

Foreword



Lee Smith

Welcome to Volume 2 of the Journal of Internal Communication. If you have a simple calculator lying around, pick it up and have a look at it. You'll find that you have to hit the "clear" button and completely clear one problem before you try to solve another.

All too often, we're trying to use our minds to work on several problems at once, without ever stopping to hit the "clear" button.

The Journal of Internal Communication is a good way to 'hit clear' – to sit down and think about what you really need to be working on, where to focus your time and efforts and where to invest that precious budget.

As you read through the articles, try to put everything else to one side and find something that inspires you to take action, to do something different.

There's Wedge Black's piece on clear communication. Skype's Jo Hay on how encouraging conversation is key to successful internal communication. And Julie Warren's thoughts on securing a healthy budget for your team.

Have a think about what you're working on and the direction you're taking with your role. It's like that old saying: if don't know where you are going, you might end up somewhere else.

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Embracing the power of storytelling and visual metaphors

Chris Carey discusses how storytelling and visual analogies combine to offer a powerful alternative to classic PowerPoint presentations when sharing your strategies with employees.

They called it their 'Big Picture'. It's a technique we've been using for many clients, and I believe it's a brilliant alternative to classic PowerPoint presentations, generating great results.

Getting the story straight

Mölnlycke went with a sailing as their chosen visual analogy. We came up with this idea through a collaborative process involving over 100 employees across the business. Being a Swedish company, Mölnlycke Health Care has a very inclusive management style, and it was crucial for them to involve representatives from all areas and levels of the organisation – globally.

We usually work with reference groups of typically 10 to 20 people, so a group of this

size was an interesting challenge. While sessions can usually be run face-to-face with smaller groups, here we worked through a network of Mölnlycke's local HR professionals to gather input and generate buy-in.

First we developed what we call a 'key message control document'. This is a manifesto developed in conjunction with the leadership team to define the messages that need to go out. We then did the same exercise with the reference group and sense checked their views with the control document.

This became the basis of a number of potential visual analogies. Mölnlycke selected the sailing journey metaphor because it had a global appeal, a sense

“ Our people really liked this hugely innovative approach to explaining our strategy. It helped us overcome both language and cultural barriers and now everyone is talking about the strategy, at all levels of the business and all around the world, including a tremendous number of people who would not usually engage. ”

of ‘journey’ from the past to the future and because everyone has a part to play onboard a successful sailing vessel.

We then developed a draft pencil drawing, highlighting each message from the manifesto, which was signed off by both the leadership team and the reference group. Although it’s a metaphor, we tried to be as realistic as possible. When picturing the journey, we showed the other vessels on the sea – Mölnlycke’s competitors – as well as other challenges they might face, illustrated by rocks and sharks. The idea was to say: “We know our journey won’t be plain sailing.” Innovation and scouting for

future opportunities were featured and we included islands in the image, representing waypoints on the journey towards achieving Mölnlycke’s vision, places where we could stop and review progress.

You need to ensure your picture is as ‘cynic-proof’ as possible when working on this kind of project, and that’s what reference groups can help you with. With the draft pencil drawing agreed, we went to full colour artwork and were ready to launch.

Launching the ‘Big Picture’

We launched Mölnlycke’s latest Big Picture at a nautical-themed conference aimed

at the leadership team in Riga, Latvia. We gave out cascade packs (DVDs, posters, competition details, etc.) and asked participants to go and deliver the messages across the world. But first, we practiced what we preached: we talked the leaders through the materials in the same way we expected them to do with their teams. We also provided storytelling tips to help them make an impact back at base.

To equip the Leaders to succeed, we also gave them ‘guidance notes’. We don’t call them ‘scripts’, because we don’t want people to learn a script and deliver it rote. Instead we

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write the notes in a way that helps leaders localise the discussions about strategy and encourage interactivity. For example, people were asked to talk about their 'heritage', and the successful behaviours from their past that they want to carry forward, which are obviously very different depending on whether they sit at the head office or work in a factory in Thailand...

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Mölnlycke supported the Big Picture launch by running a global competition. They asked their employees to make 3-minute videos explaining how they are bringing the strategy to life in their part of the organisation. The winning team will travel to Sweden to visit headquarters, meet the leadership team and learn how to sail a real sailing vessel, like the one in their Big Picture.

I believe the main benefits of combining storytelling with visual metaphors is that it enables everyone, irrespective of the language skills, to see how they fit into helping Mölnlycke achieve its strategy. It creates a common and accessible language that everyone can use to discuss strategic issues – in this case, making the boat go faster. And the technique works. The last statistics showed familiarity with Mölnlycke's mission up 26%.

But don't just take my word for it. Mattias Hakeröd, Global HR Director, Surgical Division, said: *"Our people really liked this innovative approach to explaining our strategy. It helped us overcome both language and cultural barriers and now everyone is talking about the strategy, at*

all levels of the business and all around the world, including a tremendous number of people who would not usually engage." ■

Biography \ Chris Carey

Chris Carey is Founder and managing director at Axiom Communications. He helps organisations achieve their full potential through the actions of their own better engaged and motivated people, by communicating strategies, training leaders to be more effective communicators, creating engaging communication campaigns and measuring their success.

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Focusing full time on engagement

Karen Wilkinson explains how she built a case for a full-time internal communication position.

What is your context?

The Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) is the scientific and research arm of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which was originally set up by the UK government to minimise risks to people's health and safety at work. We help investigate work-related incidents, as well as conducting research to improve occupational health and safety.

Most of the time, there's more than one element to a specific incident or risk in an organisation – there can be technical elements related to machinery and plant, or human-factor elements. As a result, we employ almost 300 specialists in a very diverse range of disciplines – engineers, ergonomists, toxicologists, psychologists,

etc. We build multidisciplinary teams of professionals from different areas of the laboratory to come up with a solution to a problem.

We have been an agency of HSE since 1995, which means that we can also provide services to the private sector, even though we are still part of the civil service. However, over the years this has meant that we haven't always been in a position to capitalise on an increasing demand for our services from public and private-sector organisations. Our expertise can actually help them to reduce risks as far as possible and then to ensure they're properly controlled thereafter.

Two years ago, we had a visit from the Minister for our department who realised our potential and encouraged us to take the opportunity to grow the business. Having

the Minister's support was a real catalyst, I think. It's the first time we've really been in a position to take control of our destiny.

What was your case for building a proper IC function?

Obviously, this involved a lot of changes internally. One of them was to encourage a mindset change across the organisation. I think that our leaders clearly recognised the importance of internal communication for several reasons.

First, we need to ensure that everybody knows what their colleagues from other areas of the laboratory are up to – probably a lot more than in other organisations, because our services involve many disciplines from different parts of the agency. One key thing that I'd like to focus on is actually improving the communication between these different areas.▶

“ Senior Management finally recognised that internal communication is a vital element of staff engagement, although I don’t think they realised how much effort was actually needed to do it properly. I was told I could do it on a part-time basis. To me, that was a step in the right direction, but it wasn’t enough of a step. ”

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Second, we needed to transfer our knowledge to industry which involves innovating and developing health-and-safety products, which is an important thing for people to know. It will mean that we will have to do some things differently, and I believe that internal communication has a huge role to play in sharing best practices. We come up with new ways of doing things every day and someone may think: *“Well, actually, I could incorporate that into something I do”*.

