.
- ▶ Part of being an innovator and a leader is understanding how change affects your organization, your practice and your world.
- ▶ Technology will make the same demands it always has on any other discipline. It is up to us to embrace it and use it to advance our goals and objectives.



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Sean Williams is Vice President and Practice Lead, Education and Internal Communications, for True Digital Communications, a full-service communication and marketing agency based in Greater Cleveland. Previously, he was owner of Communication AMMO, Inc. from 2009-2017. Focusing on research-based strategic counsel and execution, his current and past clients include McClure Engineering Company, Iowa Department of Transportation, Ernst & Young (EY), the County of Kalamazoo (Mich.), Western Reserve Academy, University Liggett School, Colorado Rocky Mountain School, Reputation Leadership Group, Excelsior University, Kent State University, Ketchum Change, Avery Dennison, the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, and Western Financial Group. Much of his current work centers on integrated communication AMMO planning process, and manager training, through the Face2Face Communication Learning Program.

Williams is a member of the PRSA Employee Communication Section, the international and Greater Cleveland Chapters of SHRM, and the Association for Training & Development (ATD). He also is a member of the Institute for Public Relations Measurement Commission, and the advisory board of the International PR Research Conference.

THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION IN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION: HOW TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING THE FACE AND THE PACE OF EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

There's a revolution under way that threatens the very future of the internal communication profession. Ironically, the transformation is being fueled by technology that communicators have fought for years to include in their corporate programs.

BRAD WHITWORTH

As communicators, we need to tap into the power of these non-formal networks as a key component of our internal communication programs.

Internal communicators have struggled for decades to introduce the latest digital tools to increase employee productivity. We've fought cost-justification battles with C-suite executives and budget-conscious managers to bring the latest communication technology in-house. It's been a perpetual struggle to convince skeptical executives that investments in technology to improve internal communications could pay off.

While we've slowly been winning those small battles to upgrade processes and programs with technology, we lost a much bigger war because we didn't understand or embrace the massive digital revolution taking place on the street. We were blindsided by the onslaught of personal communication devices and pervasive networking capabilities that radically transformed life outside of work.

Today, employees have unprecedented access to information, services and tools using their smartphones, tablets and laptops. Over the past decade, they downloaded apps to improve personal productivity. They researched products and services and bought them online. They managed their personal finances from their phones. They Skyped with relatives around the globe. They streamed full-length movies and watched live television broadcasts on their tablets. They learned how easy it was to text a friend halfway around the world and get an answer in a split second. They took high-definition photos and videos and shared them with all their friends in Instagram and YouTube. They played interactive



It should be our job to put business goals ahead of technology tools and focus on strategy more than tactics. It's more important than ever for us to help create an effective communications environment for our organizations and build communication strategies that help teams accomplish their business goals.

video games using blazingly fast computers and high-speed connections. And they could do all these things from anywhere, at any time of the day or night as long as they were connected to the internet.

While they were enjoying an advanced digital life at home, the same employees faced technology obstacles at work. Their corporate email accounts would prohibit them from sending messages whenever their in-boxes surpassed a shockingly low limit. Browsers on their desktop computers often blocked access to websites. They couldn't send graphically rich PowerPoint presentations to colleagues because the files were too large. Some companies even stopped them from using their personal smartphones to take photos or videos at corporate events or share content from meetings with co-workers who couldn't attend in person.

Over the past decade, an employee's outside-of-work technology capabilities quickly matched and then surpassed what the IT department provided at his or her desk.

You can credit Moore's Law, named after Intel co-founder Gordon Moore. He observed in 1965 that the number of

transistors per square inch on integrated circuits doubled every year since their invention and predicted that the trend would continue. And he was right. Each year for the last 50 years, tech companies have been delivering twice the computing power at about the same price as the prior year. Today the newest iPhones come with up to 64 times the memory of the 2007 model and are offered for about the same average selling price.

Practically overnight the internal communication community found itself outmanned and outgunned in the communication technology battle. Nearly every co-worker was walking around with a powerful communication device, and had more experience than the company's communication professionals with photography and video production. Surveys showed that user-generated content was more credible and effective than polished professional material. Moreover, many IT departments were beginning to reluctantly welcome employee-owned devices onto their corporate networks in a trend labeled BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) to work.

Here are the three challenges that communication professionals must meet to survive the revolution and thrive:

1. Strengthen the network

Since the start of hierarchical organizations and top-down communication, non-formal networks have developed inside organizations to share information. Most corporate executives dismiss these organic structures because they can't be controlled or managed, labelling them as the grapevine. Yet these networks are extraordinarily efficient, work quickly, don't cost anything, and they are perceived by employees as highly credible. The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer¹ showed that "a person like yourself" is far more credible than a CEO, implying that the primary axis of communications is now horizontal or peer-to-peer.

As communicators, we need to tap into the power of these non-formal networks as a key component of our internal communication programs. One Danish communication consultancy that has done just that is Innovisor.² Their client work has proven that by engaging just three percent of a non-formal network, its key influencers, you can reach an astounding 85 percent of the workforce.

If your internal communication program doesn't already include a component based on non-formal networks, you should make it a high priority.

2. Change your focus

In the future, we need to spend less time doing and more time enabling others to communicate. Our job is to put business goals ahead of technology tools and focus on strategy more than tactics.



build communication strategies that help teams accomplish their business goals.

For too long we've followed a one-size-fits-all approach to internal communication, relying on mass media and managers to reach the all-employee audience. We've created systems that are sender-centric. We decide what we think our audiences need to know. We need to evolve to receiver-centric communication models where our audiences determine what information they need to do their jobs most effectively.

3. Reset your organization's clock

The pace of most of internal communication programs is glacial, at best. We spend far too much time writing, editing, reviewing, rewriting and approving material that few employees ever see or read, saving daily news for the weekly email newsletter. It's like serving a sandwich made with three-day-old fish, moldy cheese and brown lettuce on stale bread.

Move away from artificial deadlines towards real-time dissemination of information. Pick the live webcast over the recorded video. Millennials have never waited for the delivery of a morning newspaper to get their information. News to them is instantaneous. Communication should be, too.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ There's a digital revolution under way that threatens the future of the internal communication profession.
- ▶ Almost every employee has access to weapons of mass communication and knows how to use them.
- ▶ To thrive in the future, internal communicators must put non-formal networks to work, place



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Whitworth holds undergraduate degrees in both journalism and speech from the University of Missouri and an MBA from Santa Clara University. He served as chairman of the 16,000-member International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and is one of the authors of The IABC Handbook of Organizational Communication. He was named an IABC Fellow in 1996.

COPING WITH THE DIGITAL EVOLUTION

Technological advances made over the past ten years have changed the way we communicate significantly. Technology has transformed how organisations around the world manage their public relations and marketing, including how they interact with the media, consumers, and other external audiences. But how well has the internal communication discipline kept up with developments in technology? And what challenges are we facing now and into the future?

SIA PAPAGEORGIOU

Employees want to access corporate and business information when they want it, on a device they use the most, and organisations around the world are looking for cost-effective ways to do exactly that.

Ask any internal communication professional what communication channels they use most in their organisations and I guarantee email and the intranet tops the list. How many use mobile apps, live or user-generated videos or social networking tools as primary communication channels? Not many. Finding the right way to communicate internally is challenging enough. Throw in an ever-changing digital landscape, and a collision of generations, each with different communication preferences, and the task just got even more complicated.

Coping with the digital evolution is a key challenge for internal communication professionals. According to the 2016 European Communication Monitor,¹ a survey of over 2,700 communication professionals based in 43 European countries, coping with the digital evolution and the social web, rates as the third most important strategic issue for communication management until 2019, and the perceived importance of mobile communication in addressing stakeholders, gatekeepers and audiences is steadily rising. It's no surprise however, that younger communication professionals (29 or younger) rated mobile communication and social media significantly higher than peers with a longer life experience.

So, what should internal communication professionals consider when it comes to implementing technology for the betterment of internal communication?



Trying to cope with the digital evolution often sees internal communication professionals agonising about how to keep up with the pace of change, choose the best option, introduce mobile into their workplaces, and debate whether their employees would even bring their own device.

I. The smart phone and mobile apps reign supreme

In 2015, the Ericsson Mobility Report² estimated over 2 billion smartphones were in use worldwide. They estimate that's going to make an enormous jump to 6.1 billion, or 70% of the global population, by 2020 and that 90% of the populated globe will have high-speed mobile data coverage by then as well.

In Australia, where I live and work, almost 85% of people have a smart phone, higher than the global average of 81%, according to Deloitte's 2016 Mobile Consumer Survey.³ Collectively we look at our smartphones more than 480 million times a day – that's a 40 million increase since last year. Just over a third of the Australian population checks their device within five minutes of waking, and more than half of us check our smartphone within 15 minutes of waking, interacting continuously throughout the day without being prompted, until disconnecting and switching off for the night. The research also tells us that an astonishing 30% interact with their device during the night, and that doesn't include checking the time. What's even more astonishing is that 30% of mobile consumers do not regularly use their phone to make a voice call.

Yahoo Flurry estimates that around 90% of people's mobile time is spent in apps as opposed to mobile sites. They also estimate that app usage grows by about 11% year after year. As they put it: It's an app world. The web just lives in it.

This is a key insight for internal communication professionals as we decide whether to introduce mobile apps for internal communication, which offer a more personalised experience, greater collaboration, better design, and the metrics we need to prove our value to the business, or restrict ourselves to mobile optimised sites and channels.

2. We work any time, any place

The workplace is no longer a physical space occupied by employees during office hours. The ability to work from anywhere, and at any time, has changed the way we do business, as well as the way we communicate in and outside the organisation. According to the International Data Corporation (IDC), the US mobile worker population is expected to account for nearly three-quarters of the total US workforce by 2020, and manufacturing, construction, retail and healthcare workers are inherently more mobile. The same industries are expected to see faster growth in their mobile worker population than other markets.

This means one thing: go mobile, or go home.

The imperative to go mobile becomes even more important when communicating with hard-to-reach employees like those who work on the factory floor, are on the road or work in remote areas, and allows them to consume communication and have a voice in the organisation. It also supports an organisation's drive for productivity and efficiency.

3. Convergence of internal and external communication practices and preferences

This convergence is driven by the changing environment and expectations of employees as consumers, and the fact that communication professionals have moved away from controlling communication to facilitating communication. Internally, organisations are increasingly focusing on creating a communication experience for their employees that mimics personal experience. After all, employees are consumers and like consumers, they use mobile devices to stay connected.

Employees want to access corporate and business information when they want it, on a device they use the most, and organisations around the world are looking for cost-effective ways to do exactly that. At the same time, internal communication professionals are looking to stretch every dollar in their already meagre budgets and measure ROI, which then leads to conversations with senior leaders on spend. And access to accurate and insightful data isn't easy to come by.



Where to from here?

Technology can be a blessing and a curse for employees and organisations. While it improves productivity, can enhance social cohesion, and integrates work and personal communication experiences and preferences, it can also complicate communication within an organisation.

Trying to cope with the digital evolution often sees internal communication professionals agonising about how to keep up with the pace of change, choose the best option, introduce mobile into their workplaces, and debate whether their employees would even bring their own device. The answer lies in treating this dilemma in the same way you would any other communication channel. Align it with your audience and stakeholder characteristics and preferences to drive purposeful and targeted communication.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Coping with the digital evolution is a key challenge for internal communication professionals around the world.
- ▶ Today employees want access to corporate and business information when they want it, on a device they use most, and organisations are looking for cost effective ways to do exactly that.
- ▶ Digital technology can help internal communication professionals create more targeted and purposeful communication and produce more meaningful measurement, as long as it aligns with audience and stakeholder characteristics and preferences.



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Sia Papageorgiou is an experienced internal communication professional with a 20-year track record of delivering creative communication strategies and employee engagement programs that drive understanding, engagement and performance. Throughout her career she has led high-performing, cross-functional teams and worked on major projects for clients across Australia and internationally, achieving results in challenging environments, delivering controversial areas of work and reaching disengaged employees. She specialises in best practice internal communication policies and standards, digital media, professional development, internal communication research, and employee and stakeholder engagement strategies that strengthen business operations and create a happier, more productive workforce.

MEDIUM, MESSAGE AND TECHNOLOGY

Over 60 years ago, in 1964, Canadian professor and philosopher Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase “the medium is the message,” in his book *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*. The idea being that the medium, or what we, in internal communications often refer to as channels, inevitably embeds itself in any message it conveys. This theory, or concept, holds true today given the abundance of channels available to internal communication professionals, and how they directly influence both the content they carry, and the strategy and tactics employed.

CATHERINE ST. ONGE

Next to resource planning, employee communication should be intimately familiar in understanding the workforce they serve as well as their communication preferences.

Embracing new platforms

The mediums are multiplying. Common communication channels have traditionally included town halls, e-mails (including executive messages) and intranet. The advent of social media has done several things to change the landscape of employee communications. Employee familiarity with technology has increased. The popularity of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media platforms has breached socio-economic classes as well as generational divides. And while one demographic may prefer one tool versus the other, the overall familiarity level with technology and two-way communication has only increased.

Social media has been adapted for the workplace, with several tools on offer to the global market. Quite simply, progressive companies seeking new ways to communicate with their employees have found an abundance of new channels available to them, facilitating dialogue-driven communication. In this new era of internal communication, the suggestions box has moved into the digital age with employees using both their work time and private time to voice their opinions and ideas with unfiltered gusto.

For internal communication professionals, the challenge now becomes using the right medium to disseminate the message, with the content, tone (and length!) tailored to maximize the distinct advantages of each.



In an age that embraces transparency and dialogue-driven communication, the IC professional must be able to manage the public/private debate, and understand that, inevitably, any information shared with employees will be made public.

Evolving the communication strategy and language

Given the popularity of social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and others, employees are becoming increasingly at ease with technology as a communication tool. We are competing for the attention of our employees against mediums whose purpose is to entertain, as much as it is to inform.

We have seen the development of language shortcuts, such as text message acronyms, shorthand and emoticons as a means of simplifying and expediting message delivery. While many of these shortcuts may not necessarily play a role in formal internal employee communication, there is no doubt that a move towards more succinct, precise messaging is influencing how successful IC professionals communicate.

So how, as IC professionals, do we adapt and disseminate the information we need to in compelling, if not entertaining way?

We evolve. And we do this by carefully selecting the appropriate medium at our disposal to disseminate our message, and then drafting content that will succinctly and precisely deliver that message. This doesn't have to be a complicated process.

For example, if a company wants to promote its role in a global social awareness campaign to its employees, this would involve, no doubt, an internal communications strategy that spans multiple channels. An executive message via e-mail might serve as the introduction. A campaign on an internal social media platform would encourage employee participation with a follow-up story in the monthly internal magazine. Technology has enabled a multi-pronged approach as means of casting a wider net, while providing a unique opportunity to engage with employees and solicit their feedback. The mistake would be to copy and paste content from the original executive message and not devising a specific goal or tactic and language for each medium.

One of the challenges in navigating the multi-channel approach is negotiating executive buy-in. Concise messages can be a tough sell, as can participating in dialogue-driven channels. But our role as IC professionals is to help our executives reach as many employees possible, and that means voicing (potentially) unpopular advice. For the data-driven decision-makers, the IC professional is best armed with comprehensive employee communication survey data, which will validate the approach being recommended.


Fluency in technology and understanding your audience

For IC professionals, language fluency is no longer enough in crafting a message. Understanding the medium in which it will be applied is equally as crucial, as is the ability to adapt one core message across multiple platforms.

Understand your audience. IC professionals need to understand how the employees they are trying to reach work. Are they mobile? Do they have access to a work device or private device to access internal communication materials? Are they spread out around the world? Do they work shifts and if so how are they structured? Regular employee communication surveys can answer these questions, including how best to reach employees with urgent news. Next to resource planning, employee communication should be intimately familiar in understanding the workforce they serve as well as their communication preferences.

With the advent of new communication channels, the lines between public and private information are increasingly blurred. Employers might be eager for their employees to share positive company stories across their private network, but we need to be equally prepared for negative stories to gain traction across these same networks at lightning speed. Considering traditional news outlets look at trending patterns in social media to feed their 24-hour news cycle, this poses an interesting challenge for IC professionals in managing the dissemination of company news. We cannot expect employees to understand what are private and what are public messages.





Technology can assist in restricting access to information to secure company channels, but navigating the decision of what to share with employees can be difficult. In an age that embraces transparency and dialogue-driven communication, the IC professional must be able to manage the public/private debate, and understand that, inevitably, any information shared with employees will be made public. For publicly traded companies, the litmus test is defined as “Is this information material to the shareholder?” And if so, it must be disseminated through the appropriate channels. For private companies, the litmus test may be “Is this information potentially damaging to our reputation?”

As technology evolves, so too does the role of the IC professional. From evolving language choices, to understanding the employee audience and their communication preferences, to marrying the medium with the message, the IC professional is currently, and for the foreseeable future, navigating an ever-changing communications landscape. The successful IC professional will be fluent in mediums, as well as language, and drive employee engagement through careful analysis and understanding of what works best for their organization.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ The advent of multiple communication platforms requires carefully matching the message to the medium to reach the broadest audience possible.
- ▶ Language fluency in the digital age also requires writing suitable content across multiple platforms.
- ▶ Evolving technology requires constantly re-evaluating how employees ingest internal communications to successfully compete with other news feeds.



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After completing an English degree at the University of Guelph, Catherine joined a marketing firm and served in both project management and writer roles. In 2007, she moved to a small electric car start-up in a public affairs role. There, she managed public affairs, investor relations and government relations as part of a department of three, with the company winning the 2009 Kroeger College Awards in Public Affairs for management. In 2011, she joined Air Canada and is currently Manager, Employee Communications-Corporate. She resides in the greater Toronto area, with her husband and daughter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF IC PROFESSIONALS

Is this the time when the IC professionals need to step up and take ownership of their role as a leader; why and how?

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COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONALS: STEP UP AND SPEAK UP!

Think of great leaders, people like Mandela, Gandhi, Churchill and Martin Luther King. What did they have in common? Their ability to speak up and take ownership of their leadership role. The way that they addressed people changed minds and behaviours, and eventually history.

