



Organisations must value their internal communication



Creating a culture of great communication is vital to employee engagement and retention. (Internet image)

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By Aleika Walker

For any organisation, your brand's reputation is crucial to your profitability and survival. The way the public perceives your organisation, directly affects them identifying with your brand and becoming a loyal customer.

One of the rules of marketing, is ensuring that you control the narrative by utilising external messaging to influence how the public views your organisation. But what about internal messaging? Are you communicating internally to influence the perception your employees have of the organisation? We focus so much on how the outside world perceives the organisation, that sometimes the internal customers are neglected.

Internal communication involves how information is shared and delivered to your employees. It can be in the form of announcing a new policy, introducing product lines or as simple as communicating about an upcoming event. Creating a culture of great communication is vital to employee engagement and retention. If employees do not understand why decisions are being made, it leads them to feel disconnected from the business and creates an air of "us versus them".

Workplace culture and effective communication go hand in hand. Communication is the vehicle to transmit and reinforce your organisation's values and goals and allows for the alignment to organisational culture. If it is effective, you will be able to foster a strong company culture which influences your employee engagement

and productivity. However, failing to train your managers as key communicators can disrupt the flow of communication from management to employees and vice versa.

Organisations cannot disseminate their goals and values if their leaders do not have total clarity or the necessary tools to complete the task. A good manager provides channels to relay information from management and to allow employees' voices to be heard. This can be in the form of face-to-face meetings, virtual meetings, emails, company notice boards or memos. Scheduling team meetings empowers employees with the necessary information and builds a bond of trust as they are included in the conversation about projects, their tasks, and the overall organisation.

Emotional response

With internal communication embedded within your culture, implementing change, and transitioning to a new structure will be easier. Now this does not mean it will be perfect, as employees will have an emotional response to workplace change whether it be excitement or panic.

That is why it is imperative that internal communication be built into the planning process of introducing change to employees. It should be used to explain what the company is doing, what change would look like, and the steps being taken to get there. Again, this scenario requires providing middle management with support as they will be on the front line for questions from their teams.

Employees will turn to their leaders to make sense of change and to understand where they fit in the big picture. This is where it is important that leaders be open and honest as answers that are too vague create a division and project untrustworthiness. Utilise this time to produce messaging that assists employees with the change, remembering that they will require time to process it. Buy-in takes time, but consistent communication will assist employees with acceptance.

Lastly, organisations must understand the need to communicate at the right time. As stated above, sometimes change happens and organisations are forced to move in different directions. Who should be the first to know? Your employees. Preventing information leakage can be difficult and will cause the organisation to do damage control as rumours can impact employee morale. Learning about your company downsizing or merging with another company through the grapevine or social media will change the perception you had of the organisation.

Internal communication is just as important as external communication as your employees heavily contribute to the reason why the organisation is successful. It impacts your culture, engagement, retention and by extension your bottom line. If there is one takeaway from this article, it should be the importance of communicating with your employees as no one likes to be kept in the dark!

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