However, I had always been a general communications manager. I was doing pretty much everything related to external and internal communications – managing the agency website, our intranet, press and media relations, advertising, etc. As with many organisations, when something external came in, I would have to give it the priority over internal communication. So internal communication always ended up being put aside and was simply not getting the attention it deserved. We weren’t doing anything proactively.

Senior Management finally recognised that internal communication is a vital element of staff engagement, although I don’t think they realised how much effort was actually needed to do it properly. I was told I could do it on a part-time basis – *“Maybe you could focus on internal communication one day a week”*. To me, that was a step in the right direction, but it wasn’t enough of a step, and I could see it still being pushed to the side if something else came in. So I spoke to one of the senior managers about creating a full-time position. He agreed it was important and put the case forward. As we’ve just recruited a marketing manager to manage external communication, my focus will now be exclusively internal. This is a major breakthrough.

What are your next steps?

One of my challenges will be to elevate the IC function. I am getting more involved in conversations across the organisation, but it is going to take some time before it is truly established as a stand-alone function. I’m actually doing the CIPR professional qualification at the moment, and I think those credentials will help me do this,

especially in an organisation where many people have Ph.D.s and science degrees. I also need to start doing more PR around internal communication. A lot of people don't understand what it actually means and involves. In a way, it's also for me to define how people can contribute to it, but I want to encourage people to come to me and share their stories.

In order to start building the foundations of a proper IC function, I'm initially planning to do a communication audit. We don't want to jump in and start things that we may then have to change in six months' time. We've recently run a culture survey

and some focus groups as part of a change programme. I plan to pull these results together and come up with a strategy and a plan of what we actually need to do, so there are exciting times ahead. ■

Biography \ Karen Wilkinson

Karen Wilkinson is HSL's Internal Communication Manager. She worked in commercial video production before becoming a communications manager at HSL. She has a HND in Design Communication, an MA in Film production, and is an accredited member of the CIPR.

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“ One of my challenges will be to elevate the IC function. I need to start doing more PR around internal communication. A lot of people don't understand what it actually means and involves. ”

How IC can bring value to change management

Jayne Wilson discusses how IC can add value to change programmes by bringing an audience-focused perspective.

In my various roles as an interim consultant, I have worked on many change programmes. One of them was about aligning inconsistent IT systems into an integrated platform, another one was about a strategy refresh... Whatever the purpose, I've often observed the same scenario: as an Internal Communication Manager, you usually get involved when the project has already kicked-off. This means that the team has been working on the programme for a while, and they are quite excited about communicating.

However, they are often lost in the details and struggle to look at the programme

from an audience perspective. What they want to talk about – the deliverables, the timelines etc. – is not necessarily relevant to their audiences. I think that this audience-focused approach is precisely the value you can add to the change as an IC expert.

Segmenting your audience

The first thing I usually develop is an audience map and an overview of key milestones outlining when people will see things happening.

In internal communication, you can sometimes get away with a one-size-fits-all approach. This is different with change communication. You need to look at the impact it's going to have on each audience. Obviously, your role is partly about raising awareness about the programme. However, this is not 'business

as usual' because you want people to act on it and adopt new behaviours. You need to segment your audience and focus on the outcome that you want. It's all about behaviour change.

Some years ago, I was working at British Gas. They had a number of change projects going on. I was brought in to help the programme director and the four change managers to communicate on the overall programme, as well as on each individual projects. They did have a calendar of activities, but it was built from the programme perspective – not from an audience perspective. I developed an audience map, as well as a simple picture of key milestones and of their impact on each audience.

This made them realize that some audiences would undergo too many changes at the

same time, so the programme manager went back to the team and revised the delivery timelines. In this specific example, it also helped them better position their messaging. They tended to explain everything from their point of view, announcing what deliverables would be released across the business each month, even though it was only relevant for a few people in the business... Instead they started looking at the deliverables from the perspective of their audiences and telling each of them exactly what they would receive.

Creating an elevator speech

One of the things you usually have to do when working on change programmes is to create what I call an 'elevator speech'. When leadership teams and programme managers have been working on the specifics of the programme for a long time,

they're usually quite passionate about it... They often find it hard to take a step back and explain the change in a clear, consistent manner.

In order to help them to articulate the programme in a way that is meaningful to

employees, I like to bring all the stakeholders together in a room with a view to creating a common understanding of the change.

I get them to tell me the story, explain the business case and the benefits. I ask them

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who the key players are, what success looks like, what outcome they want out of this and what the barriers to success might be. They all then develop a story and play it back to the room. They often realize that they were lost in the details!

It’s a crucial step because that’s when everyone agrees on what to say and how to position the programme. At this stage, I find it useful to create a visual singleframe of the programme.

Developing an action plan

A typical action plan is broken down into two components: the first element is the overall campaign – a consistent messaging that presents the big picture to all employees. It’s the ‘easy’ part; you develop supporting

materials based on your ‘elevator speech’ and run a campaign across the business using relevant channels.

Over time, your focus should be increasingly on the second element – the ‘audience-specific communications’. This is when you focus on the outcome you want and encourage people to take actions. It relies heavily on managers and involves helping them to inform their teams and influence their behaviours. In addition to face-to-face briefing sessions, I like to ask them to allocate some time in the week when they will have an open-door policy and allow their teams to come and ask questions.

Obviously, this implies giving them enough information to address such questions. And

sometimes it's difficult to know what the concerns might be. In one of the projects I worked on, we had change champions as part of the team – senior professionals with a long experience of the company, whom we involved all along the process. They would advise us on how changes might land, what implications they might have on teams. We also used them as test groups – they would take our toolkit with them and talk managers through it. Then they would give us their feedback.

Measuring success

Measurement is often forgotten. It's easy to spend a lot of time developing communication materials and to lose sight of what your goal really is. Although it's easy to find out whether a specific

communication has been received or whether a briefing session has been held, it can be tricky to measure behaviour change.

You can agree on a set of four or five questions that you will keep asking on a regular basis – either through an online survey or over the phone – and use this as a benchmark for tracking progress.

You can ask questions such as: Do you understand what the programme is about? Do you feel involved? Have you changed your behaviour? From there you can see if there's been any shift. ■

Biography \ Jayne Wilson

Jayne Wilson has 20 years' experience in consultancy and international organisations. She has supported major transformational change and business programmes at Ernst & Young, Lloyds Banking Group, British Gas, Diageo and Northern Rock. She currently manages Group Internal Communication at Sage.

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Winning the budget battle: Don't let internal communications be the 'poor loser'

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The IC function has always faced an uphill battle when it comes to securing budget, but in 2013 we seem to be facing even more challenges. IC budgets are coming under increased financial pressure as are IC teams to justify why they deserve a decent slice of the cake. Julie Warren describes some ways in which you can influence the financial budgetary decisions within your organisation.

Increasingly, I find myself dedicating the first part of meetings with newly acquainted Heads of IC, dominated by discussing the subject of cuts to budgets, general lack of funding into their area or headcount cuts

– all of which leave them feeling that they are not able to deliver the outputs and value they aspire to.

I believe that by following some of the tips below, Heads of IC may be able to secure better funding for their departments moving forwards:

▶ **Take the time to sit down with the finance department** to understand the company budgets for the current and future financial period. How can you make decisions for your department if you don't understand the overall company position and where you fit within this? You don't need to become a forensic accountant, but make yourself familiar with the high-

level financials and make a friend of the finance director.