DR AMANDA HAMILTON-ATTWELL

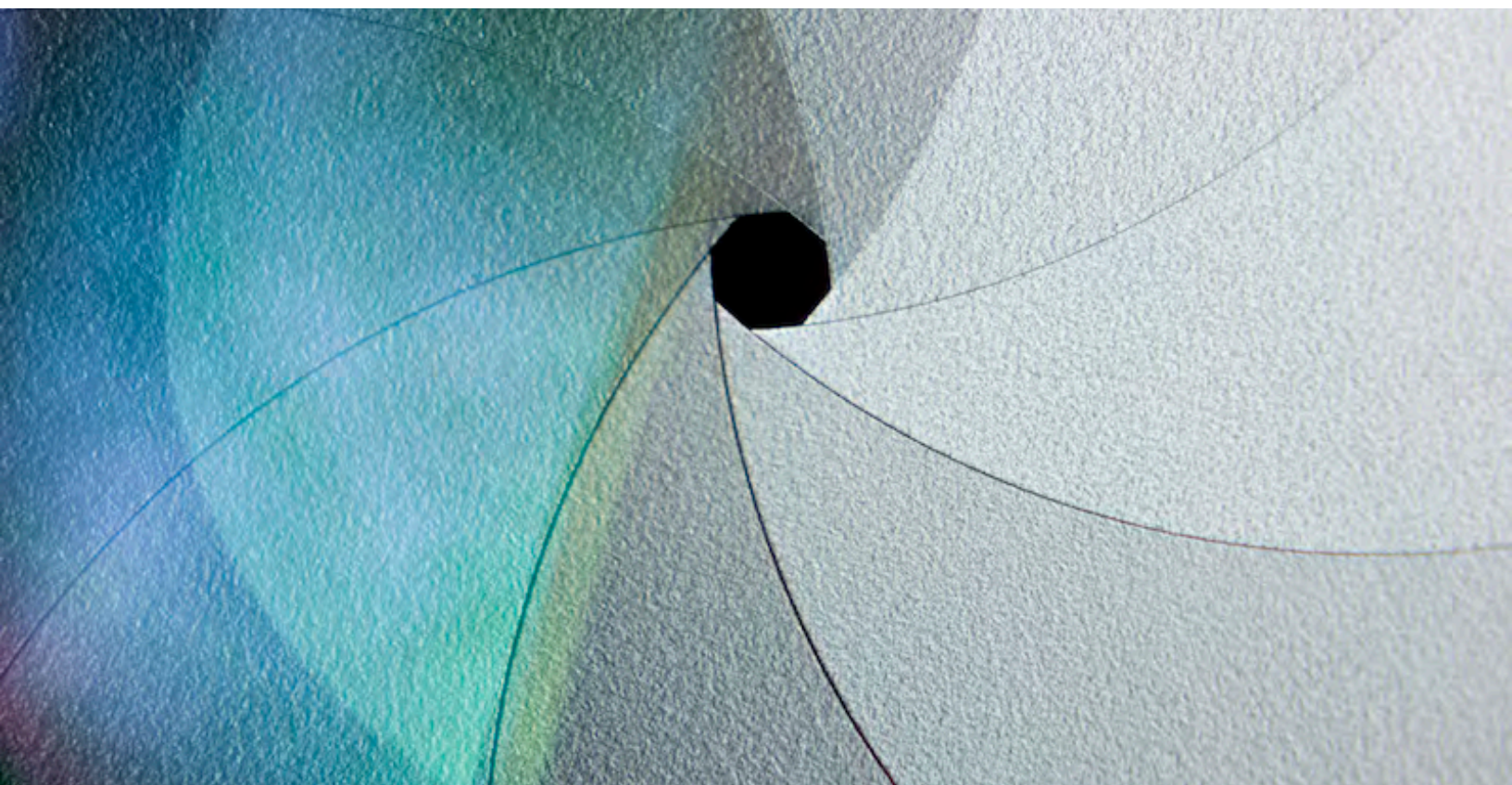
As communication professionals we need to empower leadership to master face-to-face communication and not to be carried away by "latest trends in communication."

Communication professionals are trained how to structure and distribute information to impact knowledge, emotions, attitudes and behaviours of people. We have a great responsibility to use our knowledge and skills with care like they used their natural abilities.

Unfortunately, some people who associate themselves with our profession deal with facts in ways that reflect badly on the profession. We can thank social media and the unfortunate behaviour of high-profile people for bringing the importance of accurate, fact-based communication into the open, creating an opportunity for communication professionals to condemn the use of "alternative" truths.

Communication professionals work with facts. It does not matter whether we are creating a message about the annual financial performance or a community event, we start with facts. Are "alternative facts" lies or just "other facts"? Are these new questions in the communication profession? No they are not. Lectures about objectivity and subjectivity are part of all communication programs. So what is different? The difference is that the importance of understanding what the communication profession is about, is front and centre in the news. This debate created an ideal opportunity for communication professionals to step up and take a leadership role.

In 2013 the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) described our role as "Communication professionals represent the voice of an



A key aspect of the leadership role of the communication professionals – to deliver measurable results. If activities are not measurable, they are not adding value. Leaders invest their knowledge and efforts in value adding activities.

organisation as it interacts with customers, clients, employees, partners, shareholders, competitors and the community. They bring the organisation to life with a brand voice that aligns its verbal, visual and digital messages and activities with its mission and vision. By clarifying the brand, communication professionals also help ensure the organisation runs efficiently and effectively.” The description ends with the following profound statement: “Communication professionals act as the organisation’s conscience and strive for its financial, social and environmental sustainability.”

It would be impossible to fulfil this role if a communication professional does not speak up about what the organisation stands and what its mission is. However, does this imply that the communication professional can only speak up and step up to take their leadership role when they are on the career level of a Strategic Advisor or Business Leader?¹ Not at all! All communication professionals have the responsibility to speak up for truth, fairness and accuracy even if they still are on a Foundational level. Communication professionals are the custodians of accurate, honest and fair communication in an organisation in all ways, not only in the communication platforms they produce.

“In the digital age where employees are bombarded with information via the internet, social media, emails and other technologies, the accuracy of information is more and more questionable. This creates ideal opportunity for communication professionals to step up to establish themselves as credible and reliable sources of information – building trust in an uncertain world, bringing focus and direction for employees to follow. The challenge is for internal communication professionals to make their voice heard at the table - convincingly, and then to deliver internal communication fast, efficient and in an authentic and credible way”, says Lize Hayward. Hayward communicates information to highly-skilled engineers and functionally literate operational employees.

In 1953 Marshall McLuhan² said the medium will eventually be the message in the global village. Finding innovative and creative media to draw the attention of the employees to important facts are some of the challenges that communication professionals face in the fast moving, cash-strapped, highly-strung business environment. We know that if the medium does not capture the attention of employees, the chances are that the message will pass them by.

Esther Kanaiba-Senai, Head of Public Affairs at Debswana Diamond Company, stressed the fact that as communication professionals we need to empower leadership to master face-to-face communication and not to be carried away by “latest trends in communication.”

She said, “Research shows that face-to-face communication between management and employees is the most effective internal communication method. However, in a technical field such as mining, it is a huge ask to get technical supervisors to prioritise employee communication. Therefore, it behooves internal communication professionals to demonstrate the value of investing in communication with employees and its impact on the bottom line through improved productivity and reduced safety incidents. It all boils down to demonstrating the return on investment by showing how the time they invest in communicating with employees contributes to productivity improvement.”

This statement by Esther highlights another key aspect of the leadership role of the communication professionals – to deliver measurable results. If activities are not measurable, they are not adding value. Leaders invest their knowledge and efforts in value adding activities.

To conclude, what should communication professionals keep in mind to be seen and respected as leaders in business?

Accuracy and honesty is not negotiable. Information moves at the speed of light in the digital age. You need to be quick to check facts and even quicker to respond. This makes it imperative that organisations have a communication professional at the boardroom table where strategic issues are discussed. If the communication professional gets the information second hand, time will be lost and inaccuracies may occur.



Stay on top of your profession. Leaders never stop learning and reading. Read in depth articles about business and the profession. Enrol in programmes to gain business skills and to sharpen your professional skills.

Network with leaders. Attend conferences where you can participate in conversations about business and attend conferences where you can sharpen your knowledge on the latest research in employee communication, the newest trends in the social space and how to apply traditional platforms in innovative ways.

According to Winston Churchill, communication professionals are trained in the core leadership skills. Step up and take the responsibility to package and distribute accurate and honest information.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ In the communication profession, accuracy and honesty are not negotiable.
- ▶ Be a life-long learner and stay on top of issues and emerging trends in the profession.
- ▶ Make it a point to network with business leaders and communication colleagues to create rich experiences that further your career.



**DR AMANDA
HAMILTON-ATTWELL**
ABC, CPRP, IABC FELLOW

Chief Executive Officer
Business DNA

SOUTH AFRICA

Dr Amanda Hamilton-Attwell, CEO of Business DNA, holds a Doctorate in Communication Science and is an Accredited Business Communicator (ABC) through IABC and a Certified Public Relations Professional with the Public Relations Institute of South Africa. Dr Hamilton-Attwell was the Chairman of the IABC Africa Region and served on the IABC Executive Board 2011/2012. She was the 2014 IABC Gold Quill Award Chair, and the same year was awarded the IABC Chairman's Award for her contribution to the communication profession. In 2015 she was named an IABC Fellow.

ARE YOU A SOAP DISPENSER?

You know that thing you have in your bathroom? You know, you push down on the button and some silky soap comes out for you to wash your hands. It's a great thing. Reliable. Sturdy. Does its job on time, every time. Will give you 20 years of dedicated service without wanting anything in return, except refills of course!

STEPHEN WELCH

I submit that if internal communication wants to be taken seriously in organizations, it needs to do more than just dispense soap at the push of a button. If you are happy sitting on the shelf for the next 20 years (or melting when the house burns down) there is really no need to read the rest of this chapter.

Yeah, let's hear it for soap dispensers. Aren't they great?

But the question for internal communication professionals to ask themselves is: are **you** a soap dispenser? And I ask that in both senses of the word:

1. Do you dispense corporate soap or "softsoap" as some kind of balmy goo that gets everywhere in organizations and is designed to persuade or cajole employees to perform better? Are you the equivalent of a snake oil salesman (but for soap), or the purveyor of patent medicine which, while probably not causing harm, doesn't do much good either? Are you the solution when leaders need to wash their hands of a problem?
2. More allegorically, are you someone who when subjected to pressure from a higher level, someone pushing down on you, reliably produces output without complaint or imagination?

The corporate soap dispenser is a reliable, conscientious, diligent, trustworthy member of the team. He or she will always deliver exactly what is expected, and execute flawlessly every time. Every organization needs a few of these. But if your house was on fire, would you rush back into save your soap dispenser? Would you put a soap dispenser in charge of a department? Would you listen to its advice?

Is someone who acts like a corporate soap dispenser really adding value?





Internal communicators shouldn't stay in the office waiting for passing trade. Get out there. Travel round the business. Become an essential helper who can unlock doors and make things happen.

Yes, it is true. There are times when someone will come along, ask for and expect some soap. Someone will come along and push down from the top. And you will need to dispense some soap like the good corporate servant you are. In some jobs, in some situations, reliability and consistency is key. Wouldn't it be a surprise if motor oil came of the soap dispenser? Predictability has its virtues.

But that is not leadership behaviour. That is not taking ownership of your career. That is not really adding value as a communication professional. I submit that if internal communication wants to be taken seriously in organizations, it needs to do more than just dispense soap at the push of a button. If you are happy sitting on the shelf for the next 20 years (or melting when the house burns down) there is really no need to read the rest of this chapter.

But if you want to grow and develop your career, and step up and become a leader, then the following tips might be useful.

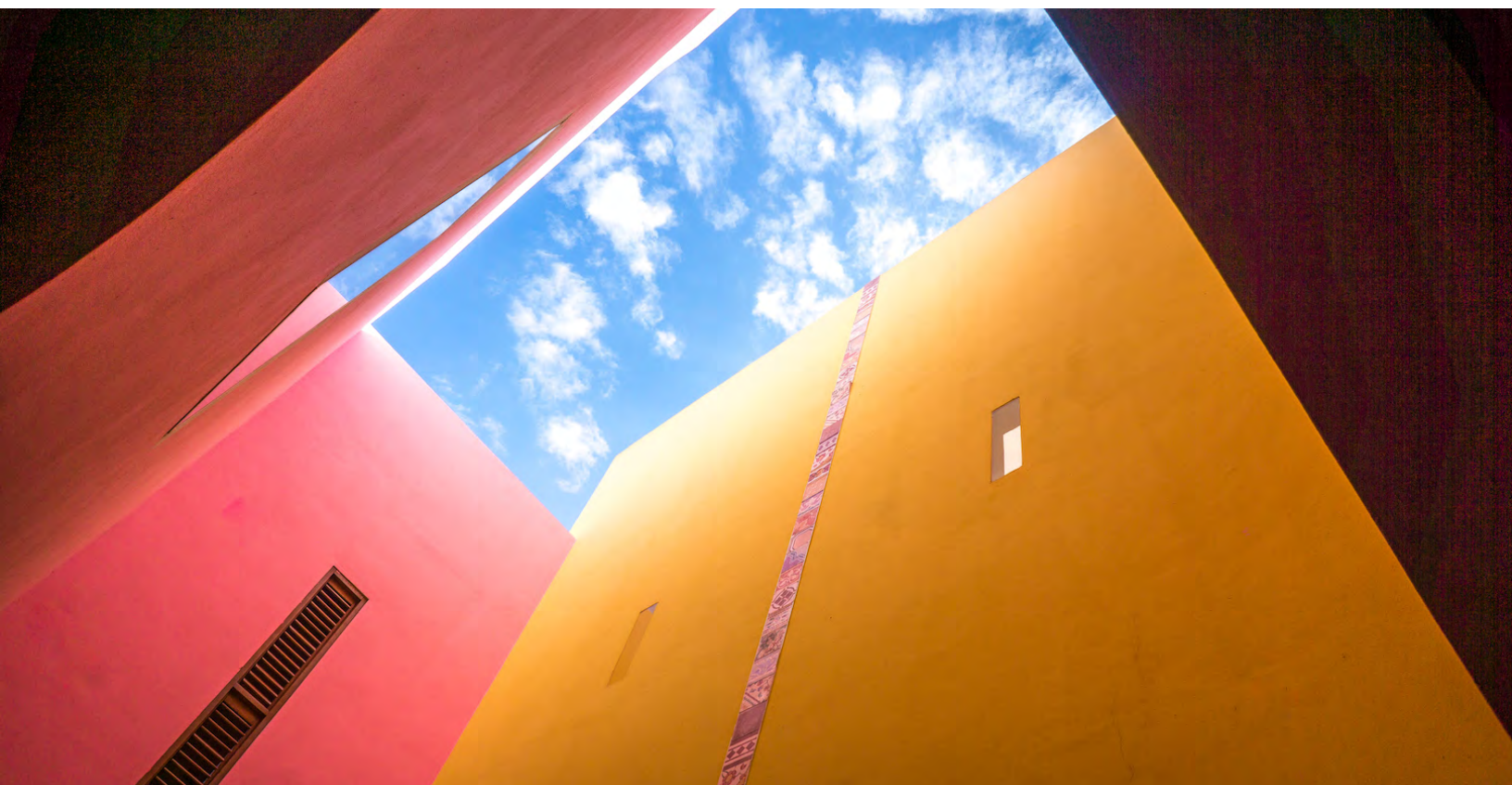
- ▶ Ask not what is for the soap but what the soap is for. The soap dispenser doesn't ask what the soap is for. It measures its utility by output, not outcome. Success for the soap dispenser is pumping out product. Not the end result. Find out what job or outcome the customer requires and then adjust your solution accordingly.

- ▶ Offer other solutions. Sometimes soap is just the thing. But other times antibacterial hand-wash or solvent is better. Just because the customer has asked for soap doesn't mean soap is the answer. Have a conversation with your customer about what the job is and then discuss alternative products that you can offer.
- ▶ You don't just clean hands. Emergency bubble bath substitute? Emergency shampoo? Use your imagination and think about other problems your skills can solve. Coaching and advising? Event organizing? Marketing? Annual Report?
- ▶ Become Passe-Partout. Don't stay in the bathroom. Become portable and an essential travelling companion. The little mini-soap a leader can put in his pocket. Internal communicators shouldn't stay in the office waiting for passing trade. Get out there. Travel round the business. Become an essential helper who can unlock doors and make things happen.
- ▶ What can you do with clean hands? You aren't dispensing soap. You are dispensing cleanliness and all the benefits that brings. You are selling the ability to cook a meal, to cuddle a baby, to be healthy. IC leaders talk about the benefits of their work, not just its features. Show how you will create value and help others succeed.
- ▶ Be the boss of the bathroom. Laugh at the tiny toothbrush, the frivolous facecloth and the timid towel. Be confident and don't let parochial rivals grind you down. Act like a leader and others will see you thus.
- ▶ Be the boss of more than the bathroom. The tiny toothbrush and its ilk belong in only one place. You, my friend the soap, can bestride the whole house like a colossus. Yes, bathroom is your cradle, but you are equally at home in kitchen, workroom, laundry room, or even outside. IC leaders are equally at home in different environments, and can add value wherever they go. They are friends to all parts of the organization.

There's a great opportunity for internal communication to be more than just a dispenser of corporate soap.

You have a choice in your career. There is nothing wrong in being a corporate soap dispenser and waiting for things to happen. There is nothing wrong with doing essentially the same thing for 20 years. But the alternative, at least in my opinion, is much more appealing. It takes courage, determination, confidence and the occasional failure. You are the entrepreneur of your own talent.

Because internal communication, like soap, has much higher potential.



Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Ask not what is for the soap but what the soap is for.
- ▶ What is the benefit of your solution, not just its features?
- ▶ Be the boss of more than just the bathroom.

United Kingdom



STEPHEN WELCH, FRSA

Independent Consultant

UNITED KINGDOM

Stephen Welch is a communication and HR professional, working in the UK. He splits his time between working at a semiconductor company and freelance opportunities and projects such as business partner training, leadership coaching and market research. From 2002 – 2013 he was a global partner of Hay Group, a leading HR consultancy where he led the global Communication Media and Technology Consulting sector.

He's a certified member of the Market Research Society and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, and Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts. He can be reached via LinkedIn or Twitter at @StephenWelch11.

STEPPING UP AS A LEADER AT A CRITICAL TIME

The world we live in has become increasingly polarized. Socially and politically, people today have radically different points of view. Sadly, public discourse is often full of anger and vitriol, and an unwillingness to listen and find common ground. It can even turn violent.

BARBARA FAGAN-SMITH

An organization must have a clear vision, a compelling strategy, and evidence that its people are working together to do important work.

That's the context for organizations at this time in the world. And in this context, it is more important than ever for those organizations to unite their people with a sense of purpose, with the feeling and belief that they are connected to each other in meaningful ways, striving for worthwhile goals, and doing work that is making a difference in the world.

Sometimes the work communication leaders are doing is more a matter of survival than breaking new ground. Their organizations are managing massive change, expanding or contracting. External forces or strategic missteps have put the pressure on. Everyone is over-extended and over-committed. In these times, organizations and employees need to have a clear sense of where they are and where they need to go.

In large part, communicating the direction of the company, and aligning employees to it, is the role of internal communications. An organization must have a clear vision, a compelling strategy, and evidence that its people are working together to do important work. Even if these elements are in place, if employees don't know and understand them in a visceral way, then a critical opportunity is lost—and the organization will limp instead of run, wander instead of moving rapidly toward a compelling destination.

Moreover, people in an organization need to understand the role they each play. They need to know how their personal work is meaningful and important. To this end, the broad messaging of company leaders is vital. But even more important in the day-to-day experience an employee has

To be an effective communication leader in today's environment, you must be able to bring people together across your organization and work collaboratively to create and implement solutions.

with her/his manager. Are they connected and communicating regularly? Is the employee getting clear feedback? Does the employee feel valued?