▶ **Believe in yourself and your department.** Engaged employees deliver significantly more than ones that are not engaged. You have the power to significantly influence the wider organisation, so keep reminding senior leadership of this and even quote financials and return on investment (ROI). IC makes an impact on the bottom line, end of.

▶ **Make friends with the enemy.** By this, I mean work really closely with external marketing, comms, sales, IT and other key departments. Without the wonderful IC department how on Earth will they

keep their teams inspired and up to date? Having other departments fully onboard could mean that they will battle on the IC budget for next year alongside you.

- ▶ **Be ambitious.** Ask for the right amount of money to do an outstanding job. I recently spoke to a Head of IC who had requested £10k for doing a major intranet overhaul. Unsurprisingly, they ran out of budget and ended up with something that was not fit for purpose, caused a huge amount of wasted time and frustration and added negatives to the perception of IC. If you need £100k to do a great job, then be clear on this. State what the ROI will be and the other longer-term benefits – *“Mr CEO, once we have this new platform, we will be able to issue monthly video updates from you, add customer testimonials, and manage our staff satisfaction survey through the same platform.”*
- ▶ **Be realistic.** If the business is suffering from reduced profits or even a loss, asking for a 100% increase on budget might not be appropriate. This goes

“ How can you make decisions for your department if you don't understand the overall company position? You don't need to become a forensic accountant, but make yourself familiar with the high-level financials and make a friend of the finance director. ”

right back to my very first point which is understanding the bigger picture. It might be that the business is suffering due to a high employee turnover – in which case you might have a very good business case for why the IC budget needs to be increased not decreased. Sometimes, we need to be blunt about the consequences of cost/budget cutting within IC, which is in many ways the heartbeat of the organisation.

- ▶ **Spend what you are given or have a very good reason why not.** It's amazing how many IC teams who have faced budget

cuts, still end the year with unspent money. This might be because they did not have the right staff or time to complete projects. Know your budgets inside out and if you have funds left at the end of the year, negotiate with your key suppliers to have them issue pro-formas to carry funds over to the next year. Or go back and speak to your finance team about other options. Obviously, don't spend for the sake of spending but if you had a really good reason for asking for this money, you need to have a very good reason why you have not spent it within the agreed timeframe.▶

- ▶ **Learn how to negotiate.** Negotiation is a skill which can be learnt and refined as we pass through our work and personal lives. In the late 1990's, I attended a training course run by Derek Arden (www.derekarden.co.uk). Derek taught me that often in negotiations, it's our own lack of planning, skills, courage etc. that is holding us back. Attending a high class negotiations skills session will help you in budget negotiations but also with suppliers and within your wider business and personal lives.
- ▶ **Be able to negotiate at any time of the year.** Things change both externally and internally during the year. If you have a very strong business case for going back to request more budget mid-way through the year, don't be afraid to go down this path –

but again, speak to other departments first and make sure that you have key supporters on your side ready to stand alongside you.

- ▶ **Make sure that you have the ability to deliver against your plans.** Too often, I hear IC departments have been unable to deliver key work streams because they don't have the right number or right quality of staff to do so. Ensure you have the right internal and external resources in place. If you need a first-rate intranet manager, have them in place to deliver the new intranet or negotiate early to get them in place.

All too often, the IC department becomes the wounded soldier in budget negotiations. This is not only sad, but often unnecessary. If you need help then ask for it and plan, be brave and focus on ROI. ■

Biography \ Julie Warren

Julie Warren is an experienced marketeer who spent almost 30 years in senior sales and marketing roles within the financial services sector. The later part of her career was spent as a Head of marketing where she built an IC function from scratch and then grew it into a fully integrated team of five sitting within her wider marketing team. Since leaving banking two years ago, Julie has spent most of her time working as a consultant for FTSE250 organisations on a wide range of marketing topics but increasingly with a strong focus on helping Heads of IC design and implement truly engaging people strategies.

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The power within

Achieving high levels of engagement with a near zero budget at Essex County Council

How do you engage a large and diverse workforce in transforming the way it works on a near zero budget? Katie Hadgraft shares some tips.

Essex County Council is going through the biggest transformation programme in local government history. Local government budgets have always been tight, but we're now at a point where without significant savings, services will have to be cut. This isn't an option for us. As one of the largest local authorities in the UK, we want to deliver the highest quality of life to Essex residents.

Three years ago, we started radically transforming the way we work through fundamental changes to our structures,

systems and processes. We've managed to save over £300 million during this time. But we need to do even better – and the change programme will now start to impact the structure of our organisation. We will change our operating model in order to become more 'outcome-focused'. We have a culturally and geographically-disparate workforce of approximately 8,000 employees, ranging from administrative officers to carers, librarians and highway workers. The programme involves a significant amount of change for all of them.

As the Head of Employee Communications and Engagement, I supervise a team made up of internal communicators and engagement consultants. Communicators

work directly with specific parts of the organisation, helping them to clarify their needs and supporting them in developing and distributing communication materials. Engagement consultants implement engagement activities, such as rolling out our annual employee engagement survey called 'Your Voice' or engaging with the 'Essex Engagers' – a group of volunteers who help us test things and give valuable feedback. So my team is responsible for both communication and engagement activities – which are two sides of the same coin.

Our mantra: Talk, listen, connect, to engage
One of our priorities is to create opportunities for real conversations and

to ensure feedback is listened to and acted upon.

In 2011, we ran our first ‘Your Voice’ engagement day – and this was followed up in 2012 by a second day. On one day, we held 48 separate face-to-face events which enabled over 800 employees to have discussions with senior leaders in an open environment. Employees who could not attend a face-to-face session were encouraged to take part online through Yammer, with hosts kicking off the debate with posts about what was being discussed in their sessions. It was a major logistic

exercise, and we relied heavily on the Essex Engagers network – they set the rooms up, organised the collaterals and collected the feedback.

Another element of this is our annual employee engagement survey. When we get the results of the survey, we take two approaches. First, we encourage each team to take local actions to address the issues that have been raised in their own individual team scores. The danger in having a dedicated engagement team is that people may think that since engagement is your responsibility, it has nothing to do with them.

So you need to make clear that it is actually everyone’s responsibility, in particular line managers’. And asking people to find solutions for themselves is a good way to drive accountability of the results. We work with every team to identify practical solutions. Our role is to provide them with advice, guidance, support packs and toolkits.

We also ask our corporate leadership team to look at the overall results and consider the four or five elements that they think could make the most difference in engagement. For example, it could be the

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“ The danger in having a dedicated engagement team is that people may think that engagement is your responsibility and has nothing to do with them. So you need to make clear that it is actually everyone’s responsibility – and asking people to find solutions for themselves is a good way to drive accountability. ”

role of a line manager: does the organisation understand what it means to be a line manager? How effective are our line managers at communication?

So we combine a bottom-up approach and a top-down approach, and then run a campaign called 'You said, We did' across the year. This gives employees concrete examples of when they have said something wasn't right, and what has changed as a result. We also occasionally run 'You Said and We Didn't Do' campaigns, explaining the reasons why we haven't acted on their feedback – there's nothing wrong with saying no to people as long as you tell them why.

Top tips for working on a tight budget

Working on a tight budget, my team has developed a few tricks to achieve maximum results with little resources:

- ▶ **Developing an extended team.** Leveraging the power of network groups is a really good way to expand your team. In our case, the Essex Engagers, as well as an

employee panel and a group of people called the 'Our Voice' forum help us come up with ideas of actions and test things. And they're really happy to get involved.