The majority of organizations do not put enough effort and thought into cultivating effective manager communication. It's a complex task that crosses functions, and therefore often fails to get attention, despite the critical need and impact. The ROI Communication Benchmark Report¹ quantified that effective manager communication actually predicts increased financial performance, and yet the majority of organizations don't have a structured approach to improving it.

Effective internal communication needs to:

- ▶ Be intentional, coordinated and strategic
- ▶ Use the right mix of technology and tools to reach people where they are
- ▶ Break through the clutter of content to make key messages stick
- ▶ Be open, transparent and multi-directional
- ▶ Incorporate and empower managers as a key source and influential force

Effective internal communication impacts the bottom line of an organization, and requires expertise and a proactive approach. It will not happen by accident. Given what is at stake, and in light of the complexity of the world today, communication professionals need to step up and take a leadership role more than ever. Few functions are more vital to an organization's success. Communication is the key to engaging employees and unlocking progress.

How to be an effective communication leader

To be recognized as leaders, communication professionals need to be proactive and intentional in winning the trust and confidence of leaders and teams within their organizations.



Here are three key ideas and related tips to consider:

1. Demonstrate your understanding of and value to the organization.

To gain the trust of the leadership team and your cross-functional colleagues you need to have a deep understanding of the business, and your organization's competitive position. You must excel at articulating its vision, purpose, and priorities, and tie your communication strategy to them. You also need to understand and care deeply about its culture.

Communication is an ongoing journey that requires adjustments. Therefore, you also need to add value to your organization through empirical research and metrics. Regularly use measurement tools such as surveys, focus groups and other channel metrics, to assess communication effectiveness and solicit ideas. Having a measurement strategy enables you to back up your plans and recommendations with data and facts. It further establishes your credibility.

2. Convene a cross-functional team and collaborate.

To be an effective communication leader in today's environment, you must be able to bring people together across your organization (IT, HR, marketing, sales, finance, legal, business units), and work collaboratively to create and implement solutions. You have to know how to build a coalition of support across other functions and teams.

Therefore, make a consistent effort to establish relationships with key leaders and managers across the organization. Do your best to understand their problems and opportunities, and work together on plans that address the organization's collective needs. When your communication efforts are successful, share the credit. Give others the glory. The best leaders have an abiding desire to help others succeed.



3. Focus on improving manager communication.

There is no single communication effort that can have more business impact than helping your organization improve how managers communicate with their teams. Managers are a key source of information and connection point for employees, and they greatly determine employee engagement, loyalty and ultimately the bottom line.

There are three elements of an effective manager communication strategy:

1. Structure

- ▶ Clearly define communication roles and responsibilities
- ▶ Define and consider communication competencies for managers during the hiring, performance review, and compensation process
- ▶ Measure manager communication effectiveness and hold managers accountable

2. Skills

- ▶ Provide manager communication training
- ▶ Give feedback and coaching
- ▶ Provide resources for ongoing skill development

3. Support

- ▶ Include leader and manager communications in your strategic communication plan
- ▶ Create a framework and expectations for communication cadence for leaders and managers throughout the organization
- ▶ Provide and manage overarching content, vehicles and tools for managers

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Demonstrate your understanding of and value to the organization.
- ▶ Convene a cross-functional team and collaborate.
- ▶ Focus on improving manager communication.

United States



BARBARA FAGAN-SMITH

Founder and CEO
ROI Communication

UNITED STATES

Barbara Fagan-Smith, the founder and CEO of ROI Communication, has more than two decades of experience in corporate communications and journalism. She leads ROI's work to strengthen communication within large organizations – enabling and inspiring employees to collaborate better, contribute more and become stronger advocates of their business, culture and brand. Barbara is also the founder of the non-profit Family ROI. Barbara was named one of Silicon Valley's most influential women by the San Jose/Silicon Valley Business Journal. She was also selected as a winner of the Enterprising Women of the Year Awards, a tribute to top women entrepreneurs.

BRIDGING THE TRUST GAP

In a world where trust in institutions is rapidly eroding¹ at the same time that technological change is accelerating, organisations can only prosper if the people who work in them are not distracted by confusion, information overload, attention deficit², and at times even fear. Trust is a significant corporate asset that can propel employee engagement forward thereby requiring management attention and rigour alongside other key employee engagement metrics.

TARNYA DUNNING

It is critical for communicators to raise the bar high for congruency in leader's values to action, stories and content, and how, where and when they engage. Without congruence, there is no trust.

Trust is built when a leader is reliable, accepting of different views, open and congruent between words and actions. Too often these characteristics are missing in the actions of politicians, CEOs, and organisational leaders creating incongruence or the trust gap.

Add to this that neighbours or peers influence people³ more than their CEO or country's elected leader; the role of the strategic communicator as an executive leader has never been more pivotal.

Today's strategic communicator needs to successfully manage their machines including communication strategies, content, tools, and data. But it's as important that we help leaders be successful communicators so that the man is as effective as the machine.

It is critical for communicators to raise the bar high for congruency in leader's values to action, stories and content, and how, where and when they engage. Without congruence, there is no trust.

To close the trust gap:

- We bring the water cooler conversation to our leaders with data-driven actions in real time. We listen at scale and pace, synthesising a data-driven approach that combines quantitative inputs with sentiment to develop actionable insights. Technology is a significant enabler for communicators.

*No longer are we an island.
We are communicators and
we partner. Artificial
boundaries between internal
and external and between
traditional and social media
can no longer exist.
Executives engage
communicators, and our
advice becomes more
powerful as we use
marketing's sophisticated
customer tools in our domain.*

At Telstra, our Yammer network has 48,000 users with one-third actively engaged. To identify the conversations that matter most we employ a mix of community managers and analytics tools to show volumes, engagement, sentiment and leader effectiveness profiles.

- ▶ We advise leaders to listen more, talk less. A “communicating at” model ensures that people tune out, so leaders need to talk with their people on their own terms, in places and times that they value.

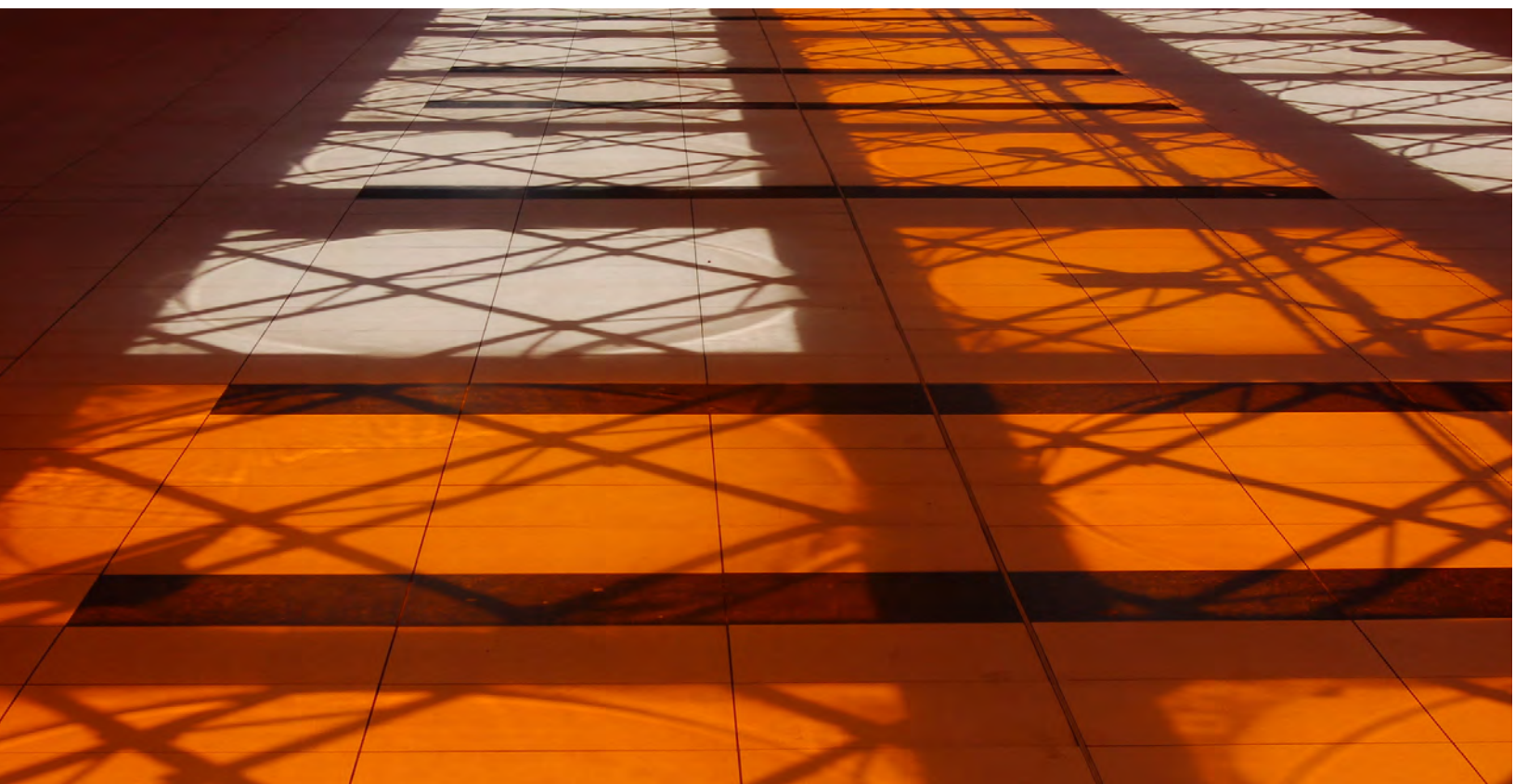
Once an annual roadshow, monthly emails, and a floor walk were sufficient. Today, leaders need to be always in listening and responding mode. The old office door can never be shut.

Tools such as Yammer provide an opportunity to shift gears and analytics help us listen when we physically cannot. More than the adoption of these tools is a mindset change that prioritises listening and engaging. As Theodore Roosevelt said, “nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.” We remind leaders that the medium is also the message.

At Telstra, we partner with HR to develop leaders' capabilities to tell our story, link it to their experiences and the outcome we need, and to be real when engaging. We guide leaders to create their own content then listen, share and respond.

- ▶ We amplify and broaden these conversations so those outside of the room feel connected and can contribute, shifting communication and conversations from a single channel to an omni-channel approach catering for diverse needs. We filter the infinite noise for employees so they are not distracted nor distrustful. We advise leaders to take this further. Where employee input has led to action, let them and those listening know.

For Telstra's 40,000 plus employees and partner staff, we use a variety of push and pull mechanisms so our people can



stay up-to-date and connected. For example, access is via a desktop corporate news site, mobile or tablet corporate news app, or Yammer on any device. We send a morning and evening content aggregator email collating corporate stories, the conversations that matter most on Yammer and on our external social sites and key media headlines. This is in parallel with a vigilant approach to shutting down local newsletters that cannot curate corporate news.

- No longer are we an island. We are communicators and we partner. Artificial boundaries between internal and external and between traditional and social media can no longer exist. Executives engage communicators, and our advice becomes more powerful as we use marketing's sophisticated customer tools in our domain.

We see employee engagement as a shared responsibility with HR, developing integrated approaches around leadership communication, capabilities and performance. We partner with IT to trial and introduce new and emerging technologies that enable us to bring more people into real-time conversations.

At Telstra we worked with the marketing team to develop a workforce segmentation approach enabling us to identify the ways and channels our people prefer. We took their Go-to-Market approach and adapted it to prioritise our content. With HR, we incorporate communication levers in key leadership training so that we improve engagement through our people knowing their role in the vision and strategy of the organisation.

- We know what best looks like and we go after it. To hold ourselves to account, we set clear quantitative and qualitative targets that we review against global high-performing norms covering metrics such as the communication environment (including levels of trust), leadership communication, channels and content.



We then measure ourselves against regular engagement research, an annual employee communication survey and monthly progress in key channels. We are transparent with our teams, executives, and organisation on progress.

We also seek out best practice with regular exchanges with other Australian corporates and an annual international study tour specifically focussed on social.

By recognising the contribution of employee trust to engagement and discretionary effort, particularly in the era of internal social and employee social advocacy, strategic communicators must partner in new and evolving ways to manage communication machinery and guide organisational leaders to be congruent in words and actions.

Strategic communicators require their fingerprints over the corporate, leadership, and water cooler conversations of an organisation. Content must be clear as it ripples through the organisation. Leaders must have the capability and mind-set to engage within a specified framework. Water cooler conversations must link proactively and reactively to what's top of mind for the organisation and what's on the minds of its people. Through finding, creating and tightening these linkages, the communications executive will lead the organisation alongside other C-suite roles.

Three Key Takeaways

To bridge the trust gap and remain relevant and valued, strategic communicators must:

- ▶ Bring an organisation's resources and tools together to benefit leaders by enabling them to shift from instinct-driven to data-driven communication engagement and congruent action which provokes, is personal, and focusses on listening more than talking
- ▶ Influence content by turning one-way interruptions into real-time dialogue, linked to the vision and strategy
- ▶ Remain diligent in cutting the noise, prioritising content and bringing news to people in the channels they want to access so that we create the space for dialogue



TARNYA DUNNING

General Manager of Employee Communications
Telstra

AUSTRALIA

Tarnya Dunning is a senior corporate relations leader in one of Australia's most scrutinised companies, Telstra. The organisation is Australia's leading telco, a top 5 ASX company and employs more than 40,000 people across Australia and over 15 other countries.

Tarnya is responsible for the company's employee communications incorporating corporate strategy, culture and leadership communications. She also manages Telstra's internal social tool, Yammer, which has one of the world's largest engaged networks. Previously she led integrated corporate affairs teams delivering award-winning consumer PR campaigns and managing significant corporate issues.

CHAPTER FIVE

EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY

New research shows that employee engagement has grown far beyond the common definition, moving toward employee advocacy. What does this mean for internal communication professionals ?

DR LEANDRO HERRERO
UNITED KINGDOM

PRIYA BATES
CANADA

JEN SHATWELL
UNITED STATES

SASKIA JONES
UNITED KINGDOM

THE BEST EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY PROGRAMME IS THE ONE THAT DOES NOT NEED EXIST

Employee engagement has grown as an industry in its own right, driven by the sub-industry of surveys and rankings. Somebody said that science advances by a series of funerals and, as far as I am concerned, employee satisfaction surveys are not feeling very well and deserve at least a dignified retirement, before it is too late.

DR LEANDRO HERRERO

The best employee advocacy programme is the one that does not need to exist. When advocacy is unsolicited, spontaneous, as a sign of pride of working in a particular workplace, you don't need a programme. You may need one when otherwise you would not have that advocacy. But then, you are always catering for something that you want to create, to install, perhaps force.

But engagement refuses to go and has found ways to upgrade itself. People are now talking employee advocacy, or even employee activism, mixing up conceptually and practically very different things.

Recent pieces of research (a loose concept in the human capital business) and position papers by experts, are also using the term employee activism, perhaps because activism is on anybody's TV screen these days. They have hijacked the term because it sounds powerful, but what they describe when they actually do, is at best employee advocacy. That usually means having your employees as advocates of the company, presumably overtly praising the good things in the outside world.

This is a noble aim, often developed and implemented in a naïve way. And internal communications can be caught in the fire, expecting these professionals to be the drivers of that advocacy. I have, for example, seen plans to provide materials and prompts for employees to be able to have conversations about those good things that the company does.

In a noticeable case that I remember from years ago, things backfired pretty easily and painfully. A pharmaceutical company provided a toolkit for employees to show their great expenditure in R&D, all the sites and labs, all the billions spent in finding new medicines, and an overall justification



I have a cynical, highly heuristic and seldom wrong principle that when a company talks a lot about something, it is likely that they lack that something. A lot of talk about teamwork in the value system, makes me think that teamwork (unlike what it is often pretended) is probably weak. Strong teamwork companies don't talk too much about it. They just do it. Employee advocacy is always a candidate for this as well.

for big prices for which profits could then be fed back to the R&D voracious machinery. They wanted employees to use that data to enter in conversations with anybody outside.

The numbers were impressive. You needed those multimillions and billions to be able to spend in R&D. What they forgot to mention is that the marketing and sales costs were at least twice as much than the R&D costs. So when somebody pointed out that if they spent less in the marketing and sales overgrown machinery, surely they would have more money to reinvest in the search for new medicines, the whole Internal Communications machinery collapsed and the advocacy programme faded quietly.

If internal communications is called to arms, it may be worth remembering a fundamental principal before embarking themselves upon a programme. I call it *The Power of the Absent Programme*. The best employee advocacy programme is the one that does not need to exist. When advocacy is unsolicited, spontaneous, as a sign of pride of working in a particular workplace, you don't need a programme. You may need one when otherwise you would not have that advocacy. But then, you are always catering for something that you want to create, to install, perhaps force. Not impossible, but worth starting from this premise.



I have a cynical, highly heuristic and seldom wrong principle that when a company talks a lot about something, it is likely that they lack that something. A lot of talk about teamwork in the value system, makes me think that teamwork (unlike what it is often pretended) is probably weak. Strong team work companies don't talk too much about it. They just do it. Employee advocacy is always a candidate for this as well.

In our Viral Change™ programmes, we work with a relatively small number of peer-nominated, highly connected employees who take upon themselves the task of role-modelling some specific behaviours and engaging with their peers in conversations and actions. They become true advocates but we hardly use the term. They do advocacy without a label. And it works.

There is another point here to consider. Many use the term employee advocacy when referring to the external world. But the internal world is possibly more important. And here the borders between employer branding and employee advocacy get blurred. This is nothing unusual in the messy world of organizational life, which is always looking for labels to capture specific initiatives. And capture is the right word, since they all end up in captivity.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Internal communications needs to critically think why it is given to them that task of employee advocacy (crafting, management) if that is the case. Does it mean that the underlying assumption is one of good messaging and communications regardless of any other variables?
- ▶ Internal communications is often prone to accept anything that starts with a 'com' and then ending up doing things that other parts of the organization should own. The function should challenge more the ownership of initiatives such as employee advocacy so that their taking does not constitute an alibi for managerial incompetence. It is the art of management that needs to be at the forefront of having employees = advocates in the payroll.
- ▶ In any case, if needed and started, the overall goal of an employee advocacy programme is to kill it as fast as possible by making it completely redundant. Then, you have advocacy with big A.



DR LEANDRO HERRERO

Chief Organizational Architect
The Chalfont Project

UNITED KINGDOM

Dr Leandro Herrero is the CEO of The Chalfont Project, an international firm of organizational architects. He is the pioneer of *Viral Change*™, a mobilizing platform which delivers large scale behavioural and cultural change in organizations.

He is the author of several books including *Viral Change*™, the alternative to slow, painful and unsuccessful management of change in organizations' and *Homo Imitans, the art of social infection: viral change in action*.

Dr Herrero is a psychiatrist who spent years in top global managerial roles in the UK and the US. He is a speaker on organizational challenges and writes a *Daily Thoughts* blog to a large community of followers.