- ▶ **Linking to the right parts of the organisation.** Find out who can help you achieve your goals within your organisation – for example, Learning & Development or IT. Obviously, you need to give people enough notice and to build a relationship over the course of the year, so that everyone feels they're working towards a common goal.
- ▶ **Developing in-house skills.** If you can't afford an external agency, opt for a DIY solution and upskill your team. We recently invested in a handycam and in video editing software. One of my team members is passionate about this and we achieved excellent results; he now produces a video every week to go with our online newsletter. Another example of achieving a lot with very little spend was when we launched our audio line. The principle is very simple: our senior leaders

record a message using their phones, and then any employee can dial in, listen to it and leave feedback. At the end of the first week, that audio line got 900 calls!

- ▶ **Using free online tools.** There are plenty of free or low cost online tools, such as Yammer or SurveyMonkey, available out there. Learn how to use them and incorporate them into your strategy. ■

Biography \ Katie Hadgraft

Katie Hadgraft is Head of Employee Communications and Engagement at Essex County Council. Her team was awarded the 'Best employee engagement programme' prize at the #insidestory Awards from CIPR Inside (www.ciprintside.co.uk). Katie has many years' experience of employee communications and engagement gained from a mix of sectors including telecommunications, transport and local government. Teams she has led have been recognised nationally over the years with a number of professional communication and HR awards. You can follow Katie on Twitter @KatieHadgraft or contact her at katie_hadgraft@hotmail.com.

Skype and the art of conversation

Skype's employee communication lead Jo Hay says the art of conversation is key ...

Following the acquisition in October 2011, Skype is a division of Microsoft.

The Skype Division is truly global with around 2,500 employees spanning APAC, Europe and the US, which means constant collaboration across different time-zones and cultures to make great things happen. We're disruptive and innovative by nature and our mission to enable billions of people to share experiences every day means there's always a lot going on. In internal communication, we need to continuously look at the big picture, understand what's important for our people and success and create our communication and engagement plans around that.

Sharing information will always be an important part of communicating internally but you can't and shouldn't rely on one-way traffic as a route to understanding and engagement. You need to strike the right balance between imparting key information, facilitating discussions and providing opportunities for people to get involved. And you need to understand the profile of your organisation and people to figure out that balance. There's no 'one size fits all' solution and the picture you're dealing with is constantly changing. It's always a question of science and art – using data and intuitively connecting people.

Just as Skype is about facilitating conversations – whether professional, social or personal, internal communication is also about facilitating conversations – between leadership and employees,

between leaders as peers, between managers and their teams, between individuals. And conversations by their nature are a two-way thing – it's hard to get engaged if someone talks at you instead of with you.

At Microsoft, we work with very intelligent, talented people who have opinions about most things and are not shy about sharing them. The more engaged people are, the more they want to share what they think to make things better, to drive results. We use all kinds of ways to facilitate conversations – from in-person Q&A between employees and execs, to topic-based social media threads, to group chats, to career development check-ins. We conduct regular pulse checks with all or parts of the division to understand what's front of mind (good and bad) and what we

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“ As the pace of organisation life speeds up, change is ever present and access to real-time information increases through technology, we have an increasing responsibility to cut through the noise and facilitate high quality, high touch conversations. ”

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should be talking about to drive improvement and we feed key themes into all our employee communications. We encourage feedback at all levels and through all our communications even when that feedback is tough to hear. Having experienced a high degree of change in recent years with three ownership transitions, we know only too well how important (and healthy) it is to keep the conversation alive.

Leaders as Communicators

Everyone has high expectations of leaders as communicators. It's a key part of the job description and it's a tough gig a lot of the

time. We bring our senior leaders physically together at least once a year, which for a global division like ours is a big investment in every sense of the word. At these meetings, we aim to strike that balance between delivering core information on vision and strategy with facilitating conversations about executing plans and how to engage the teams in delivery and making the Skype Division a great place to work. We then equip the leaders to share core information and engage their teams in the next phase. It's pretty intense but it provides a strong backbone to our annual communication and engagement programme.

We also support our executives in their functional communication plans through regular virtual All Hands, annual events and regular blogs/updates. We also have Site Leaders in each location who act as our 'cultural ambassadors' and who facilitate local conversations and provide valuable feedback to us in communications and to the executive team.

Managers as Communicators

Managers as communicators is an age-old topic but one that is as relevant today as it has ever been; perhaps even more so with economic pressure, constant organisation change and competition for talent. How you feel about your manager can have a huge impact on how you do your job and make or break your decision to stay or leave. Their communication skills, as part of their broader management capability, is a key factor in employee engagement.

No one is good at everything; some managers are naturally good communicators while others may be more technically gifted and haven't invested

in their communication skills. We work closely with our HR partners in this space to understand where we have role models and how we can leverage their strengths to help others develop. Our annual survey provides valuable insights about individual manager capabilities and is a great tool for generating self-awareness and driving improvement plans. Microsoft has incredible learning and career development frameworks and invests in its people, so we're lucky to have access to a rich array of resources to improve managers' communication capability.

The role of IC

We will always have a responsibility for 'corporate' or top down communication through push channels like events, emails/

blogs or intranets. But as the pace of organisation life speeds up, change is ever present and access to real-time information increases through technology, we have an increasing responsibility to cut through the noise and facilitate high quality, high touch conversations about the things that matter to people, things that make a difference and impact success, things that attract and retain talent. It's a dynamic role that has you moving from strategic thinking, planning and advising on the ground execution from one hour to the next. You have to listen hard, intuitively understand the organisation psychology and the nuances and keep adapting your approach.

It's certainly not for the fainthearted or thin skinned. And you have to be passionate

about keeping the art of conversation alive. Through whatever means available and necessary. ■

Biography \ Jo Hay

Jo Hay is a change communications professional with 20 years of experience across many industries including transport, logistics, financial services and communication technology.

In her current role in the Skype Division of Microsoft, she has led change communication programmes through several changes of ownership, most latterly the acquisition of Skype by Microsoft.

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The future of IC in India

Anisu K. Verghese currently serves as the India Internal Communication Lead at Sapient. He discusses the specificities of the IC function in India and the challenges it faces.

When I started up my career over a decade ago, internal communication was almost non-existent in India. The main focus was on PR and marketing, and internal communication was seen as secondary.

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In many ways, there's still a limited understanding of what IC can do for an organisation and few leaders recognise that it requires specific skills. According to the 2011 India Internal Communications Survey which is the only survey of its kind in the country, only a third of India-based communicators thought that they had leaders' buy-in for internal communication and less than half were confident of pitching a business case for internal communication.

However, I've observed some drastic changes over the past few years, mostly under the influence of multinational companies.

India has a very dynamic talent market. There are multiple opportunities for a job seeker, and people change jobs very easily. As a result, staff turnover is very high and retaining employees is a big challenge for most companies. With the growing war for talent, increased job opportunities and globalization, internal communication is the glue that keeps staff together, aligns employees to the strategy and enhances the employer brand from within.

As in many multinational companies, people at Sapient India receive leadership messages from the local and global offices. However, this may not always appeal to our local audience, which is typically very young and not necessarily familiar with this kind of 'big picture' messages. We help them understand what it means and

how it is going to affect their role and their career. We try to get the local leadership team to step up and talk to employees. Local leaders are often seen as more accessible and they are in a better position to get important messages out. Obviously, there's a huge amount of operations and things going on at the same time, so planning this kind of release can be a challenge.