THE ENGAGEMENT SOLUTION: ENGAGEMENT FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Engaged internal audiences, whether they are employees, members of an association or club or families in a community, have the potential to help organizations and causes succeed. Leaders know this too, and ask human resources teams to lead engagement. After all, engagement is about people, right? In the 2015 Edelman State of Engagement survey, it's clear that engagement is still widely perceived as falling under the domain of HR versus being a driver of business performance and employee advocacy and herein lies the challenge.¹

PRIYA BATES

Organizations must have engagement strategies that are aligned with business strategies involving all parts of the business, and include employees, leaders and executives. Engagement strategies must be integrated into every day interactions and activities. And like every good strategy, it must begin with setting the right goals.

Organizations must have engagement strategies that are aligned with business strategies involving all parts of the business, and include employees, leaders and executives. Engagement strategies must be integrated into every day interactions and activities. And like every good strategy, it must begin with setting the right goals.

Setting the right engagement goals

Most organizations use the Gallup I2² to measure and benchmark engagement. These questions focus on three areas described by AON Hewitt³ as:

Say: Employees speak positively about their organization.

Stay: Employees want to be part of their organization

Strive: Employees desire to go above and beyond

Employees who speak positively about their organization refers to employee advocacy, an important measure of true engagement.

At Inner Strength Communication Inc., the 4 Ps of Engagement help link business strategy with engagement goals that help drive the awareness, understanding, action and belief to encourage employees to advocate through actions and words.



Once the right goals have been set, organizations should look at systemic programs that can help turn goals into behaviour. The engagement system acknowledges that engagement doesn't happen by accident but instead is purposeful.

1. Perform: What does success look like from a measurable organizational perspective? These are the business goals. Examples include financial targets, operational efficiency, cost reduction, customer sales and service goals and/or reputation scores.
2. Participate: What do employees have to do to deliver the organization results? Examples include sell more products, bring the brand promise and values to life through specific behaviours, sign up for volunteer programs or follow new processes.
3. Promote: What should employees say? Examples include sharing the right information on a new initiative, helping sell products and services, sharing positively around the watercooler or on social media or recommending the organization as a great place to work.
4. Proud: What will make employees proud? Although harder to measure, this intangible behaviour is integral to engagement success. Articulate elements that help employees internalize goals and how an organization's goals serve customers, community and the environment.

Once the right goals have been set, organizations should look at systemic programs that can help turn goals into behaviour. The engagement system acknowledges that engagement doesn't happen by accident but instead is purposeful.

Fixing the system

There are four key areas of the engagement system that require a critical look to understand where gaps exist and disconnects with results can occur:

1. **Build the foundation:** It's important to start by taking a good look at foundations. For performance goals, look for strategic business plans, holistic articulations of the brand beyond logo, tagline and visual identity elements like values, personality and voice and legal policies like codes of conduct that people can clearly read and interpret. Don't be surprised if these foundations simply don't exist.
2. **Train your people:** Once foundations are built, organizations must take the time to train their people. Training takes various forms and can include communication, campaigns and formal training programs that help build awareness, understanding and action. How many organizations have codes of conduct that employees sign but don't understand? How many have strategic plans have not been communicated beyond senior leadership? Usually training and awareness campaigns that fail fall into two distinct categories:

A famous quote from The Field of Dreams⁴ is "if you build it, they will come." Some organizations check a box on policies and guidelines or new technology tools, and they simply believe that people will follow or adopt because it exists.

And then there's launch and leave. Some organizations put a lot of effort and investment into a one-time launch event and then never communicate again. These programs don't take into consideration employee turnover and the importance of repetition and reinforcement.

To get training right, incorporate it in a way that ties an organization's expectations into clearly defined actions and behaviours.

3. **Recognize the right behaviour:** Once the path has been defined and people have been trained, it's time to reinforce the right behaviour with the right recognition. Be purposeful with every day, informal recognition that says "thank you" and "good job" but also clearly articulate formal recognition that includes individual and team rewards, performance reviews and promotions. A former leader once said that we tell our people what we truly value by whom we hire and whom we fire. Recognizing the wrong behaviour can hurt engagement and trust.





4. Measure and share success: Peter Drucker says, “What gets measured, gets managed.”¹⁵ A key to managing engagement is measuring and sharing success. As part of an engagement system, measure against engagement goals and foundational goals. Share stories with employees to both show and tell what great engagement looks like and the results that can be achieved when employees are engaged. Having a communication plan and infrastructure that regularly connects leaders, managers and employees creates the transparency and trust successful organizations want.

When leaders, managers and employees align to a common strategy and work together to deliver results it is magic. Communication and HR professionals can push organizations beyond check-the-box engagement programs into powerful engagement strategies that turn employees into proactive advocates for the brand.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Set real engagement goals with links to performance, participation, promotion and pride.
- ▶ Focus on an integrated employee engagement strategy and system.
- ▶ Use a critical eye to identify gaps and disconnects that can hurt engagement and advocacy.

Canada



PRIYA BATES
ABC, MC, CMP, IABC FELLOW

President
Inner Strength Communication Inc.

CANADA

Priya Bates builds strategic communication, engagement, branding and transformational change plans that help organizations connect the dots between business strategy and employee delivery. She dreams of a day when the role of internal communication is recognized as integral to organizational and business success. Priya has earned both IABC designations for professional communication: Accredited Business Communicator (ABC) and Communication Management Professionals (CMP). She has also been recognized for lifetime achievement in communication nationally and internationally by IABC having earned the IABC Canada Master Communicator (MC) designation in 2010 and the IABC Fellow designation in 2016.

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THE DEFINITION OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ISN'T CHANGING. EVERYTHING ELSE IS.

The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer¹ reminds us that our employees are considered the most credible source of information about our companies, and thanks to platforms like Glassdoor, employees in the age of social media can serve as such more publically and prolifically than ever before. So engagement is no longer an employee-business dynamic. It's an employee-public dynamic that has real business ramifications.

JEN SHATWELL

You could spend all year reading research around what motivates our employees to give us their best, but most credible sources agree that the secret sauce involves a combination of meaningful work, workspace atmosphere and organizational culture. Employee experience may be the new buzzword du jour but if it means the exact right mix of those ingredients for your employees, one study suggests that the companies that get it right are four times as profitable than those that don't.

In part because of this, and no doubt because they were bombarded by news of a “worldwide employee engagement crisis”² in 2016, our stakeholders are more interested in engagement than ever before. They understand its potential to impact the bottom line, but they don't fully understand the variables that affect it, and they want us to get to the bottom of it.

For these reasons, internal communication professionals are asking more and better questions about employee engagement. We're demanding and utilizing more meaningful data sets to evaluate it. We're interrogating the concept and, in particular, its return on our investments of time and resources. Hence, there is a slew of new thinking around the topic and attempts to wrangle and define a largely subjective and intangible concept³.

At the risk of oversimplifying or coming across as glib, I'd like to suggest that it's our frame of reference that's changing and that, fundamentally, when it comes to employee engagement, only this question is essential: are employees motivated to give us their best and is their best good enough for our businesses?

If the answer to the first question is no, IC has a critical role to play, not only in motivating but also in unearthing the root causes of complacency or discontent. If the answer to both questions is yes, IC has a critical role to play in determining



Here's where the advocacy piece comes in. If we get culture, atmosphere and purpose right, our employees want to talk about it. They happily serve as that most credible source of information about our companies and IC is wise to stay out of their way.

how the business can benefit from employees' expression of their motivation, and thinking creatively about how to promote and facilitate such expression. If employees are motivated but their best isn't good enough, call HR!

IC as motivation detector

What I like most about reframing employee engagement is blowing up the notion that it's a moment-in-time measurement that occurs via survey every year or two. These mega-surveys are limiting in two ways. Some are driven more by recruitment needs than by motivation needs. They grant us access to Top 50 and Top 100 lists that can be powerful endorsements and magnetic to top talent.

Other surveys are institutional. IC professionals were not involved in their original design, have to fight to include even a handful of new questions and aren't always privy to their complete results. No one appreciates having years of comparable data sets more than me, but if we don't allow ourselves to adapt and improve our questioning as the business and our employees require it, we may as well not ask anything at all.

So in my work with IC teams, we actively move toward what I call an ambient environment of measurement. Because I'm pragmatic, I start with whatever mega-survey my clients are already committed to. We identify meaningful indices against motivation drivers by narrowing down the full survey into subsets of questions that are easy to pulse against over the course of the year. IC's ability to spot, alert the business to, and begin to address issues of motivation in real time is not only valuable and agile, but the inability to do so in this day and age veers archaic.

Qualitative focus groups and interviews then give us the ability to ask more poignant questions, add ballast to the quant and help IC professionals go deeper into identifying and addressing root causes.

IC as a motivator

You could spend all year reading research around what motivates our employees to give us their best, but most credible sources agree that the secret sauce involves a combination of meaningful work, workspace atmosphere and organizational culture. Employee experience may be the new buzzword du jour but if it means the exact right mix of those ingredients for your employees, one study suggests that the companies that get it right are four times as profitable than those that don't⁴.

Similarly, purpose. Jim Stengel's research showed that companies that were grounded in purpose, that meaningful work ingredient, were 400 percent more profitable than their peers and grew three times as fast over a 10-year period⁵.

So when planning strategic work streams for any given time period, I'm eager to push back on teams that overemphasize employee engagement activities versus investments in culture, atmosphere and purpose. Engagement should not be the work of IC. Rather, business-benefiting motivation is the outcome of strategic internal communication.

IC as a motivation megaphone

Here's where the advocacy piece comes in. If we get culture, atmosphere and purpose right, our employees want to talk about it. They happily serve as that most credible source of information about our companies and IC is wise to stay out of their way.

This isn't new! What is new are the multitude of channels via which employees can express themselves and the vast reach those channels offer them. IC's opportunity in this era of engagement is to establish permission for employees to share and then to reduce noise across the organization increasing resonance around our most powerful narrative and purpose-illustrating stories so that motivated employees will share them.





Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Despite so many trends and definitions around employee engagement, all that really matters is whether our employees are motivated to give us their best and whether their best is good enough for our business.
- ▶ Motivation to give us their best is the by-product of a persistent focus on culture, atmosphere and purposeful work.
- ▶ Motivated employees have always been advocates. Now they have a more credible, louder and farther-reaching voice than ever before. Give them the permission and means to use it and get out of their way.



JEN SHATWELL

Independent Consultant

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Jen Shatwell works with businesses to create strategic communication plans and put thought leadership into practice. With a focus on achieving measurable results that unlock performance, she's a believer in and advocate of the necessity of science and art in the communication field.

With 20 years of experience, Jen is an independent consultant and works with Fortune 100, Fortune 500 and fast-growing companies in the technology, consulting, energy, retail, biotechnology and hospitality industries. She was previously Managing Director of Global Advisory Services for Melcrum and has practiced in domestic and international markets, and across corporate, government and non-profit sectors.

COMMUNICATING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

"With billions of people on social media, leading marketers are quickly learning that they don't have the resources to engage in every brand conversation on every channel. While some brands have caught on and are empowering advocates to share stories on social channels, many brands are overlooking one of the most valuable types of advocates - their employees!."

SASKIA JONES

Many brands try to restrict how employees use channels such as Twitter and Facebook to share company information. The reality is that the internet allows a potential for open dialogue which can't be stopped. Consumers are sharing their experience about brands and employees are able to share their ideas, whether we like it or not. Our job is to embrace and leverage this opportunity, not to be scared of it.

What is employee advocacy?

Simply put, employee advocates defend their organisation against criticism and champion their organisation, online and off. Employee advocacy programmes actively encourage employees to share brand content through their own networks. Social media is not the only way for them to do this, but it's a clear channel to promote and measure success. The potential benefits are huge, providing another channel to your market through thousands of personal networks.

With many companies fearing the risks of such lack of control, you'll need leadership on board to make this happen. You'll need to have great content to share and encourage use of technology and training. But most importantly, you'll need to empower employees from top to bottom to share their personal experiences both within and outside the organisation, with integrity and authenticity.

Isn't it risky?

Many brands try to restrict how employees use channels such as Twitter and Facebook to share company information. The reality is that the internet allows a potential for open dialogue which can't be stopped. Consumers are sharing their experience about brands and employees are able to share their ideas, whether we like it or not. Our job is to embrace and leverage this opportunity, not to be scared of it.



Consumers are becoming increasingly cynical and less trusting. They say what they think about companies and they are looking for the real story behind company doors. Allowing employees to communicate in their own words gives consumers an insider view, which will fuel trust and belief in your brand.

That's not to say the risk of damaging tweets, blogs or posts is over, but with the right training and guidelines this can be minimised.

The need for a plan

Weber Shandwick, a PR firm in partnership with KRC Research, conducted a global study of 2,300 employees at organizations with more than 500 employees². They found that 33 percent of employees post messages, pictures or videos in social media without any encouragement from their employer. Only 45 percent of employees have a clear understanding of what they should and should not do on social channels when it comes to company-related topics.

We can capitalise on this opportunity by having a plan and policy to guide employees, encouraging active use of social media. It requires commitment from leadership, involving employees and ensuring ongoing analysis, feedback and improvement.

Having a plan isn't just about making sure you have socially-interesting content to share with employees and tracking how they use it. It's about helping employees to see that it has real and practical benefits and the vital role they have to play.

People trust people, not corporate messaging

Word-of-mouth marketing still trumps company marketing. An employee advocacy programme means your marketing messages can reach far and wide through employee's personal networks. As well as people trusting the content, there is a far better chance that people will consume it if shared by a personal connection. Furthermore, personal connections are far less likely to unsubscribe or unfriend³.

A global study by Edelman⁴ found that employees are trusted more than CEOs, well-known personalities, elected officials, and celebrities. The study found that 72 percent of the general public trust social media content shared by friends and family.

However, for employee advocacy to work it is important that employees have confidence in your brand and organisation and the desire to support it.

Engagement is a team effort

The groundwork for this needs to be a team effort across the organisation including HR, corporate communications, marketing and IT teams, all of whom own different pieces of the communication jigsaw. It is vital for internal communications to collaborate across all these teams for success. Above all, senior leadership need to engage employees in order for your advocacy efforts to thrive.

Authentic senior leadership is vital

Weber Shandwick's study found that leadership is the most important factor in encouraging employee advocacy. If employees can trust what leadership are communicating, feel a personal connection and have an opportunity to ask questions and give feedback, they will respond positively. Employees need to feel appreciated. They need to feel it is their organisation, understand it on their own terms and contribute to it. This means giving them a voice, not just telling them what to think, do and say. As a communication professional, your job is to support and coach your leadership team to help make this happen.

Make it personal

The key to employee advocacy is allowing employees to share personal stories about company activities. It will add integrity and authenticity to your brand. Providing signed off messaging for sharing reduces risk, however this is a cumbersome and slow process and stops you from reaping the benefits which will come when the message is more human and personal. Allow your content to inspire people to respond and support it in their own words.

Seeing backstage

"Not only do your customers want to talk to real people inside your organisation, but your employees are desperate to talk with real customers. They want to tell them the truth⁵."



Consumers are becoming increasingly cynical and less trusting. They say what they think about companies and they are looking for the real story behind company doors. Allowing employees to communicate in their own words gives consumers an insider view, which will fuel trust and belief in your brand.

Sense of purpose

Encouraging employees to do this isn't about them receiving financial rewards or gaining extra responsibility. It's about being trusted, empowered and driving the organisation forward.

Five ways to encourage employee advocacy:

- ▶ Encourage use of social media for employees to share company information and news. Provide access to social media at work and make it easy for them to stay connected and informed.
- ▶ Provide messages, pictures and video content they can easily share on social media.
- ▶ Be brave. Trust and empower them to add their own voice. The more human the message, the more influence it will have.
- ▶ Walk the talk. Make sure leaders connect with employees. Ensure actions match rhetoric. Any lack of authenticity can leak out of the organisation.
- ▶ Measure and share success. Have a clear plan and policy. Keep leaders informed about the results. Thank employees for their valuable efforts.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Unleash untapped potential. Consumers want to hear from your employees. Not supporting and encouraging your employees to share company content misses one of the biggest opportunities in social media.
- ▶ Ensure authenticity starting at the top. Consumers are looking for the real story behind company doors.
- ▶ Move from control to collaboration. Collaborate with teams across the organisation and have a plan and policy in place. Stimulate people to be courageous and share their own stories. People trust people, not corporate messaging. It will have much more power and reach.



SASKIA JONES

Strategic Communications Professional

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Saskia Jones is a strategic communications professional with wide-ranging experience. Her latest role was Head of Communications Engagement at Oxfam. Engaging over 5,000 staff and 22,000 volunteers around the world, her team communicated with staff and volunteers in over 50 countries and 650 shops in the UK. Saskia has a particular interest in employee advocacy and digital employee communication and her team has won multiple awards for initiatives in this field. Saskia's contribution to internal communication has also been recognised by the Institute of Internal Communication, who awarded her Internal Communicator of the Year at the IoIC Icon Awards.

CHAPTER SIX

CONVERGENCE AND INTEGRATION OF COMMUNICATION DISCIPLINES

The traditional lines between internal and external communication are blurring from key messages to audience analysis, strategies and channels. What does this mean to the future of the internal communication function?

ADRIAN CROPLEY
AUSTRALIA

CAMERON CRAIG
UNITED STATES

RAND LALAINA
MADAGASCAR

BLURRED LINES ARE AN OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS

The lines between internal and external communication continue to blur. That doesn't mean we are out of focus. It means the opposite.

ADRIAN CROPLEY

The lines have blurred between internal and external audiences, and we must adopt ways of understanding people at a much deeper level so that we can communicate in a more personal, relevant and targeted way.

The first of five articles featured by the Centre for Strategic Communication¹, deals with the future of the communication profession². The *Convergence of Marketing and Communication* notes that convergence is a dominant trend in marketing and communication pointing out, "Today's marketing and communication professionals are experts in some of the same disciplines . . ." We are seeing the convergence and integration of internal and external communication in the same ways.

It could be argued that the lines have been blurring for a while, however, this has been accelerated since we moved into the 2010s. Social media, collaboration and a deeper understanding of audience behaviour and relevance of the message has sharpened the focus in more ways than we could have imagined ten or fifteen years ago. Nothing is driving integration more than big data, analytics and new tools against a backdrop of alternative truths and fake news.

Where is internal communication heading? I have asked myself that question since I held my first internal communication executive role and created my first strategy over 20 years ago. Have I continued to change my thoughts on the direction of internal communication? Absolutely! However, I have always believed that internal communication is more critical for organisations now than ever before.

In the 90s internal communication was defining its role in employee satisfaction, taking control of channels, and developing new ways of communicating. During the next decade internal communication aligned itself with organisations, providing context and delivering on



Internal communication is positioned to lead rebuilding trust in the business community, while spin doctors and government advisors struggle with credibility.

engagement, while taking a quantum leap to embracing a new online world. Internal communication became a critical business function. During the latter years of the last decade economic times prevented business from investing in internal communication in ways that could springboard into new ways of communicating. Today, organisations continue to realign their thinking, focusing on purpose and the need for employees to have context and meaning driven by who they listen to, interact with and trust through channels and messages.

Knowing our audience

The lines have blurred between internal and external audiences, and we must adopt ways of understanding people at a much deeper level so that we can communicate in a more personal, relevant and targeted way. Taking a lesson from our marketing colleagues about how to use big data and analytics, internal communication professionals can understand where people go for information, how they consume it, who they are and what drives their behaviour. Targeting the right message in the right way to the right audience is critical in a noisy communication world.

Choosing our approach

In an environment where the audience, not the organisation chooses the channel, our approach should be driven by audience insight and business need. What do we want people to know, feel and do? This critical question, overlaid with insights gained about the audience and aligned with what the business is trying to achieve, will drive the approach. The communication environment is omni-directional and includes multiple channels. Communication professionals make choices based on what we know, what's available to us, what's available to the audience and the new choices we and the audience make.

Getting strategic

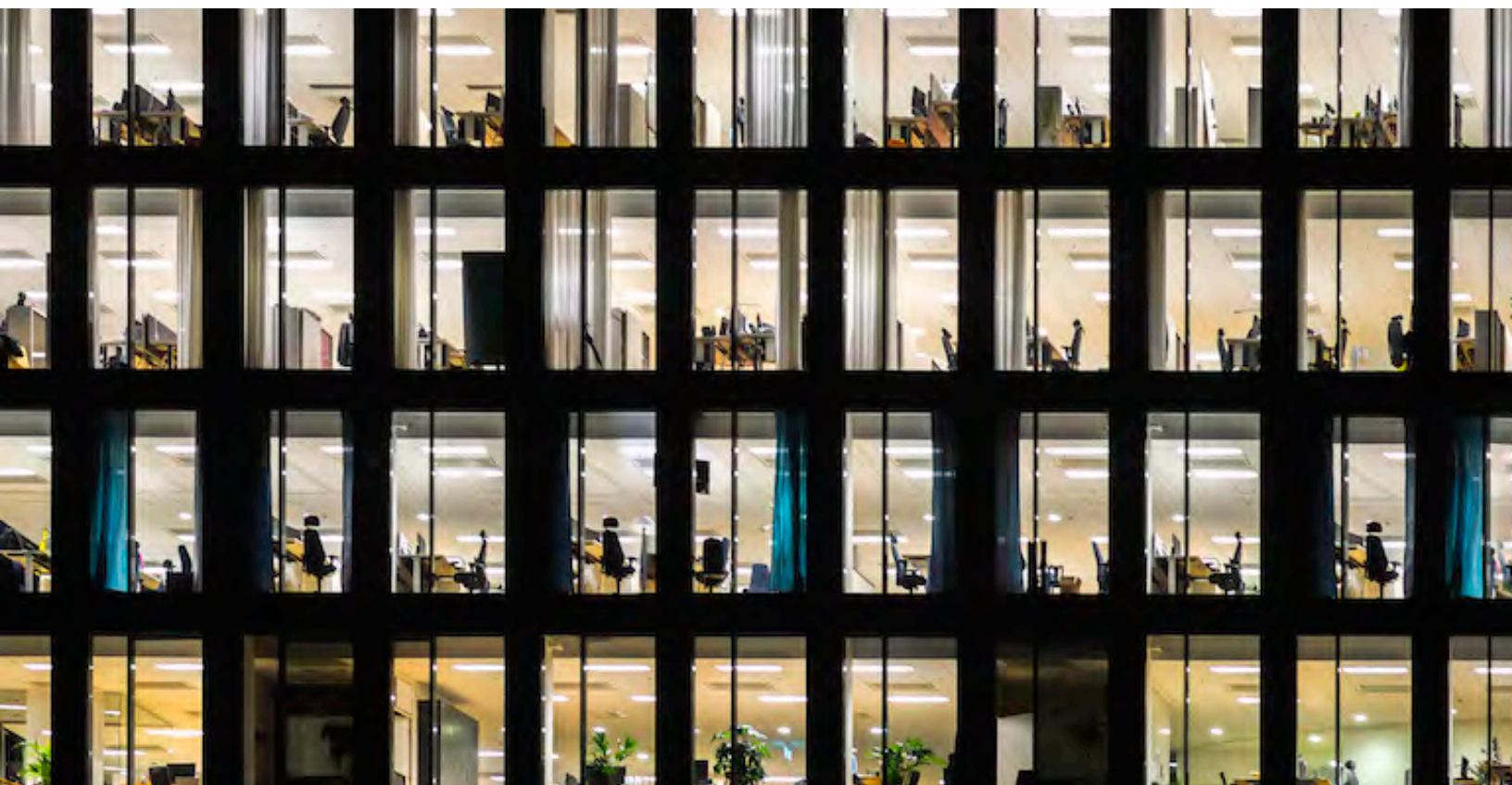
Good strategy is the product of great research, analysis, understanding of the current context and how that context shapes the future. We don't all have to be strategists to take a strategic approach. We simply need to understand audience and organisational needs, and then facilitate a connection between the two in a purposeful way. Simply put we must build better relationships and be the facilitators of communication within our organisations.

Dealing with the decline in trust

The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer³ didn't paint a rosy picture when it revealed that "trust is in crisis around the world. The general population's trust in all four key institutions — business, government, NGOs, and media — has declined broadly, a phenomenon not reported since Edelman began tracking trust among this segment in 2012." This is worrying yet not unexpected given the mass media world where anyone can say anything in any way to anyone and be believed. It's bound to have an impact.

One out of every two countries has lost faith in the system. The credibility of both CEOs and government officials has been declining for several years and is now at an all-time low. It is also interesting to note that 64% of people trusted leaked information over 36% who trusted press releases. Trust in a peer remains on top and non-traditional media continues to rise as a more trusted channel, even though it is open to misinformation.

The influence factor of relationships is the glue that will hold society together as we venture into the next decade. The Edelman report has also put business on notice saying, "when the system is failing, companies must do more." That includes treating employees well, offering high quality products and services, listening to customers, paying its fair share of taxes and ethical business practices. It is very clear that internal communication will also need to act as an ethical filter.



Opportunities for internal communication

In a rapidly changing world, where a new channel is launched almost daily, we need to go where communication is happening instead of hoping that the audience will come to us. Internal communication has been doing this for years, so we are well positioned to show our external colleagues how it is done, aiming for a conversation with lots of listening rather than talking and spinning. We drive organisational communication by understanding audience and business needs, facilitating that alignment and purposely taking a strategic approach.

A huge opportunity has surfaced with the advent of fake news, alternative facts and the decline of trust in the system. There is an opportunity to do what internal communication does best – listen, be authentic, truthful, build relationships and advise the organisation on ethical communication practices. Internal communication is positioned to lead rebuilding trust in the business community, while spin doctors and government advisors struggle with credibility.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ The lines continue to blur between internal and external communication while marketing converges with communication as a practice.
- ▶ Deeply understanding audiences, taking a strategic approach and dealing with diminishing trust, impacts the future role for internal communication
- ▶ Internal communication is faced with an opportunity to show how truthful, honest and authentic communication can rebuild trust and establish its role of facilitator and ethical advisor.



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As a pioneer in internal communication globally, and a past chair of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), Adrian is widely recognised as an expert in strategic communication. With a career spanning over 25 years, he has worked with clients all over the world, including Fortune 500 companies, on major change communication initiatives, internal communication reviews and strategies, professional development programs and executive leadership and coaching. He has been a keynote speaker and workshop leader on strategic and change communication at international conferences all over the world, and has received numerous awards including international Gold Quill awards for communication excellence.

THE WALL BETWEEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS HAS COME DOWN

A couple of years ago I wrote a piece titled "PR Career Rule #1: Thou Shalt Not Do Internal Communications"¹ that examined the perceived divide between internal and external communicators. It was based on my personal experience in external communications at companies like Apple, and then switching to full-time employee communications roles at PayPal and Visa.

CAMERON CRAIG

The wall between internal and external audiences has not just come down, it has imploded. It's also clear that yesterday's approach of high profile, better funded external communications teams and less resourced internal teams will not work. The successful communicator of 2017 must be well-rounded and employ strategies, channels and audiences across both sides to build a company's reputation.

Based on the comments left and feedback I received, the article confirmed that such a divide exists. The majority of communicators choose internal or external communications roles but not both. And communicators rarely switch course in their careers.

Some said the wall was coming down. It was just a question of when and how.

Flash forward to 2017 and trust in media, government, business and NGOs is at an all-time low. According to the 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer², CEO credibility dropped 12 points globally to an all-time low of 37 percent, plummeting in every country studied.

The wall between internal and external audiences has not just come down, it has imploded. It's also clear that yesterday's approach of high profile, better funded external communications teams and less resourced internal teams will not work. The successful communicator of 2017 must be well-rounded and employ strategies, channels and audiences across both sides to build a company's reputation.

Three key areas illustrate this.

Outside-in Approach

I've worked at several companies going through hard times. For some, the industry they were in was in transition. For others, perhaps poor decisions or leadership had got them into a bad situation. Sales soften, revenue suffers, share prices



NO LIMITS

In 2017 transparency is key. Anyone who believes you can keep information shared on intranets or internal memos from getting out is deluding themselves.

drop and employee morale sinks. During these times a small spark of external validation is needed before employees start to believe again.

I worked at Apple for 10 years during its turnaround period. Steve Jobs was a master of leveraging outside momentum to rally the internal troops. This was a hard task considering Apple's stock was tanking, the future was unstable and employees could earn more at a competitor down the road. Then, in 1997, Apple unveiled its visionary "Think Different" campaign, which was applauded by critics and credited with restoring the company's reputation.

As Tom Hormby³ confirms, the campaign⁴ was a turning point for Apple.

"On September 30, two days after the debut, Jobs threw a party for Apple employees at his Palo Alto home where he talked about the campaign and Apple's future in general. It began as a critique of Think Different but eventually turned into a rousing pep rally for Apple's image."

Jobs leveraged an external moment to rally internal troops and give them belief that Apple had its mojo back and things would get better. Apple still didn't have any signs of

improved financial health. Theoretically he was trading air to buy the hearts and minds of employees, but it worked.

I joined Apple in 1999 and watched Jobs repeat this tactic at many all-hands meetings, in internal memos and through other channels. When Apple's new products started getting good reviews Jobs would make sure employees knew about it.

Inside-out Approach

In December 2016, Apple faced growing criticism from the media that it wasn't committed to its Mac desktop computer line. Reports said efforts focused on portables and tablets at the expense of desktop development.

CEO Tim Cook addressed the reports on the company's intranet saying, "Some folks in the media have raised the question about whether we're committed to desktops . . . let me be very clear, we have great desktops in our roadmap."

The comments were promptly leaked to TechCrunch⁵ and picked up by multiple sources. Did Cook or Apple's communications team write the comments knowing they were going to be leaked to media? My best guess is that at a minimum Apple's PR team reviewed this memo with the likelihood it would be leaked to press in mind. In 2017 transparency is key. Anyone who believes you can keep information shared on intranets or internal memos from getting out is deluding themselves.

Some companies embrace this inside-out approach. When Zappos laid off 8 percent of their workforce in 2008, CEO Tony Hsieh published the internal memo confirming the layoffs to their external blog minutes after. They encouraged current and affected employees to take to Twitter. As Jennifer Leggio says in this ZD article⁶, if you followed Zappos Twitter feed during this time you would have seen a few things:

- ▶ Centralized reaction, which allowed the company insight on how to best handle sensitive situations with both laid off and current employees
- ▶ An outlet for each employee to react in a way that they know they would be heard by management, fellow employees, the media and other listeners
- ▶ Public, thoughtful interaction between employees and management
- ▶ Laid off employees planting seeds for future employment opportunities
- ▶ Communication with laid off employees of other companies, and a new birth of networking

Transparency helped the company and affected employees during the layoffs. Zappos put its culture on display for the world to see. While layoffs are never seen as positive, Zappos actions ultimately



helped boost the long-term currency of their brand.

Zappos is not alone. Search Google and it's not too hard to find internal communications videos that Walmart⁷ uses to communicate with associates, the Coca Cola Ambassador iPhone app⁸ employees and sales teams or an internal video from PayPal: PayPal in 90 Seconds⁹. These channels don't appear by mistake. The companies know they portray a positive view of their culture and their insider status makes them even more credible.

Growth of Employee Advocacy

When employees are 37 percent more trustworthy than CEOs per the Edelman Trust Barometer, it's no wonder that the field of employee advocacy has become crowded with experts, apps and influencers in recent years.

According to LinkedIn, leads developed through employee word-of-mouth marketing convert seven times more frequently than other leads. They say content shared by employees on social channels drives eight times more engagement than content directly from brand channels.

At Polycom, we use a paid employee advocacy program to make it easy for employees to share smart social content that drives engagement. The employees most active on the platform are some of the most engaged employees at the company.

The wall between internal and external communications has come down. We all have to work harder using multiple channels and strategies, internal and external to drive engagement for our companies and brands.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Leverage external recognition to drive internal engagement.
- ▶ Be proud of your internal transparent culture and use it externally to boost your brand.
- ▶ Arm employees with compelling stories so they can be your best advocates.

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Cameron Craig is a communications professional with 20+ years of experience working with Apple, Visa, PayPal, Polycom and Yahoo! Formerly, he was a tour publicist for Johnny Cash. Follow him on Twitter [@Cam_CommsGuy](#), [LinkedIn](#) and <http://www.asignaturestory.com>.

ARE THE TRADITIONAL LINES BETWEEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS BLURRING?

Although nuanced, this fact remains constant for all communication professionals. And I have to stress from the outset that the opinion below is the opinion of a person who has to surf between the lines out of necessity.

RAND LALAINA

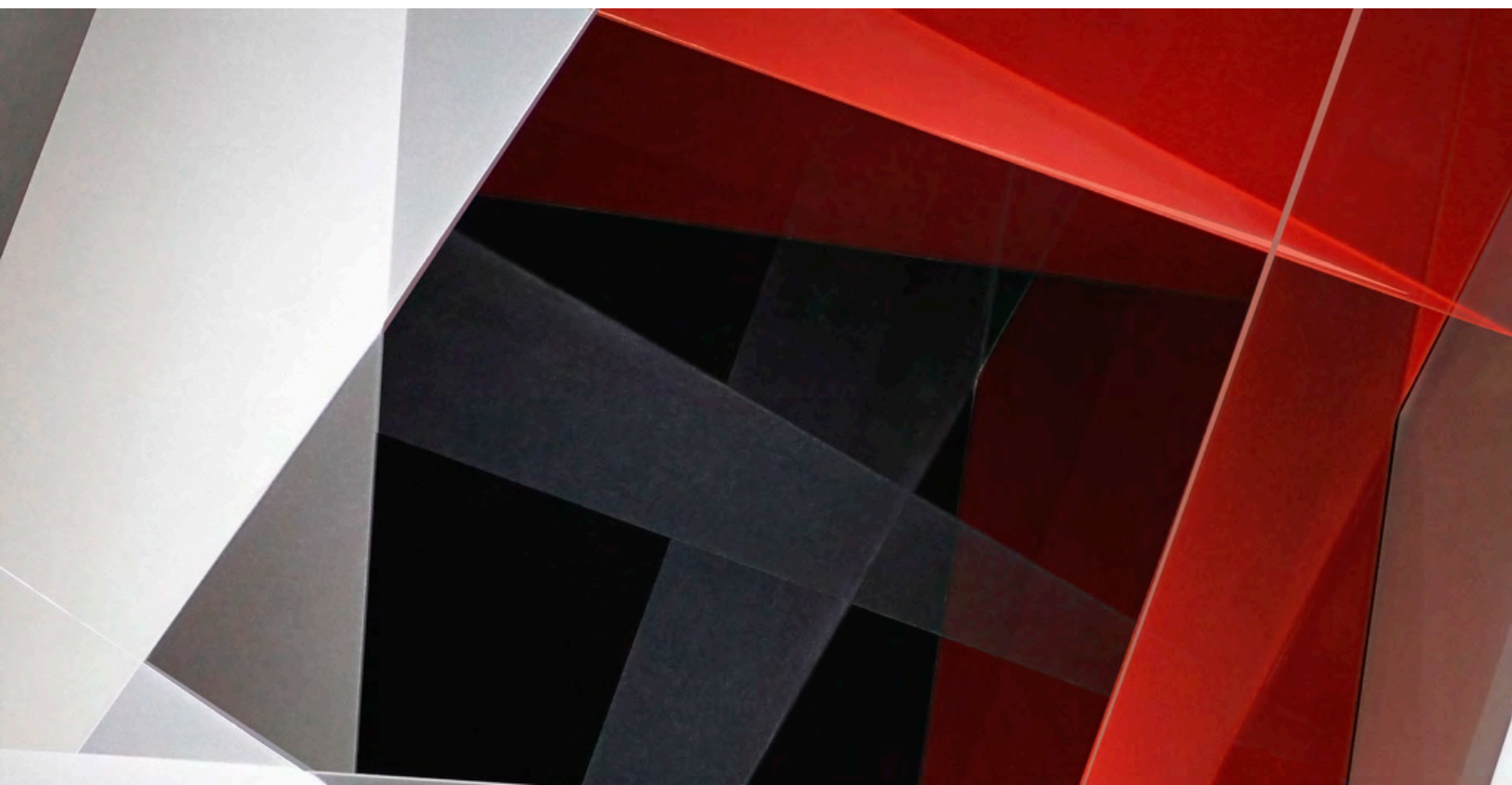
If all messages for external stakeholders unsurprisingly come back to employees through the means of media or social networks, all internal communications are also designed with the understanding that they will eventually be taken outside the organization.

In fact, the increasingly accelerated evolution of the integration of internal and external communication over the last few years has blurred the lines between the two communication fields. Even organizations bear the mark of critical moves that reinforce this trend.

In the mining industry, which applies to me, as well as in the other activity sectors, it becomes less and less common to see internal communication falling under the purview of Human Resources. The secular trend is now that communication departments oversee both communications and that evidence ties in with the subject of our article.

Having the privilege of being the leader of an integrated department that has, within the same structure, both internal and external communications, these blurred lines are day-to-day realities for me. If all messages for external stakeholders unsurprisingly come back to employees through the means of media or social networks, all internal communications are also designed with the understanding that they will eventually be taken outside the organization.

In the different aspects they are conceived, especially regarding messaging, internal communications are also expected to be picked up by the press. That being the case, whether on purpose or not, with malicious intent or not, we have repeatedly seen memos sent by the CEO to employees published in the press the day after. All companies, big or small, are faced with such situations almost every day when the content of their internal communications presents some



When drafting communication for employees, teams in charge of media relations, social networks and external relations work with the internal communication team and define proactive or reactive actions depending on the common strategy.

informational value. Therefore, it has become a rule for the overall internal communication approach to anticipate such cases.

Countless cases demonstrate that the lines are becoming increasingly blurred between internal and external communication. Some companies use the same sites to communicate equally to employees and internal stakeholders and to external stakeholders. To a more critical extent, there are internal communication campaigns that when taken out of the company create a stir that are, in the best of cases, embarrassing or even harmful to the company's reputation. Conversely, there are external communication campaigns that employees can find offensive. We are definitely in an era where the lines between the two types of communication are blurred like they have never been before.