I think it's very important to have a local internal communication manager because we're better placed to interact with the local audience, understand what they're interested in and turn global messages into something relevant and credible for a local audience.

I do believe that internal communication can contribute to driving employee engagement. As far as possible, I try to focus on 'what's in it for them'. Maybe more than in other countries, you can make a difference by

improving employees' experience with the company.

I work very closely with the leadership team and the HR department, and we've come up with some programmes designed to get our employees involved in CSR initiatives and to make the company a better place to work. One example is the 'Silent Auction', a campaign organized every two years across our three locations in India. People have the opportunity to offer services or products – such as a stand-up comedy act and popular Bollywood dance by the office leadership team – at a price which is 'silently' bid online by others in the company. The highest bidder wins the service or product. The campaign finishes with a 'Loud Auction' where teams bid for the 10 highest ranked bids. The funds collected goes to charities our organization engages with. People in India are very excited about giving back to society and this really makes a difference.

I conduct internal communication refresher workshops with other IC practitioners for 'power' users of communication.

“ India has a very dynamic talent market. There are multiple opportunities for a job seeker, and people change jobs very easily. As a result, staff turnover is very high and retaining employees is a big challenge for most companies. Gaining support from leaders will be a key challenge for internal communicators in the coming years. ”

I also hold regular industry-level workshops, where I share thoughts and best practices to elevate the function in our companies. Based on the discussions we have, I think that gaining support from leaders will be a key challenge for internal communicators in the coming years. But I expect that there will be an increase in the demand for specialists in internal communications in the next five years. However, these professionals will need to bring in-depth expertise in areas such as message development, social media, crisis communication and executive communication. ■

Biography \ Aniiisu K. Verghese

Aniiisu K Verghese is an internal communication expert, career coach and author. He managed key internal communication assignments with Fidelity, Accenture and i-flex solutions including corporate intranets, company employee newsletters, internal brand campaigns and CSR communication. Aniiisu blogs at Intrascope (www.intrascope.wordpress.com) and has recently published a book entitled *Internal Communications: Insights, Practices and Models* (Sage Publications, 2012).

He can be reached at [@aniiisu](https://twitter.com/aniiisu) on Twitter and at intrascope@yahoo.com.

Let your personality speak for you

Wedge Black isn't naturally a 'people person' but in his time as an internal communicator, he's developed a sense of what people care about. He loathes dull communications and tick-box engagement activities, preferring to read material that gets to the heart of the matter, written by people who care.

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Everything is so boring. When was the last time you felt truly interested in something that wasn't scandalous or bad news?

Certainly, the digital world is full of people sharing links to useful articles, and there are beautiful apps for browsing curated content on your mobile device. But do we see this behaviour inside the firewall?

I'm guessing there are few subjects that get shared internally with any fervour. I think part of the problem with business news, project updates and revised HR instructions, is the bland forthrightness of them all. Audiences respond to clear concepts, and I admire clean and simple language, but the usual process of drafting communications seems to squeeze out the crafting part.

Writing is a craft; message shaping by committee may insure against error, but quashes any spark of personality.

Working alongside HR for a large utility company, I noticed that every HR communication began with '*We are pleased to announce*'. This meant that the intranet news archive was full of articles that all looked the same on first scan. If you have

to say '*This is an announcement*' and say you're pleased, something is wrong with the clarity of your writing. Good news should be obvious from the context and tone. It was my pleasure to re-shape these supposed announcements into news articles that didn't read as if written by committee.

We need more personable communications; we need more personality to shine light on what's interesting and relevant. The company does not write news articles and procedures, people do. If readers can detect a human presence in our communiqués, they're more likely to take note and do more than scan read the opening words of each paragraph.

This is where leaders can create real impact by expressing their thoughts in more personal ways.

People want personable leaders

In all but the very largest enterprises, employees expect to know how top leaders feel about performance, service and the company's goals.

I'm not encouraging leaders to let go of their self-control and mental acuity. I mean to highlight that motivation and engagement stem from how a person feels about things, and what they believe.

Leaders can shape beliefs by actively demonstrating the values of the organisation. A leader's actions have to be congruent with the company's values.

Leaders can inspire loyalty and motivation by their emotional commitment to the things that matter to staff and customers.

A policy isn't enough; making board room minutes available isn't enough. People want to hear exactly what high-profile leaders think about the organisation's progress and direction, and hear how they feel about the importance of that direction.

Ghostwriting for the CEO of a FTSE 100 company, I was trusted to get the tone right for good and bad news. Obviously, the content came from the CEO and my ideas were reviewed, but the point was to get the tone appropriate for the CEO's personality, the subject matter and the culture. In other enterprises, I've worked with directors who didn't often write for the intranet and left company news to HR.

Sharing thoughts may help people understand the 'what' and the 'how' of

corporate strategy and tactics, but leaders who can share how they feel about an important matter demonstrate the 'why'. If people are on board with the reasons behind a decision, they'll work out the 'what' and 'how' for themselves.

Ending a speech or written update with *'I feel this is very important'* doesn't count as sharing the emotional drivers of the matter. People expect to see the emotion, and that's all about style.

Voice and tone

The personality of the author or speaker shines through the 'voice' of the material. Audiences should be able to recognise who is speaking; it's about allowing idiosyncrasies and personal phrases to stand. ▶

Editors and communicators may seek ‘word efficiency’ and follow short sentence and ‘one topic per para’ rules (which are valuable guides) but at what cost? If slavish adherence to rules irons out the personality then the piece is going to land flatly with the audiences.

I appreciate when an editor removes over-used words like ‘ensure’, but I worry when expressive vocabulary is banned for the sake of simplicity and apparent ‘reading age’ of the audience. Jargon is to be avoided, but are we not allowed to use ‘eschewed’ if it makes a lovely phrase?

The voice of a leader needs to shine through – the message can be shaped to be more explicit or details added to create better understanding, but let’s not destroy the spark that people will be drawn to.

Tone can always be beefed up or dragged down with a little copy-editing. Tone is about getting the mood right, so that the writer’s enthusiasm doesn’t clash with any concerns the readers may have. I won’t lecture communication professionals on how to talk about good news, challenges, change or problems.

Relevant but dull? Re-write!

Voice and personality are important for those everyday updates ‘from the business’ too. Every article, email, and announcement should have a person named at the end.

Those HR updates that are supposed to support the culture are going unread because they are lifeless, and the relevant points of interest are buried under bureaucratic weasel words.

It’s obvious that such top-down comms have been written by committee. The opening paragraphs are often especially grating.

A better way to announce dull but relevant matters is to have the committee or director agree the points that must be made (the substance) and then let the HR communications person shape the messages (the style) as she or he feels is best for the various audiences. Several different messages may be needed for different channels and audiences.

Context is everything, and communicators need to set the scene and demonstrate they understand the reader’s situation, but staff don’t need everything about the company spelt out in every newsletter. Owing to word-count constraints in print media, I’ve ruthlessly cut the padding from

“ We need more personality to shine light on what’s interesting and relevant. The company does not write news articles and procedures, people do. ”

whimsical rambles, and honed the article to get to the point. Tone and personality have to shine through the quality of our words, not the quantity.