That has been generating growing difficulties, both internally and externally for communication professionals and for some creating managerial nightmares. Thus, it is no surprise that this has been the topic of research and debates over the last few years.

The emergence of social networks and smartphones

The emergence of social networks and new communication tools, such as smartphones, has completely changed the nature of communication, whether internal or external. Social networks have become more than imperatives. They have earned a position of high importance for themselves in communication strategies. The immediate individual contact these tools offer has revolutionized a certain number of marketing and public relations approaches. In internal communication, it's curious to see how the practice of BYOD has irrevocably changed many things within an organization.

In the broader sense, this new setting allows for a freer expression and increases scrutiny over everything that is said and done, and even on what is left unspoken or unaccomplished within an organization.

A question of content and messaging

Whether for external or internal communication purposes, a double-sided question has to be considered, and answers to this question significantly impact messaging development. What if the content of an internal newsletter is posted on Facebook, or if a journalist gets interested in it? Or on the other hand, how will internal stakeholders understand the message especially if the topic creates controversies inside the organization?

The first implication is, therefore, to get the messages used internally and externally aligned. The time when someone could work in his or her respective corner is long gone. The message for employees and internal stakeholders and for the public and external stakeholders should be the same.

This seems quite simple, but in practice, it is complicated and requires new ways of working. How can we avoid internal stakeholders getting offended or embarrassed by the content or the form of information they see on the TV when coming home from work in the evening? How can we manage the consistency between information distributed within the company and that sent outside the company without mentioning the eventual dissonance between what is broadcasted outside the company and what the employees are experiencing? The situation can be very deleterious to the credibility of the organization's messages.

The ambiguity, which raises a number of questions, is first and foremost a matter of messaging and content, and of uniting them internally and externally.



A matter of integration and common strategy

In the aforementioned example of the memo sent to employees a sort of integration outline can solve this issue. When drafting communication for employees, teams in charge of media relations, social networks and external relations work with the internal communication team and define proactive or reactive actions depending on the common strategy.

Since there is no longer any content specifically designed for only internal or external distribution, the message is the same and the whole strategy is agreed and known by all. A common strategy is the most crucial element. It is the key to real integration.

To conclude, it is indisputable that the lines are really vague between the two branches of communication. If the distinction is far from disappearing then integration, working together and a common strategy are the conditions for success. Whatever the situation, internal and external communication are condemned to work in total collaboration.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Social networks and smartphones have revolutionized the nature of communication as never been before, and have made the lines between internal and external communication unclear.
- ▶ Message alignment is one of the most striking developments in this profession. No matter how you approach it, the message is definitely the same both internally and externally.
- ▶ If the lines are hazy, one of the practical consequences is the need for coordination, leading to a common internal and external strategy in the implementation of an organization's communication.



RAND LALAINA

Senior Communication Professional

MADAGASCAR

Rand Lalaina leads an internal and external communication team for a large-scale mining operation. Accredited as a Chartered Public Relations Practitioner by the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA), he specializes in corporate communication and has become a practiced follower and active participant in the fields of crisis communication, internal communication and employee engagement in the mining industry.

Working at the convergence of external relations, stakeholder engagement, and CSR, he is intrigued by matters regarding the social license to operate. Likewise, he has significant experience in communication for development (C4D).

CHAPTER SEVEN

COLLABORATION BETWEEN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

To what extent internal communication and other disciplines, such as external communication, marketing, etc., should be working closer together, and what approaches should be considered for the benefits of the organization?

JIM SHAFFER
UNITED STATES

JONATHAN CHAMP
AUSTRALIA

ZORA ARTIS
AUSTRALIA

CONNECTING THE WORKPLACE TO THE MARKETPLACE

Peter Drucker, management consultant, educator and author, said there's only one valid definition of business purpose: to create a customer. "You have to manage for results, do the right thing right and make serving the customer the center of everything," Drucker said¹.

JIM SHAFFER

External communication needs to create a realistic, customer-centric brand promise. Internal communication needs to partner with external communication and other internal functions to align the organization so it delivers the brand promise. That includes eliminating communication breakdowns that make it difficult for employees to do what they need to do to deliver the brand promise.

Organizations that pursue this path saturate every nook and cranny of their operations with the voice of the customer. They insist on customers interrupting every project, process, activity, program and initiative. Their objective? Make every customer experience perfect.

According to Gartner², a leading information technology and research firm, investing in the customer experience pays off in terms of revenue growth, profitability and customer loyalty.

The customer experience represents all of the interactions a customer has with a product or service provider. It's made up of many encounters or touchpoints where customers and prospective customers come into contact with an organization to create the overall customer experience.

Both externally and internally-focused communication play a role in creating those touchpoints. For instance, external communication functions deliver a multitude of touch points through marketing, public relations, public affairs, branding, sales and advertising activities and programs.

Internal communication affects the customer experience through three primary sources:

1. Leaders communicate through what they say and what they do.
2. Systems and processes (such as measurement, rewards, learning and development, etc.) communicate priorities and enable people to take actions that shape the customer experience.



External communication needs to create a realistic, customer-centric brand promise. Internal communication needs to partner with external communication and other internal functions to align the organization so it delivers the brand promise. That includes eliminating communication breakdowns that make it difficult for employees to do what they need to do to deliver the brand promise.

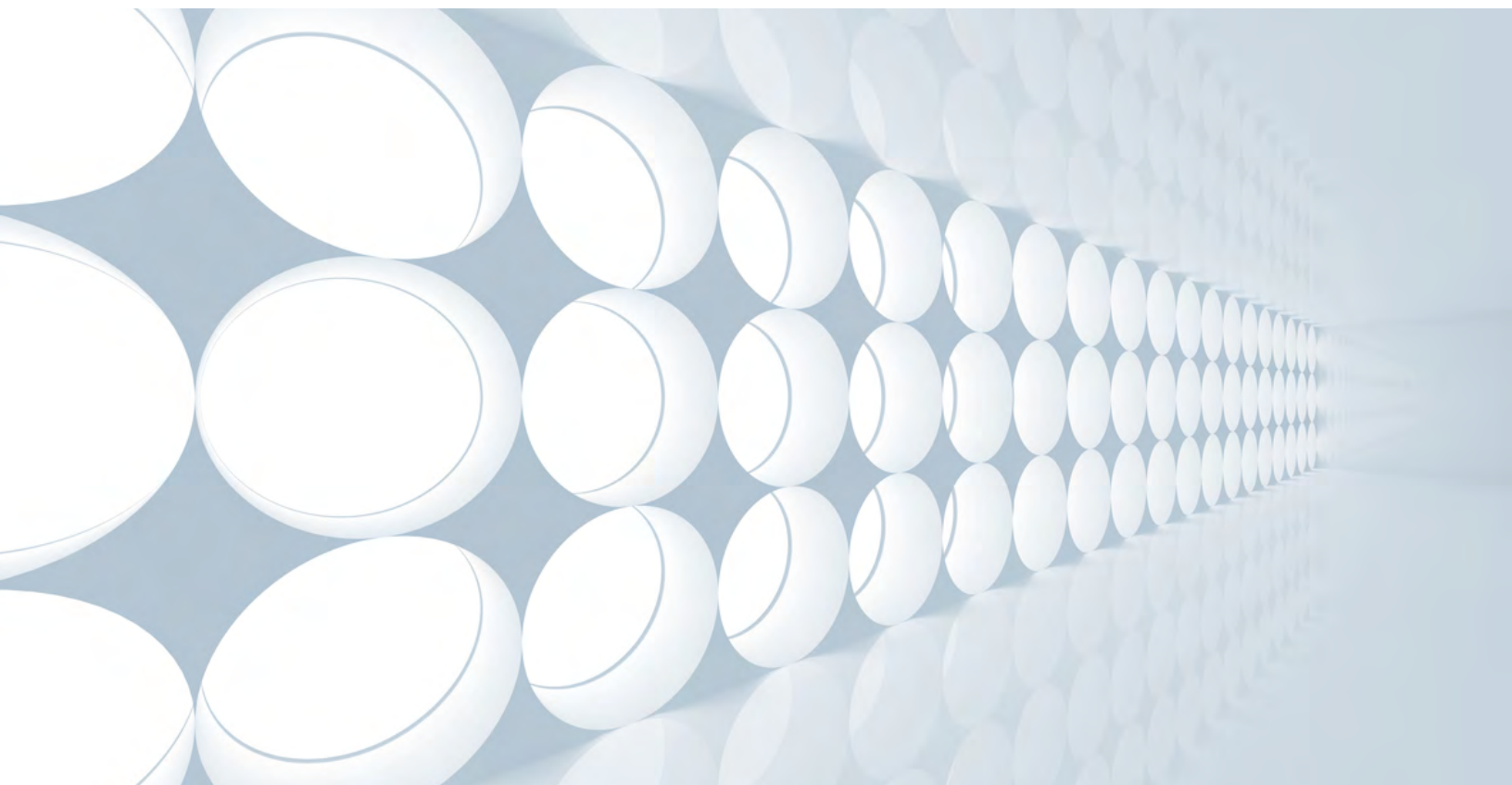
3. Formal communication channels such as publications, meetings and social media communicate in multiple ways.

In other words, external communication helps *create* the brand promise while internal communication helps *deliver* the brand promise.

Here's how that works.

The diagram on the next page represents these two forms of communication and how they can and should work together.

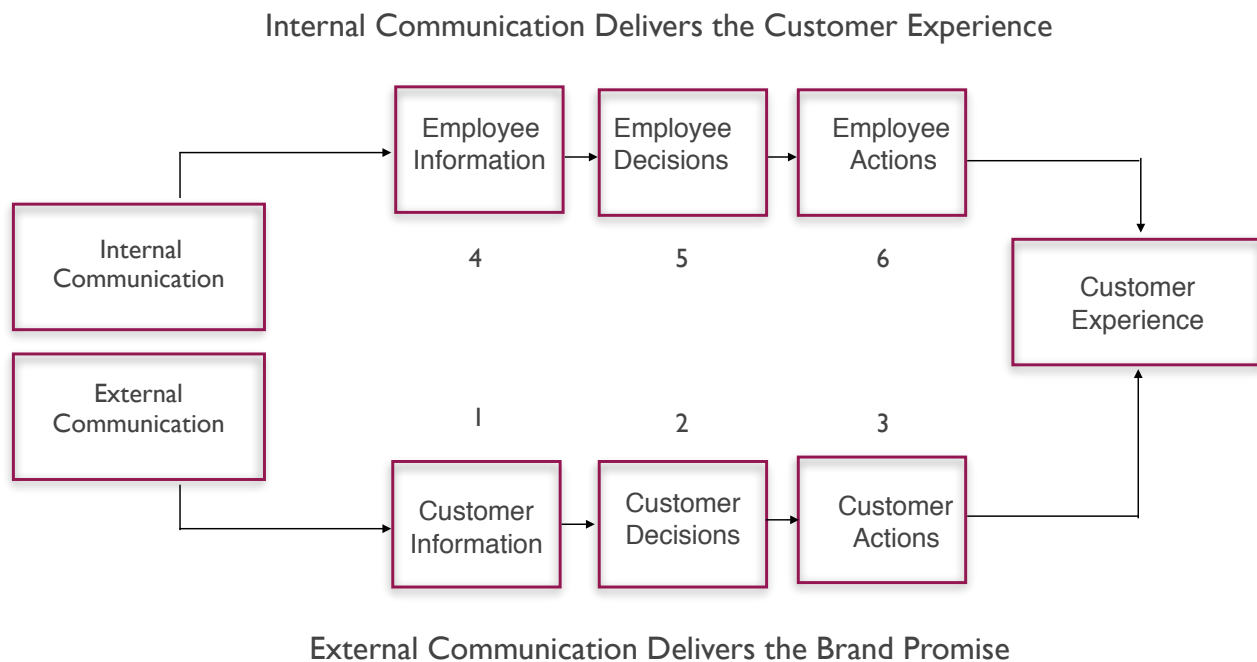
The boxes across the bottom of the diagram represent external communication that customers and prospective customers receive. The boxes across the top represent internal communication to employees.



In many organizations today, that will mean changing the way work gets done in the internal and external disciplines.

Here's a five-step plan that, if implemented well, can successfully connect the workplace to the marketplace.

1. Build a solid business case for the necessary integration between the external and internal communication disciplines. Include a value proposition that represents a promise to be delivered from the integration.
2. Create and communicate a vision and strategy for customer experience that everyone in the organization understands. The vision represents a vivid, measurable picture that's aligned with the organization's values. The strategy represents a plan to help realize the vision. Involve employees in the customer vision and strategy development.
3. Identify organizational capabilities and competencies that are needed to realize the vision. Determine high priority capability and competency gaps that are needed to play and needed to win. Create and implement specific plans to reduce and/or eliminate the gaps.
4. Learn and apply best practices from other organizations that will help improve the customer experience.
5. Align organization systems and processes so that they focus employees on what's important to the customer and enable them to deliver a superior customer experience. Successful implementation is what Drucker meant when he said, "You have to manage for results, do the right thing right and make serving the customer the center of everything."



In Box 1, information to the customer drives customers' decisions (Box 2) and the actions customers take (Box 3), which in turn create the brand promise—what we say we'll deliver. In Box 4, information that flows inside the organization helps employees make decisions (Box 5) that drive their actions (Box 6), which then deliver on or fail to deliver on the brand promise.

As an example, let's say a company's advertising program promises "on time delivery every time." However, the company fails to communicate that commitment to its employees. As a result, employees deliver on time only some of the time. External and internal communication are at odds. What the company promises through external communication is different from the experience that employees delivered to customers. This communication and others like it occur when there's insufficient coordination between the work of the internal and external communication functions.

To avoid this, external and internal communication functions need to integrate their work so the brand promise and brand delivery are consistent. That requires sharpening the goals, role and work performed by the two disciplines.

Both must focus laser-like on improving the customer experience, which leads to customer loyalty and ultimately revenue growth and improved profitability. External communication needs to create a realistic, customer-centric brand promise. Internal communication needs to partner with external communication and other internal functions to align the organization so it delivers the brand promise. That includes eliminating communication breakdowns that make it difficult for employees to do what they need to do to deliver the brand promise.



Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Investing in a positive customer experience drives revenue growth and increases customer loyalty.
- ▶ Externally-oriented communication helps create the brand promise while internally-oriented communication helps deliver the brand promise.
- ▶ External and internal communication functions need to integrate their work so the brand promise and delivery are consistent.

United States



JIM SHAFFER

Leader
The Jim Shaffer Group

UNITED STATES

Jim Shaffer is an internationally recognized management consultant, author, speaker and leader of the Jim Shaffer Group, a firm that helps organizations accelerate results through superior strategy execution. The firm's clients represent some of the world's most respected brands.

Jim was a principal, vice president and global leader of a Towers Perrin (now Willis Towers Watson) center of excellence. He was an architect and leading practitioner of the firm's change management consulting practice.

His book, *The Leadership Solution*, became a classic treatise on leadership, change management and creating high performance organizations.

THE FUTURE IS SHARED PARTNERSHIPS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THE FUTURE OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Over 20 years ago, UK communication leader Bill Quirke wrote in *Communicating Change*: “From the employee’s point of view, [they are] receiving communication from the organisation in whatever its dealings may be with [them] - not just those items which are formally labelled employee communication”¹.

JONATHAN CHAMP

The question is no longer whether partnerships are useful. The question is “how can I contribute”?

Over the next two decades, massive changes have occurred in organisational life, communication, and business practice.

Everyone communicates: The rise of the specialist and the generalist

The evolution of communication technologies, the rise of line managers as key communication channels and increased peer-to-peer dialogue are responsible for shifts in internal communication. These complex ecosystems rely on technical (platforms and channels), behavioural (culture and change) and process (the right information at the right time) elements to work together.

Communication is in the hands of the many. What is left for internal communication to bring to a partnership? What is your specialist contribution and what value do you bring as a communication professional? Is it deep understanding of the audience? Channels? Narrative? Messaging? Program management? Business leadership?

Priorities shape partnerships

Partnerships between communication and marketing or human resources are relatively common. Starting with organisational priorities instead of function provides a different way of looking at partnership.



Communication professionals have a significant opportunity to create stronger partnerships, provided they see their role as being facilitators and co-contributors rather than channel managers,

Focus Priority	Lead Partner	Key Partners
Brand (Sales and customer experience agenda)	Marketing CMO	Internal Communication Talent Product Customer Experience External Communication/PR
Engagement (Leadership and culture agenda)	Human Resources C-suite	Organisational Development Internal Communication HR Business Partners Change Management
Reputation (Regulatory of issue-centric agenda)	COO Corporate Affairs External Communication	Customer Operations Risk Management Internal Communication Legal
Strategy/Innovation	Program or strategy office CFO Transformation team	Change Resources Internal Communication Marketing Customer Experience External Support

This style of just-in-time partnership that responds to the priorities of the organisation is similar to adhocracy, which has become a central part of agile organisations. Adhocracy is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “A system of flexible and informal organisation and management in place of rigid bureaucracy.” Structures shift rapidly according to the current business problem to be solved.

The question is no longer whether partnerships are useful. The question is “how can I contribute”?

Across these kinds of partnership, communication professionals can play the role of convener, bringing together these constituents and facilitating the process.

What are the benefits of partnership?

The best internal partnerships occur when there is a shared stake in the outcome and all parties can contribute in a valuable way to shared results.

Increased organisational agility

Collaboration can seem to take longer initially, but over time it increases the organisation's ability to be responsive and focus on the right challenges.

Shared knowledge and organisational learning

Perspectives and insights from multiple internal partners improves the quality of decision making.

Reduced exposure to risk

By adopting approaches such as “Working Out Loud” with a partner group, feedback and insights can be contributed earlier in design or development.

Trust

Delivering outcomes in partnership has the potential to deepen trust between functions within an organisation.

What prevents good partnerships?

Internal competition for power or resources

Most professional support functions have adopted a similar strategic aim over the past decade. They want to have a seat at the table. However, in most organisations, there are still a limited number of seats, and they are reserved for the functions that clearly demonstrate their contribution to strategic and operational needs.



Divergent methodologies

Different functions have similar goals but may have different approaches to getting there. Organisational development, change management and employee communication all share some processes and methods, but have a variety of ways of working. Taking a broader view of methodologies and focusing instead on achieving common outcomes can overcome differences, but this is often a cause of tension in immature partnerships.

Conflicting strategic objectives and performance measures

Put simply, if one function is primarily measured on speed and another on quality, there will be conflict. Learning to be good partners can often highlight differences or inconsistencies within an organisation. Being able to surface differences across audiences and work through them to a shared resolution becomes an important capability.

Partnerships are relationships

In conducting communication reviews and strategic planning, I've interviewed or surveyed hundreds of internal stakeholders about their perspectives of communication functions. Looking at this research, it became apparent why it can be hard for communication professionals to find the sweet spot for building internal partnerships. Business areas expressed conflicting expectations of the communication function: know our business, provide tactical support, think beyond the tactical support, take a broader view of solutions and stay in the right lane.

In other words, each potential partner had different needs. While it is not sustainable to bend and switch to every potential partner's expectations, recognising these differences is a helpful starting point.

How can communication professionals deepen partnerships?

- ▶ Does each partner understand how others perceive their role and contribution to strategy and operations?
- ▶ Can each area advocate for the other? For example, “We should include technology in this conversation.”
- ▶ Do all partners have a shared understanding of what they are working towards, whether it is a short term initiative or a long term approach?
- ▶ Do all the partners have a common view of the key business priorities and goals and how their specialisation contributes?
- ▶ Are there triage processes that enable partners to become involved at the appropriate time? If the business approaches the training team about a product, will this trigger involvement from the communication team?
- ▶ Are there any organisational systems or processes that could have an unintended negative impact on partnerships?

Conclusion

Communication professionals have a significant opportunity to create stronger partnerships, provided they see their role as being facilitators and co-contributors rather than channel managers, wordsmiths and gatekeepers.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ The increase of complexity in organisations means there can be no single function responsible for communication.
- ▶ Formal and informal partnerships deliver significant benefits for organisations and functions within them.
- ▶ Internal communication has a role to play both as a partner and as a facilitator of quality partnerships.



JONATHAN CHAMP

Chief Communicator
Meaning Business

AUSTRALIA

Jonathan Champ, Chief Communicator at Meaning Business, has two decades of experience helping organisations communicate meaningfully, strategically and engagingly.

He has held senior roles in three top 25 listed ASX companies, including QBE, Westpac, and NRMA. Committed to developing the communication profession, he was formerly Asia Pacific Research and Content Director for Melcrum. He is the creator of the Shorter COMMS Plan methodology, a CEB Global Black Belt trainer and Public Relations tutor at Macquarie University.

A 20-year IABC member, volunteer and 2014 IABC World Conference speaker, he co-ordinated the Gold Quill Asia Pacific Panel since 2015

CONNECTING THE DOTS. COLLABORATE OR LOSE OUT.

Do you recall Jan Carlzon and his pivotal little book from the 1980's? Moments of Truth¹ was my lightbulb moment early in my career. I realised the value of connecting customer centricity, organisational purpose, communication and employee empowerment, and ironically, given the more recent moments of truth at United and American Airlines, it was based on airline experience.

ZORA ARTIS

Understanding why you do what you do is fundamental to culture, engagement and the bottom line. Each person in the organisation needs to understand its purpose. It should connect everyone because everyone is responsible for achieving it.

Blurring of lines, convergence and alignment between PR and marketing, marketing and HR, internal and external communication are all recent talking points. Last month, research from USC Annenberg² found that half of in-house and agency practitioners surveyed felt that closer alignment of marketing and PR is inevitable within the next five years. I found this insight somewhat surprising. It's been on the cards for years. Many organisations have been integrating the disciplines in different ways into centralised, matrixed or hybrid project teams. Some do it well, while others seek better ways to work together. It makes sense and benefits the brand and the business.

I recently experienced a moment of truth on a family holiday at the idyllic Intercontinental Fiji Resort. Two days in, my son was violently vomiting at midnight. Gastroenteritis! It was potentially a major issue for the resort. The staff were extraordinary in showing they genuinely cared. They understood the situation, focused on my son's wellbeing, engaged and communicated. It was clear alignment across functions. They got it right.

For more than two decades I've worked as a marketer, business strategist and communications practitioner. I've been uniquely positioned, straddling both the agency and client side understanding the perspectives and priorities of both, and working across multiple disciplines developing breadth and depth. I'm a problem solver looking for the best



Don't forget the vital role of internal communication and employee engagement when you are working on external communication. They work hand in hand.

outcomes irrespective of the mix of disciplines, channels and audiences. I've taken away three key learnings from the cross-pollination of disciplines.

Clarity of Purpose

I've listened to Tony Hsieh³ and Simon Sinek⁴ champion that the heart of any organisation is the why, then the how and the what. Understanding why you do what you do is fundamental to culture, engagement and the bottom line. Each person in the organisation needs to understand its purpose. It should connect everyone because everyone is responsible for achieving it. Some organisations struggle as they don't communicate well within or outside the organisation. This is where we as communicators, marketers and storytellers have a role to play together to differentiate brands, build reputations and communicate value. Think of those who do it well, Patagonia⁵ or Atlassian⁶, and you get the picture.

Process

Successful integration leads to greater alignment and better outcomes, particularly where proper planning involves multi-disciplinary stakeholders early in the process. This allows the

the best people, whether from marketing, corporate affairs, organisational development, creative or IT, to work together on the problem from the start. People can think more broadly, share perspectives, feed off each other, generate ideas and use resources more wisely.

Process falls down where it is rigid or assumptions are made. I've worked with organisations that have developed well-intentioned strategies only to fail. Why? Process and communication. They've done a launch, involved leaders and shared their strategy, but they've neglected to engage or connect the dots about the why and how the individual employee fits in. It's the set and forget approach. They assume their managers know how to communicate but they've not enabled them to do it. Consequently, the strategy implementation fails.

This happens with brand/re-brand strategy and implementation. Senior and middle management neglect to understand the need for the employee engagement piece of implementing brand strategy while they focus on the external brand campaigns. Are the employees not the ones who live and breathe the brand, the ones who deliver on the promise of the external marketing or communications campaign? Of course they are, so don't forget the vital role of internal communication and employee engagement when you are working on external communication. They work hand in hand.

Last year, I had an amazing opportunity to work on one of those rare projects where you genuinely feel that your work contributes to the greater good for community. I had the pleasure of working with incredibly talented and passionate people across five organisations responsible for delivering the strategy. They're truly multi-disciplinary working from research, policy, operations, communication to marketing. As the lead communication strategist, part of my role was to enable the partnership to work better together by helping to identify the gaps and their potential so that they would realise how they could achieve their why and what they needed to do.

Motivation

When you're on the agency or consultant side, you have the opportunity to bring people together where they can align behind common goals and strive to achieve tangible outcomes. This leads to great work that both you and your client are proud of.

Occasionally there are times when the stars don't align. No matter how hard you try it doesn't happen, although the outcomes are good but not great! One of the reasons for this is motivation. I've said that alignment is crucial for integration to work as is senior leadership support and key performance measures at the levels below. On the surface you see the best intentions with broad holistic support, but reality is different. The functional leads may have different perspectives and priorities that they're measured against or they may be engaged in power plays. Managing this is





tough and requires discipline. It requires engaging stakeholders very early, identifying potential issues, securing executive level sponsorship and providing ongoing education about the benefits of integration and working together.

Since that light bulb moment decades ago, my belief in connecting the dots and collaborating for a common purpose has been reinforced through my experiences. The benefits of discovering what is possible by working better together certainly outweigh the alternative.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Communication professionals must strive for clarity of purpose, aligning to the business needs and providing a holistic view.
- ▶ Process is critical to success. It defines project ownership, responsibilities, resources and executive support.
- ▶ Alignment of interests and collaboration are essential ingredients to deliver better outcome results.



ZORA ARTIS, GAICD, FAMI

CEO

Three's a Crowd

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Zora Artis is the CEO of Three's a Crowd, an Australian independent strategic creative services firm working with corporate, government, SMEs and non-for-profit brands across a multitude of sectors. She has over 25 years of experience in marketing, branding, advertising, digital media and communication, delivering strategic and creative solutions in dynamic and complex situations. Zora has honed her business acumen and expertise in the role of brand, communication, business and governments in local and global contexts working both the client and agency side.

Zora is an IABC International Executive Board Director, Past President of IABC Victoria, IABC Gold Quill Award winner and recipient of the IABC 2015 Chairman's Award. She's a Company Directors graduate with the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a Fellow with the Australian Marketing Institute. Zora holds a Masters of Commerce, a Masters of Marketing and a Bachelor of Business (Tourism).

CHAPTER EIGHT

FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION

To what extent the rules of internal communication have changed and are changing, and how should communication professionals be dealing with those?

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UNITED KINGDOM

MIKE KLEIN
NETHERLANDS

RITA ZONIUS
AUSTRALIA

ANIISU K. VERGHESE
INDIA

GIVING EMPLOYEES A VOICE THAT IS TREATED SERIOUSLY

In this piece, I will argue that it is not just social media networks that are changing the rules of practice. The game changer is the expectation that citizens and employees have to express their voice.

DR KEVIN RUCK

Employee voice exists where everyone in the organisation feels they can have a say and that their voice is heard and listened to, and their views taken into account when decisions are being discussed that affect them.

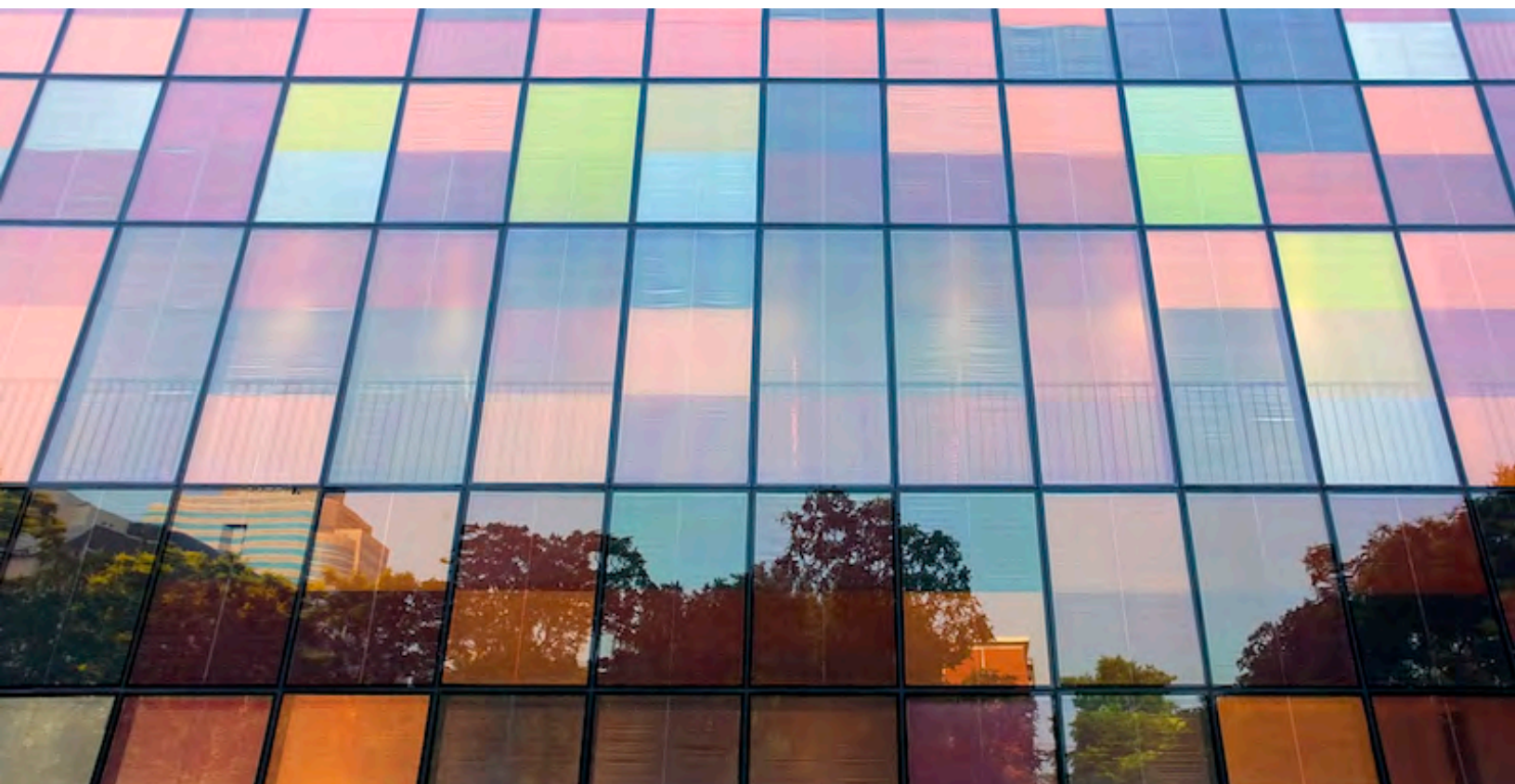
Internal communication has tended to be very one-way in the past, with a history¹ steeped in publications that some employees saw as propaganda. However, this is now changing. In my discussions with hundreds of internal communication diploma students in recent years, the importance of two-way communication that embraces employee voice is now much more widely accepted.

As employees engage in a wide range of conversations on social media in their private lives, they are also seeking a more authentic dialogue with senior managers. The rules are now changing. The idea that practice is just about keeping employees informed isn't enough anymore.

So, what is employee voice?

Employee voice is not a new concept. Indeed, some scholars argue that it can be traced back more than two hundred years to the industrial revolution. From the 1970s onwards, it started to be discussed in the context of trade unions and collective representation of employees, works councils and industrial democracy. More recently, employee voice² was established as an enabler of employee engagement by the UK-based Engage for Success movement. They describe it as follows:

"Employee voice exists where the organisation has put mechanisms in place to enable it to have an ongoing conversation with its staff, in different ways, to ensure every voice is heard. Employee voice exists where everyone in the



Strategic internal communication practice should start with research to determine the base level of satisfaction with voice in the organisation.

organisation feels they can have a say and that their voice is heard and listened to, and their views taken into account when decisions are being discussed that affect them."

It is worth noting that this approach emphasises *mechanisms* and *listening*. An annual employee engagement survey on its own is a very limited example of a way that employees can express their voice. Indeed, many employees are cynical about the annual engagement survey as they feel that little action is taken to address issues highlighted.

Voice can be expressed in a variety of settings including face-to-face gatherings with senior managers. However, employees expect managers to listen carefully to what they have to say. As one employee said to me about a senior manager event, "He was smiling, but not with his eyes".

How common is employee voice?

In a major study³ in 2011, 52% of employees said their employer was good or very good at seeking views. However, 24% said their employer was bad or very bad at this. In the same study 46% of employees said their employer was good or very good at responding to suggestions and only 34% said their employer was good or very good at allowing influence of decisions.

In my PhD research⁴ into five organisations in the UK, satisfaction with opportunities to feed views upwards was variable. Satisfaction levels were as low as 28% in one organisation and as high as 58% in another. In one organisation in the study, differences between satisfaction in seeking views between line managers (70%) and senior managers (25%) was indicative of a command and control culture with low levels of engagement. Satisfaction with senior managers responding to suggestions was also notably low at two organisations in the study (15% and 10%).

How should IC practitioners incorporate voice into strategic practice?

The rationale for embracing employee voice that includes genuine listening is that it is associated with higher levels of employee engagement. And, as we know, engagement is associated with higher levels of organisational success and better employee well-being. Strategic internal communication practice should start with research to determine the base level of satisfaction with voice in the organisation. The following three questions can be used to gauge satisfaction with opportunities for voice:

1. Opportunities for me to express my views online
2. Opportunities for me to express my views face-to-face with my manager
3. Opportunities for me to express my views directly to a senior manager

(5=Very satisfied, 1=Very dissatisfied)

The following four questions can be used to rate managers for listening:

1. My manager listens to my views.
2. Senior managers listen to views that are expressed by employees.
3. My manager takes account of what I have said when making decisions.
4. Senior managers take account of what employees say when making decisions.

(5=Very good, 1=Very poor).

The results for these questions can be used to develop measurable internal communication objectives for the year ahead. For example, in an organisation that has a 45% satisfaction level for “Opportunities for me to express my views online” an objective could be set to improve this to 65% within 12 months. The key point is that employee voice should be woven into all internal communication activities and not be a one-off activity. If it is not systematic, employees may not trust it.



What are the challenges for internal communication practitioners?

The overriding challenge facing internal communication practitioners in establishing or maintaining employee voice is the ongoing belief of employees that their views are valued and taken seriously. In my research, one employee said, “You know, he was not interested in listening to me. So after thinking of an idea, I did not give any input, I actually stopped my input.” If managers do not listen, employees will stay silent and become disengaged. Internal communication practitioners must call out inauthentic listening and this will require courage and support from senior leaders in the organisation.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Keeping employees informed is no longer enough.
- ▶ Employee voice comprises two core principles: Providing *opportunities* to express voice and active *listening*.
- ▶ The first step to implementing a system of employee voice is to research current levels of satisfaction in your organisation and set measurable objectives for improvement.

United Kingdom



DR KEVIN RUCK

Co-founder, PR Academy

UNITED KINGDOM

Kevin Ruck is the editor and co-author of the text book *Exploring Internal Communication*. He established the UK's Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) internal communication qualifications and he is the course leader for PR Academy's delivery of the CIPR Internal Communication Diploma.

BREAKING THE RULE OF ENGAGEMENT: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The push for employee engagement has begun its decline, which is something that should cause the spirits of internal communicators to soar.

MIKE KLEIN

While the IC world is beginning to wake up to the possibility that there is life after employee engagement, the first step will involve wresting control of budgets from those who've pushed employee engagement, and also finding internal customers and budget holders who can see the relationship between the alignment of people and resources and the delivery of specific objectives.

It may be too early to declare victory, but prominent articles in Harvard Business Review¹ and Forbes² reflect increasingly vocal skepticism among HR practitioners and internal communicators at the idea of employee engagement as an almighty purpose for our profession. The unwillingness of the international IC measurements standards team³ to include engagement in its work underscores this skepticism.

The waning faith in the real value of employee engagement is also reflected in more frequent challenges to the main unwritten IC rule that's been in place since the turn of the century: *The goal of internal communication is to drive high engagement survey scores, across the board, and all other goals and activities were either secondary or immaterial.* Now, we see increasing appetite for selective and strategic IC interventions unconnected to the employee engagement agenda.

Why now?

The value of high employee engagement scores has always been difficult to measure. Even with a much-lauded relationship between employee engagement and various measures of organizational performance, the relationship between *investment in employee engagement initiatives* and actual performance is far more elusive. Indeed, there does not appear to be an established relationship between spending on employee engagement initiatives and employee engagement scores.

The damage unleashed by the enforced focus of internal communication on a one-size-fits-all strategy is much easier to assess:



As a function working across the business, internal communication can move into transformational networking, the willingness to intervene to bring unconnected complementary people together, and add tangible value beyond its core communication remit, altering organizational relationships, power flows and knowledge flows.

- ▶ Organizational initiatives and projects left to falter without adequate communication support
- ▶ Alienation of stakeholders denied professional communication support by communication departments
- ▶ Cynicism and resistance from managers and employees whose own experience did not match the experience promised by the engaged organization
- ▶ Budget wastage on events and collateral designed to drive a feel good effect that drives engagement scores rather than on activities to empower leaders, managers and staff to perform more effectively
- ▶ Insufficient attention paid to the differentiated roles of leaders, managers, and influencers in driving organizational conversations and prioritization, leading to rumor and misalignment

Seizing the initiative

Now, strategically minded internal communicators must overcome additional challenges, even as they are getting free from the employee engagement straitjacket.

Budgets are a lagging indicator. So, while the IC world is beginning to wake up to the possibility that there is life after employee engagement, the first step will involve wresting

control of budgets from those who've pushed employee engagement, and also finding internal customers and budget holders who can see the relationship between the alignment of people and resources and the delivery of specific objectives. They must develop and embrace value-based metrics and measurements to justify their involvement in change and other organizational priorities.