Annual communications offer little challenge to the writer, and often little interest for the reader – simply because the author usually copies and pastes from last year’s article. This lazy habit misses the chance to reinvigorate the subject and reach deeper into the audience. I remember working with an author to redraft her comms to focus on benefits rather than spending too much time explaining the technical features and causes of the problem. Our fresh article became a persuasion piece, rather than a tech report, and more people took action because of it. We could track action based on the cost-saving activities our suite of articles asked people to take,

and the number of enquiries the author received.

Whatever needs communicating, we have to respect how the audience will respond, and I suggest that the days of soulless diktats are over. ■

Biography \ Wedge Black

As a digital communication specialist who doesn’t like the word ‘digital’, Wedge Black has managed several intranets in the last decade and now focuses on internal and external communications as a freelancer.

[Read more of his thoughts at Kilobox Communiqué – kilobox.net](#)

The benefits of incorporating mobile devices into your strategy

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Mark Morrell talks about the potential of mobile devices.

People have always been outside of the office space – think of sales representatives or engineers visiting customers to either repair or install something... However, mobile technology now enables you to get messages out to them quickly – something that wasn't possible in the past.

This doesn't only affect remote workers or employees who travel a lot: work is increasingly shifting towards mobile devices. By 'mobile devices', I mean laptops, tablets and smartphones – and most of the time, a combination of them.

Employees are using this technology in their everyday life and they expect to be able to do

the same at work. In the future, they won't be stepping in an office the majority of the time. They will be moving around. The traditional situation where employees were using a desktop and 'consuming' communications during specific hours of the day is over. Increasingly, they will want to share things anytime, anywhere, and to be updated instantaneously. They will work with mobile devices whether in the office or not, and sometimes with their personal devices – 'Bring your own devices' initiatives are on the rise.

So there's a whole new audience out there that internal communicators need to get to know; they sometimes feel left behind or threatened by it.

Obviously, there are some issues and risks that need addressing. But overall, I believe the benefits outweigh them.

Reputation

Some years ago, if an organisation was in the news for any reason, the communications team had to wait until the next day to start rolling out an official answer. By the time the message got to employees in the field, it was often too late. Customers had already formed an opinion on the matter.

With mobile technology, you suddenly have the ability to send real-time messages. You can share the corporate view of any media coverage very quickly – either through text, e-mail or any other sort of digital channel. So instead of hearing the news from the press and even from customers, frontline employees hear it first-hand from you and are able to share a more balanced view with customers.

Feedback

One of my clients – a mobile phone operator – has implemented a system that equips its shop staff with mobile technology and turns assistants into market researchers, routing real-time insights and data back as well as fast track issues or feedback. So if a customer brings up an issue with a new product, or if an employee comes up with an idea of how to improve client service, they can feed that back to a central team quickly using their mobile.

As with this example, retailers will empower frontline staff with smart, mobile services to transform not only the shop assistant's work but the way customers experience shopping in stores. Although the return

on investment may be difficult to measure in terms of bottom line, the impact on employee engagement is significant: you feel far better engaged when you know you can quickly influence something.

Collaboration

With mobile devices, applications are quickly emerging as an essential communication channel. Interestingly, surveys indicate that most of the time, calls or texts are not what people use their smartphones for. They use them for many other things, including apps.

Apps enable people to find and submit information very quickly. It's incredible the amount of time you can spend in large

organisations trying to find out who you need to reach out to and how. With an app, you just have to press the submit button and your request will go through to whoever is able to act upon it.

Future trends

We have reached a tipping point where more mobile devices were sold than traditional desktop PCs in 2012. In the coming years, I expect that more companies will copy the iTunes model and make a library of apps available to their employees to help them work and collaborate more effectively. Employees will start to expect to be able to use their own mobile device for work as well as organising their personal

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“ It's incredible the amount of time you can spend in large organisations trying to find out who you need to reach out to and how. With an app, you just have to press the submit button and your request will go through to whoever is able to act upon it. ”

life, which will be a challenge for people in IT and Security.

As well as being able to receive communications and respond instantly by liking, sharing, or commenting on it, employees will find it easy to start discussions, raise their own views, and enrich the existing communications channels by using their mobile devices. Internal communications will be 24/7 with mobile access driving this trend.

Which brings me to my key point: most organisations still lack a sense of direction.

Sometimes a team or a few individuals have seen the benefits and are developing things in a rather fragmented manner. In the coming years, organisations will have to build a proper mobile strategy.

This strategy needs to align with what the organisation's goals are, have a clear governance framework setting out roles and responsibilities, and have as its first priority to create a great mobile user experience that encourages people to use their mobile devices to help with their work, stay better informed and engaged, and to be more productive. ■

Biography \ Mark Morrell

After holding a number of roles in HR, employee engagement and internal communications at BT, Mark Morrell became their Intranet manager responsible for meeting the needs of over 180,000 global employees and third parties. BT's intranet was recognised by the Intranet Benchmarking Forum as one of the best globally. Mark is now an independent consultant and helps clients improve their internal communications, intranets, digital workplaces and SharePoint.

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Communicating in tough times

Remploy is facing the biggest challenge in its history. Lynne Myall talks about her experience being at the forefront of drastic changes.

Remploy was set up by the government after World War II with a view to providing training for disabled people. As a result, a series of manufacturing sites opened throughout the UK from 1946 onwards, eventually amounting to a total of more than 90 factories with an extremely broad portfolio of activities.

Whilst these sites were initially intended to help disabled people develop professional skills before moving on to other companies, employees just stayed at Remploy. The workforce reached more than 6,000.

In 2011, the government commissioned a review of the support provided to disabled people who want to work. It was found

that most of them wanted to be integrated into society along with everyone else. The report stated that the 'sheltered employment' model was *"not the model for the 21st century"*. Based on these findings, the government decided that Remploy factories should be closed in two stages and put in place transitional arrangements to support individuals who would lose their jobs. Remploy is now going through a closure programme.

Say it as it is

Remploy has always been a commercial organisation but obviously the impact of this decision was huge. There are consequences for both the people who will be made redundant and the rest of our employees who will have to go through significant changes and deal with an uncertain future.

From a communication point of view, it's been a real challenge. We communicate

mostly face-to-face with our employees. Whenever a factory was closing, the manager – supported by an HR colleague – would run a face-to-face briefing with all of the staff.

We're also making sure that employees have one-to-ones with their managers and can ask questions. I suppose it is the value of face-to-face: making sure that you're listening to employees and finding out what information is useful for them. The key to this process is ensuring managers have the right information to answer questions.

We've had to put all the communications together: manager briefs, support leaflets telling people where they should get support from, help lines... Remploy has many different audiences so we had to make sure that we were including all the different stakeholders, including carers who would potentially need a separate message. We

“ One of our main challenges was making sure everything was produced in easy read to avoid falling into business speak. Materials needed to be clear and upfront, because the worst thing is to leave people in the dark. ”

also needed to produce alternative formats to address everyone's needs.

One of our main challenges was making sure everything was produced in easy read to avoid falling into business speak. Materials needed to be clear and upfront, because the worst thing is to leave people in the dark.

What's in it for those who stay?

At the same time, you also need to think of the employees whose jobs aren't at risk at the moment, because they are uncertain about the future too. I do believe that Remploy has a strong expertise to offer. One of our most successful activities is

our branches across the country where disabled people can get support to find work – such as coaching and CV writing skills. We've moved to being a specialist recruitment agency for disabled people. It's really growing, especially since employers – large and small – have seen the benefits of hiring disabled people. Last year, we placed 20,000 people outside of Remploy and we now have a target of 100,000 by 2020. So although the manufacturing part of our activity will disappear, our recruitment services are increasingly successful.

A consulting company is currently looking at what could become of Remploy. In

the meantime, we've introduced flexible working to try and fit in with the people's lifestyle and educational aspirations, as well as two volunteering days a year so people can support their local communities or organisations that they feel passionate about.

The idea is to tell people that in the short term it's very difficult, but in the longer term it's got to be better for everyone. By changing our operating model, we will make a better use of the money and help more people find jobs. For one person working in the factory, we can find a job for four others outside with another employer. ■

Biography \ Lynne Myall

Lynne Myall is Communications Executive at Remploy.

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Embedding a culture of communication at DENSO

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Alan Taylor explains how he developed an integrated IC function at regional level at DENSO and how he helped drive a cultural change.

DENSO is a global firm headquartered in Japan. We supply advanced automotive technology, systems and components to the world's major car makers. As part of the European HR team, I work at 'regional' level. In Europe, we employ around 14,000 people across approximately 30 locations in 15 countries. The company operates through a loose, decentralized organisation of local companies, with countless cultures and languages.

I was appointed in charge of internal communications and employee engagement about two years ago.

Although internal communication sits under the HR department, I obviously work very closely with the corporate communications team – which is responsible for external communications such as social media, media relations, trade and automotive shows.

Before I took up that position, there had been a few attempts from our regional headquarters based in Amsterdam to build a regional capability, but all of them had failed for lack of time or appropriate resources.

However, the company had reached a point where they needed to get a much clearer handle on communications in general. We were becoming more integrated as a regional business and had

to act as an independent and autonomous business region.

So there was a very clear business case to improve communications in general, and I was brought in to develop a consistent, integrated IC function at regional level.

External communications as a starting point

Interestingly, external communications were the starting point. As part of our significant expansion plans, we had ambitious recruitment targets, particularly with highly skilled engineers. Brand awareness is an issue to us: we sell internal components and technology to renowned car manufacturers, but we are not really known to society as a company. Our HR teams were telling us, we're competing with other companies for skilled engineers, but no one knows our

“ I very much believe that it’s not for a central team to be directive and to tell people that our way is the best way. Our responsibility is to find out what they currently do, what they need, and provide a value add and efficiency at a regional level. ”

business! Therefore they were turning to us to help them improve our recruitment performance and our return on investment.

The first priority was to revamp our corporate website, the external side of our brand. Although it is outside of my role, I took this opportunity to bring together the necessary energies of the business to transform what was then a seven year old corporate website in a very short period of time – around three months. There was a very pressing demand from the HR community better to promote the company through this channel: they wanted to run advertising campaigns; however, they were driving traffic to a very uncompetitive website.

This project gave me two opportunities: engaging with local companies about communications and developing a new visual identity.

Engaging with local companies

As far as local companies were concerned, the communications team was stuck in headquarters and never had face to face meetings with them about their needs, so there was a real issue around the credibility of the function – and I believe that’s where I really made a difference.

Because of other aspects of my role, I’m very much out and about in the plant. And that combination of a business necessity to talk about the contents of our website and the

cultural change to put someone out there to have that face to face dialogue with local entities was really the turning point in starting a new focus on communications in our business.

I met and engaged with management teams in most of our locations. Because our business is fragmented, it takes time to get around all of the businesses and understand their specificities, so I haven’t covered all of them yet.

I very much believe that it’s not for a regional team to be directive and to tell people that our way is the best way. Our responsibility is to find out what they currently do, what they need, and provide

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a value add and efficiency at a regional level. I think local companies have welcomed this approach because it was a gradual collaborative initiative.

Developing a visual identity

Working on our website gave me the opportunity to create a visual identity. We looked at each element and that really led us to think about internal visual themes for each area of the business. We came up with the idea of visual themes for different functions. Being culturally decentralized, we wanted to empower the local businesses, so we developed poster templates and fact sheets which could be easily tailored by them.

Suddenly, people started to see how they could use those templates for their local needs. They recognized the value

of this simple but efficient model of communication.

Looking to the next step

We have received an excellent feedback so far – it's measured by the number of demands received. In terms of our priorities in the years to come, I expect a lot of work around behavioural change: we need to get our managers to talk to their teams, to share our messages and to use our new channels. This is something that we haven't suitably addressed yet. We will also need to revisit our own organisation as a communication team to eliminate duplications and inefficiencies. I also want to develop video as a channel – we haven't got a single video explaining who we are and what we want to achieve. So we may have had a good first two years, but there was a lot more work to still be done. ■

Biography \ Alan Taylor

Alan Taylor started up his career in HR. In 2009, he joined DENSO where he held a variety of senior operational roles in HR with responsibilities including internal communications. He currently has an international remit which include designing and implementing an integrated strategy for Communications for DENSO's operations in Europe. He is also a non-executive Director at Sustainability West Midlands, providing both the Board and the operational team of this leading sustainability advisory group with support on communications, social media and HR.

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Spreading the word at the NSPCC

Head of Internal Communications
Liane Pannell explains how her team used storytelling techniques to create a sense of common purpose and enable the human voice at the NSPCC.

The NSPCC is a UK-based charity whose purpose is to help vulnerable children. When I joined the team about a year ago, we were reviewing our brand. As a charity, we rely on public donations, so enabling our 2,000 staff to have a voice was a big opportunity and we created a fresh approach to how we embed our brand internally and build external clarity through staff ambassadors.

We decided to create a three-and-a-half-hour storytelling workshop and asked every single employee to commit to attend – obviously, it took some selling to get buy-in from managers – but I focussed on understanding and addressing their departments’ needs, whether that was to have more impactful conversations

with local authorities, with donors, or with other departments. We worked hard to really show how storytelling was the key to making conversations memorable and influencing people to take action, and therefore a useful skill for everyone.

We used a ‘train the trainer’ model and recruited 80 employees from all divisions (they weren’t trainers by trade) across the UK to deliver the workshops to their local colleagues. Around 150 employees have already attended a workshop and we plan to have all 2,000 staff trained by September.

We ask people to come along with an audience in mind that they want to have a more powerful conversation with about our work. Using storytelling techniques, we help them to create powerful stories about what we do from the things they already know – something they’ve heard about our work that has moved or inspired them. The only thing that is set

in stone is the brief summary (based on our brand pillars) which people get to practise and come up with a way of making it memorable to them. The emphasis is then on the importance of listening and matching audience needs to a story about our work. This gives everyone the opportunity to think of what inspires them to work at the NSPCC and to articulate our purpose in a personal and passionate manner – to colleagues and to the outside world.

We also want these workshops to be an opportunity to break down silos, so we are careful to mix people from different parts of the organisation. They get to meet colleagues they usually don’t interact with and share stories with them whilst building a bank of their own. At the end of the session, they are asked to make a commitment to action. There’s a handout where they can say what story they commit to sharing, with whom and in what time frame. They keep a copy for themselves

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“ Instead of giving them talking points, the storytelling workshops give them an opportunity to articulate our purpose in a personal and passionate manner. ”

We survey people after they've come along, and we ask them whether they are going to tell a story to the outside world, whether a local authority, family or friends. One hundred percent said they would so far. We're now looking at how to follow up on that, but 'Spread the word' has really become our internal slogan.