Once there are customers and projects, the opportunity becomes more clear to demonstrate value and re-establish internal communication as a serious business discipline by:

- Accelerating the completion of projects and initiatives
- Mobilizing influencers to share and contextualize messages for their peers
- Supporting alignment in the direction of common purposes, visions and objectives
- Clarifying desired behaviors and brand attributes
- Spreading the adoption of new technologies
- Facilitating the integration of acquisitions
- Identifying the value created by connections employees initiate with each other through transformational networking

All of these activities not only help deliver real organizational ambitions, their impact on those ambitions can be measured.

- Project completion speed can be measured relative to expectations and to projects of comparable scope and budget
- The spread and recall of messages delivered through influencers can be compared with that of messages shared through cascades or broadcast communication
- Alignment can be assessed through surveys and focus groups and corrected further
- Defined behaviors can be observed and evaluated
- As for technology take-up and M&A integration, there are numerous qualitative and quantitative ways of assessing speed and value

Transformational Networking

A proactive internal communicator will not only add value by executing to the current brief, but also turn the connections they make during their activities into pivotal assets.

Over time, internal communicators will have the ability to make introductions between key people below C-level. These introductions can lead to connections between like-minded employees, employees with complementary capabilities, or those with common interests.

As a function working across the business, internal communication can move into transformational networking, the willingness to intervene to bring unconnected complementary people together



and add tangible value beyond its core communication remit, altering organizational relationships, power flows and knowledge flows.

Indeed, it is only by working across the business and supporting real business objectives that IC teams can acquire the knowledge and connections to play this transformational role.

In closing

During the last fifteen years the strategic, transformational potential of internal communication has been suppressed in the push for employee engagement. But rather than rue lost opportunity, the important thing now is to be prepared for the new opportunities to contribute and to have that contribution measured and valued appropriately. It is in that measurement that we will regain our license to have an impact on our organizations. With that license, our ability to contribute will expand in many ways.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Overemphasis on employee engagement is coming to an end, creating new opportunities for internal communicators to have a real business impact.
- ▶ Many of these opportunities will allow internal communicators to demonstrate their value to the business in direct and tangible ways.
- ▶ Transformational networking offers major opportunities for communicators to reshape their organizations by creating new relationships and altering knowledge and power flows.



MIKE KLEIN

Principal
Changing the Terms

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Before becoming an internal communication consultant, Mike Klein worked as a political consultant in the U.S. for eight years. With nearly two decades of experience in internal communication, Mike has penned a book about social dynamics in large organisations, titled *From Lincoln to LinkedIn, the 55-minute Guide to Social Communication*.

Mike currently authors a blog, *Changing The Terms*, which advocates selective engagement and a strategic approach to internal communication. Mike is an MBA graduate of the London Business School and is based in the Netherlands.

EMBRACE A DIFFERENT KIND OF FEARLESS IN A CHANGING, MESSY, DIGITAL WORLD

The disruption of the communications function is not something to be feared. Communicators should see the shift as an opportunity to refresh our roles and work with leaders to encourage them to be the real deal, ultimately driving better business outcomes.

RITA ZONIUS

No longer are we tidying up communications or acting as information gatekeepers. Today, a different kind of fearless is needed from IC to find the signal and facilitate business progress in a changing, messy, digital world.

In addressing the fear many organisations have about taking the social media plunge, consultant and writer Euan Semple makes a blunt assessment of how management is playing out in large organisations today.

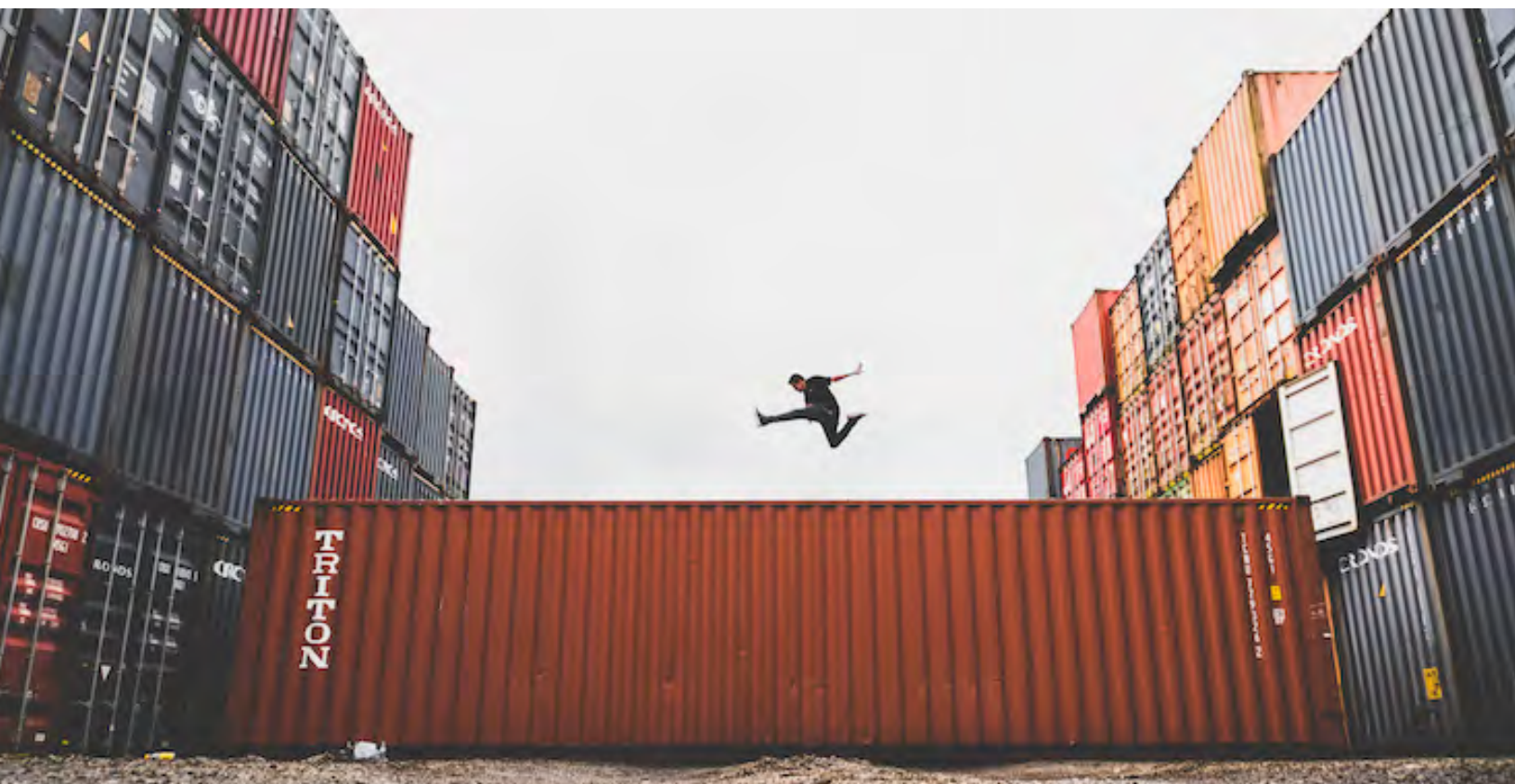
“A lot of management is about tidying things up and making things look organised,” he says in this video¹. “If you try and make everything look tidy, all you are doing is killing some of the potential signal and you miss stuff. You want lots of conversations, lots of stuff happening so you get lots of signal.”

That view packs a punch when I think about the state of IC today.

Once, being effective involved building relationships with leaders and counselling them on how to best deliver messages in a transparent way. Much of our work involved managing one-way communication with fairly limited feedback channels.

IC operatives were effectively broadcasters with considerable influence over the company signal such as what would be communicated and when. Life in IC was a reasonably tidy affair. Today the digital economy has disrupted the traditional flow of information inside and outside the borders of our organisations.

Trust in media, NGOs, business and government is in decline and we consider our peers to be as credible as experts when it comes to information about companies, according to the Edelman Trust Barometer².



An organising principle identified by futurist Jon Husband, the wirearchy is challenging the existing hierarchy in organisations and putting a blow torch on traditional leadership communication and engagement.

New technology is transforming how we engage with one another and get work done. People rely on the networks they have created but staff engagement remains stubbornly static³.

Add the constant noise from digital and social channels, which people can easily switch off if they aren't sold on what they're receiving, and today's communicators are struggling to find the signal needed to communicate in a meaningful way. This complex, connected environment where anyone can have a voice and information can move around the world in a nanosecond is changing the rules for IC.

No longer are we tidying up communications or acting as information gatekeepers. Today, a different kind of fearless is needed from IC to find the signal and facilitate business progress in a changing, messy, digital world.

IC as a connector

Communicators have always applied their skills as strategists, problems solvers and change agents to influence the shape of communications. In today's challenging environment, leaders are recognising that their IC partners are primed to take on broader roles as connectors across their rapidly changing businesses.

The Arthur Page Society in the US highlighted this ongoing evolution of communications in a report on the Future of the Chief Communications Officer⁴.

“Our roles are increasingly moving across the spectrum from elements still within the remit of the function,” the report said. “...towards the performance of the company which requires deeper degrees of collaboration and involve multiple responsibilities that the comms function does not own.”

Here’s a live example. Around two years ago, my team and I worked with our technologists to lead the deployment of ANZ’s first enterprise social network (ESN). At the start of this project, the conversations we had with our businesses were about connecting people to enable collaboration and conversations about taking the use of social to the next level, and doing the business of the business, beyond communication.

This involved coaching newly-minted community managers to marry existing data with ESN analytics to determine whether they were on track to achieve hard business goals. Today, we’re even intertwined in conversations about focusing on key communications platforms from a user perspective, rather than as pieces of technology to keep alive.

When I started my career I never imagined I’d play a role in shaping a digital workplace. That would have been a role for technology alone. But, here are IC people using their skills as influencers to be a part of these important conversations.

Address the trust deficit

The increasing use of social media is leading to the rise of the wirearchy⁵, where even relatively junior people can be extraordinarily influential based on the shape and size of their online networks. An organising principle identified by futurist Jon Husband, the wirearchy is challenging the existing hierarchy in organisations and putting a blow torch on traditional leadership communication and engagement.

Social media creates greater transparency in a low-trust world and IC professionals can ill afford to keep writing sermons from the mount on behalf of their leaders. People can spot a message that’s not genuine and will quickly dismiss it.

Smart IC professionals know we must strike a balance in enabling unfettered, and at times chaotic, conversations to take place around our organisations while coaching leaders in how to find and engage with the signal personally and with humility.



Yes, it's likely to be a harder road to travel with leaders who prefer a command-and-control style of communication, but IC will never address a trust deficit by perpetuating inauthentic leadership communications or by ignoring the voices of powerful influencers in their organisations, regardless of their job grade.

No ifs or buts

It should go without saying, but in a digital world, you need to be social. It doesn't matter whether you're starting out in your IC career or have been around for a little while. If you're not being social it's like you're standing in the corner of a room at a party by yourself.

It's impossible to encourage others to discover new ways of working if you haven't experienced them. Experiment with different social channels and identify what's will work for you, personally, professionally or both.

Next, nurture your networks, work out loud⁶ and be generous in sharing what you've learned in your IC career with others who may benefit from your experience. Do it without expecting anything in return. Over time, I guarantee the social world will have a way of rewarding you for making this selfless contribution.

Leave tidying up behind. Be fearless and reinvent your career for a more chaotic and unpredictable digital world.

Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ Beyond IC, get used to applying your skills in a broader role as a connector in your organisation.
- ▶ Address the trust deficit. Teach leaders to be their authentic selves and engage the social influencers in your organisation.
- ▶ Be social, work out loud and be generous in sharing what you have learned in your IC career.



RITA ZONIUS

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With extensive experience in corporate communications, Rita Zonius leads ANZ's Internal Digital Communications team. The team was established to support the bank to realise the business benefits of enterprise social technologies, including driving a collaborative culture across ANZ's workforce of more than 50,000 staff.

In addition to her accountabilities for leading enterprise social, Rita governs ANZ's global intranet platform to ensure continuous improvement initiatives are aligned to international best practice user experience. She's also focused on supporting communication professionals to reposition their careers for the new social and digital economy.

THE EVOLVING RULES OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

With the world of work changing rapidly¹ and expectations from the increasingly young workforce² rising, the rules of internal communication are no longer the same. Hyper connectivity³, generational differences and elimination of traditional job roles at the workplace means internal communicators face challenges they never have before. As organisations evolve to be an amalgamation of people with skill sets and diverse capabilities, a shift is taking place from organisational commitment to occupational commitment⁴. Likewise, with more and more organisations operating businesses as decentralised and autonomous units and the nature of work evolving from individual to team-based roles, the expectation to engage employees has grown stronger⁵. These insights indicate that communicators can direct their energies more toward encouraging collaboration and driving business performance.

ANIISU K. VERGHESE

Organizations that involve, inspire, align and empower employees to go the extra mile build a supportive culture, transparent ways of communication and strong leadership. Today, internal communicators are expected to be organizational connectors as opposed to craft experts who provided sound advice.

Furthermore, the rise of social media and technology solutions has resulted in a proliferation of channels, increased complexity and information saturation⁶. Culture and engagement⁷ are cited as the most important issues that companies face around the world with a majority citing these as their top challenges. Dwindling trust among employees⁸ in organisations has resulted in fewer employees voicing their thoughts openly. Only about half of employees surveyed felt their voice mattered and significant action has been taken as a result of feedback shared through surveys.

Earlier, the rules of internal communication were to communicate downwards, inform employees and manage channels such as company magazines. It was expected that the communicator shared company updates, provided counsel to leaders and produced content that was consumed by employees. With hierarchical structures in organisations and employees having limited access to information, the internal communicator served as an influential resource. Through the 1940s⁹ two-way communication, communication models and the importance of executive communication for the executive came to the fore.



Letting go of control is this ability to collaborate, transcend operational and functional boundaries, listen and involve employees that helps deliver business value.

Later on, the focus shifted¹⁰ to increasing message transmission, communication efficiency and enhancing human relations. This era also saw the integration of channels and the rise of the line manager as a key communication conduit. During the 1980s, internal communication progressed¹¹ from managing newsletters to influencing how organisations engage with employees.

The growing importance of the knowledge worker in organisations, democratisation of information, demographic changes and technological advances meant the rules of internal communication needed to evolve. Employees expect communication to be authentic, relevant, engaging, high touch and respectful. The role of work in their lives is mostly about gaining relevant skills, being their best, being known as an expert and contributing to society overall¹². Employees today are more willing to chart their own careers, shape their own work, seek greater challenges and collaborate across levels¹³ — quite unlike the past. It means that they are more flexible, comfortable with newer technologies and expect to be involved as communicators of the brand. Therefore investing in building the brand from within¹⁴ is pragmatic.

Researchers have made a case for recognising and harnessing individual initiative and creativity¹⁵ instead of consistency and control. Tapping the passion and engagement of employees provides organisations far greater advantages than conformity and homogeneity. Organisations that involve, inspire, align and empower employees to go the extra mile build supportive cultures, transparent ways of communication and strong leadership. Today, internal communicators are expected to be organisational connectors¹⁶ as opposed to craft experts who provided sound advice. The function is beginning to have a seat at the table and has experienced growth¹⁷.

Multi-faceted communicators¹⁸ are expected to be the curators of corporate culture and custodians of the brand. Rather than managing information flow and channels they need to let go of control, invite employees to participate and manage the message effectively. Letting go of control is about accepting each employee as a competent communicator and recognising individual talent and skills. It is this ability to collaborate, transcend operational and functional boundaries, listen and involve employees that helps deliver business value. The communicator needs to understand organisational dynamics, know how to shape corporate character¹⁸ and be seen as living the values and instilling pride. This also expects the communicator to have a grasp of insights and a laser sharp focus on employees¹⁹.

When organisations involve and empower employees in large and everyday decisions, there is a sense of shared ownership that furthers belonging. Power sharing among employees also leads to more balanced decision-making. As organisations progress from keeping decisions under wraps to inclusion to co-creating, employees are more engaged. Likewise, giving autonomy and meaning to their work and opportunities to discover and learn each day improves their connection with the organisation.

In summary, the new rules of internal communications mean communicators need to accept and align with the changes shaping the workplace, involve and partner with employees to help them be effective ambassadors of the brand and be their best selves²⁰. The internal communicator is no longer the owner and gatekeeper of information but is expected to tap the knowledge and talent of employees²¹ to create engaging communication, own the last mile on internal corporate reputation, manage employee relations and leverage 'moments of truth' to the organisation's advantage.



Three Key Takeaways

- ▶ The rules of internal communication have evolved from transmitting messages to partnering with employees and building a brand from within.
- ▶ Expectations of the communicator have changed dramatically from producing company content to being the curator of corporate character and encouraging an employee voice.
- ▶ Harnessing human potential and helping employees be their best at work for business success redefines the rules of internal communication in the new world order.

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Aniisu K. Verghese is an internal communication professional, author, speaker and consultant with over seventeen years of experience with leading retail, IT, financial services and consulting organizations. Aniisu is the author of – Internal Communications – Insights, Practices and Models (Sage Publications, 2012) and currently serves as the Corporate Communications and CSR Lead for Tesco Bengaluru (India), the technology and retail operations team of Tesco, one of the world's largest retailers. He speaks at communication and management conferences and is passionate about engaging practitioners and academia on internal communication through workshops and his blog – Intrakope.

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We're proud to support "*Disrupting the Function of IC*", an epic contribution to the future of the communication profession. We applaud the authors who contributed their insight and wisdom, and most of all we salute our friend and colleague, Lise Michaud, global champion of our profession.

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Internal communication has always been positioned to influence business results, and now, more than ever, it is a critical business driver.

We understand how important it is to reach employees with clear, consistent, relevant, timely messages. Not just some employees, but all employees, especially those who can't open an email when it arrives or have limited access to the company intranet. We know how important it is to benchmark awareness, understanding and engagement, and how much internal communication professionals rely on data to inform strategic planning. The path to increased value lies in the ability to demonstrate results.

Let's talk evolution. The workplace is different now than it was 10 years ago. Job structures are diverse. Remote teams are quickly becoming the norm. Employees are telecommuting with a more flexible schedule. And millennials demanding digital connections, a preference that strongly influences how internal communication is managed.

Internal communication management is complex and multi-faceted. In this age of social media, apps for practically everything and digital intelligence, traditional and citizen authorship newsletters, intranets, posters and bulletin boards alone just don't cut it anymore.

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Since Lise Michaud launched IC Kollektif in early 2016, its importance to the IABC network and to the wider communication profession has grown and grown. As a dynamic source of knowledge, resources and research, IC Kollektif is an indispensable hub for our global profession.

We're excited to support IC Kollektif's inaugural publication of internal communication insights to help us advance our profession, drive the value of business communication, create meaningful connections and develop strategic communication professionals.

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Adrian Cropley

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Rita Zonius

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INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

**CHALLENGES
OPPORTUNITIES**

**THE INSIGHTS AND WISDOM OF
30 EXPERTS FROM 6 CONTINENTS**