Even our internal magazine is called 'Spread the Word', and is consistent with our storytelling approach, using personal stories as the spine of the publication and enabling social sharing wherever possible.

Before Christmas, we also launched our first 'Ambassador day' using our biggest fundraising product 'Letter from Santa' as a suitable centrepiece. We ask our employees to think about how they can help spread the word about it to their friends and family. We created Twitter tweet templates, Facebook status templates, HTML email templates to make it really easy for them to get the message out. It was the first time we had ever done anything like that at the NSPCC, and it

boosted employee morale – some staff even wanted to go the extra mile and get involved with fundraising, hosting bake sales and paying a pound to dress in green. According to a quick poll, 50% employees got involved in the day. We're thinking of running similar events in the summer and again at Christmas. ■

If you want to know more about the spread the word storytelling project specifically, you can also connect with Joanna Hyde, project lead, on LinkedIn.

Biography \ Liane Pannell

Liane Pannell has held senior internal communications roles in the private and charity sector, managing large scale change programmes and developing new ways to engage staff. At the NSPCC, Liane and her team have built a whole range of new internal comms channels from scratch and delivered a series of national staff conferences. The team was recognized as the 'Best in-house team' at the #insidestory Awards from CIPR Inside (www.ciprinside.co.uk).

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and swap the other one with a partner. They commit to follow up with that person within the next month, so that they can track progress.

A portion of the workshop is about understanding individual contributions and demonstrating our beliefs. We all support the same cause, but if you're not working on the frontline with children, it may be difficult to see how your work relates to the bigger picture. We want everyone to make that connection; we want them to feel important and just as confident in sharing stories.

Using Yammer to engage Gatwick Airport staff during the London 2012 Olympic Games

Caroline Thorpe shares her experience on using internal social media to inspire staff and create energy around the Olympic Games.

How did you start using Yammer?

As the UK's second busiest airport, Gatwick was responsible for welcoming thousands of passengers during the Olympic Games. The eyes of the world were on us and we had to deliver an excellent level of service, at what was already our busiest time of the year. Our CEO wanted all employees to be informed and involved in the preparations. In order to maintain a sense of celebration, recognition

and community spirit, we decided to give Yammer a big role within our channel mix.

The main reason for using Yammer was to empower all of our employees to share their own stories of the Olympic Games. It was also an opportunity for the project teams to share regular updates and to answer the questions asked by our employees in a more efficient and timely manner.

I only really started using Yammer in November 2011. At that time, 600 people had already signed up without us doing any promotion at all. We started using it as part of our channel mix and promoting it

actively. For example, we ran stories on our intranet or in our employee magazine and encouraged people to ask a question about it or to comment on it on Yammer.

So we never launched it officially – I know some companies do. We simply positioned it as a place where people could have their own voice and tell us what they thought as opposed to just being recipients of information. We asked staff volunteers to share their experience of preparing for the Olympics and Paralympics to inspire others and to create excitement around the Games. It started growing slowly from there; then the Olympics was a big turning point.▶

What are the main benefits?

One of the main drivers for using Yammer during this critical time was the ability to share photos. This was obviously a highly 'visual' event and our frontline staff could share photos and videos of the teams arriving – quicker than we could ever get an official photographer out there! For most users, being able to 'like' a picture without having to think of a clever comment made it much easier to join the conversation.

We had people from across the organisation – including our CEO, Operations Director, 24/7 security staff, engineers and terminal staff – using it, over 1,000 comments posted and 650 photos uploaded. There was no way that we could have reported as much through our traditional channels. There were so many teams arriving, so many stories to share... We could never have kept up with

it. The front line employees were doing it themselves, and they were doing a much better job! It was also more credible because it was coming from the people who were really involved in the Olympics. So for us, it was obviously an incredibly efficient way of sourcing relevant news stories that we could then share in our weekly update and on our intranet.

There are many other benefits to using Yammer. Most of our employees are not sitting at a desk and can be difficult to reach through traditional electronic channels. But they can use their personal mobiles to log into Yammer and stay connected to the business. As an IC manager, it also provides valuable insights into what your audiences are interested in or concerned about. You can't be everywhere, especially when you're a small team, and using Yammer really helps you stay on top of things.

It's also a brilliant way to encourage innovation and collect feedback. One of our engineers recently posted a comment suggesting giving a free ID pass to all the charities working with the airport. Before I could even think of who I would forward this comment to, someone from the Finance department replied saying it was a good idea and they'd look into it. A couple of days later, the team announced they were going to implement this.

Another example was when our COO came to me one day and told me he needed to present a business case for opening a staff restaurant in the North Terminal. He asked me whether we could run a poll on Yammer to see how many people would use it. Not only did we collect many positive votes, but comments also gave us feedback on what they'd want from it – regarding the opening hours or the fact that it should have hot food.

“ We had people from across the organisation – including our CEO, Operations Director, 24/7 security staff, engineers and terminal staff – using it, over 1,000 comments posted and 650 photos uploaded. There was no way that we could have reported as much through our traditional channels. ”

How does it affect your role?

With Yammer, your role changes slightly. You need to be comfortable with the fact that you won't be in control of all the stories or won't be the unique 'voice' of the organisation as is the case with traditional channels. It is your role to keep the conversation alive and to help grow its popularity among people who may not 'get it' at first. One thing I like to do is give people a little bit more if they visit Yammer – for example, we might share two great photos on the intranet, and tell people there are ten more on Yammer. This way you give people a reason to head over to Yammer.

Keep in mind that Yammer is also only one element of your channel mix. You will always need to use your other channels as they each have their own clear purpose. Plus I don't think you'll ever convince everyone to be on Yammer. And that's fine.

What tips would you give to someone getting started with Yammer?

Take the time to explain the value of using social media to your main stakeholders. Start identifying two or three topics that people want to hear about the most and go talk to the teams who can help you start an interesting conversation. Make sure that the relevant parts of the business are onboard, trained properly, and know how to make the best use of the platform. Allow some time for it to catch on: unless you're a tech savvy business where everyone is online all the time, it will take time for people to really see the benefits. So give it a good year and develop a clear plan.

You also need to recognise that not everyone is fond of social media. Don't force people into it, and address their concerns. For example, some people may

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be suspicious of these sorts of social media channels because there's a risk that the wrong information will be shared on there. I think it's important to remember that the wrong information is shared every day in businesses through word of mouth: but at least with an open forum like Yammer, you have the chance to rectify things and direct people to a reliable source of information.

What are your plans over the coming months?

After the Olympic Games, we are still using Yammer. We are still encouraging people to post pictures of new shops opening or new airport buildings going up, to ask questions and to provide feedback. It remains a great way of recognising and praising individuals for their efforts. One thing I'd like to explore – and something we are starting to look into – is to open this up to our 'extended community', that is, everyone working at Gatwick but not directly employed by us, such as airline staff and partners. ■

Biography \ Caroline Thorpe

After starting her career in a PR agency, Caroline Thorpe moved in-house working in media relations and external communications roles in Government and the public sector. Internal communications caught her eye a few years back, and she is now a Communication Manager at Gatwick Airport. Gatwick won the 'Best internal social media programme' prize at the #insidestory Awards from CIPR Inside (www.ciprinside.co.uk).

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