

MELCRUM'S

Special Report on:



Internal branding

How to create and sustain a
successful internal brand

By David Grossman, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA
dg&a



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dg&a is a boutique communications consultancy that helps leaders and teams be at their best, tell their story from the “inside-out”, and deliver measurable business results. dg&a’s client roster includes Abbott Laboratories, Cisco Systems, McDonald’s, Nielsen and Texas Instruments.

Most recently, Grossman is helping create what he calls leadercommunicators™ who unleash the power of communication to engage employees and drive performance. His methodologies in strategy development and messaging have won him accolades for bringing structure and sound discipline to the practice of communication.

His agency, which focuses on organizational consulting and strategic leadership and internal communications, was recently named 2007 Boutique Agency of the Year by *PRWeek* and was credited with “expanding and evolving its service offerings” and for how its large clients “looked to the firm to handle critical leadership issues”.

In 2006, dg&a won the Silver Anvil award from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and the Golden World Award from the International Public Relations Association (IPRA). In addition, dg&a has won numerous national and international awards.

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About this report

A successful brand starts on the inside, and when organizations get the link between their internal and external brands right, they'll notice strong business results.

This report takes you through an eight-step process for mastering internal branding efforts in your organization. You'll receive guidance on shaping your brand using a proven process, including tools, which will help you build an internal brand that resonates with employees, and mirrors your company values.

The report also shares tips and advice from case-study companies that have already built and molded their own thriving internal brand.

References

1. Keller Fay Group survey, 2006
2. American Marketing Association

INTRODUCTION

Internal branding is a complex challenge, but executed correctly, an internal branding initiative can reap great rewards for communicators and their organizations. This report contains resources that will help even the most seasoned communication professional tackle the challenge of internal branding, in any organization, at any level.

Through this report, you'll learn how to build a solid business case for internal branding – one that will help non-communicators and communication professionals alike see the link between employee engagement and the internal life of an organization's external brand. At the same time, this report will provide a proven process for building brands that resonate with employees, and achieve business results.

Why learn about internal branding?

Internal branding is a powerful new strategy to help us drive the business results our management teams want. Traditionally organizations have spent billions on external branding – the concept has been around for decades, and the business results are indisputable. Brands are a major currency of conversation: in fact, the average American mentions 56 brands in the course of a week's conversation¹. We know from years of research and business results that a brand's share of mind corresponds to a share of the collective consumer wallet.

What's not always as obvious to businesses is the relationship between their external brand, the one they spend millions in marketing dollars to build and protect, and their internal brand – the one that's experienced and brought to life by their employees. Branding starts on the inside and since the brand is ultimately defined as a promise, those who carry out and deliver on that promise are the first and most important audience.

Brands mean business – and employees embody your brand

Employee behavior as a touchpoint with your customers is incredibly important – and a negative experience will cost you more than just the opportunity of doing business with that individual. In a recent study of customer behavior, 8 percent of customers switching brands are lured away by competition; in contrast, 68 percent are turned away by an employee's indifferent attitude². And, those who have a negative experience with your brand will talk. On average, statistics indicate that every unsatisfied customer tells at least eight people about their experience. And now, those consumers can share their experiences not just with their friends and people they know personally, but with the whole world through blogs, message boards and other forms of social media.

Keep in mind, the brand promise holds true as a concept whether your end customer is another business or an individual consumer. Businesses that operate in the business-to-business (B2B) space have just as much at stake as a business-to-consumer enterprise. In many B2B industries, customer service is the true differentiator among companies. In fact, the community in which you do business

Common pitfalls of internal branding

- Thinking it's "just a logo".
- Losing sight of your messages and business goals during the iterative design process.
- Not engaging the right people at the right times to get buy-in.
- Not supporting the brand with ongoing communication.
- Failing to seek employee input.
- Neglecting to ground the logo and rallying cry in specific, meaningful actions.

may be smaller and by extension even more connected – making word of mouth all that much more important. Every touchpoint with a customer, whether business or consumer, is an opportunity to deliver on your brand promise – or not.

It stands to reason, then, that companies that are good at building their brands know they are really *managing the things people in the company do* to help fulfill the brand promise. Employees are the living embodiment of your brand, and they have the ability to make or break your brand promise at every moment, at every interaction.

We as communicators can't manage product quality or cost – but what we can do to ensure our customers are satisfied with our brand, is to help employees understand and deliver on the brand promise. That's where internal branding comes in.

INTERNAL BRANDING DEFINED

Internal branding may look different in different kinds of companies, but at the core of an internal branding strategy, it's about presenting a credible, compelling and differentiating story about your organization, product or initiative. That story drives engagement and the behavior you want, engaging talent to drive performance inside the organization. Internal branding builds brand ambassadors that deliver the brand promise, and speak out positively on behalf of the organization

It's not a logo, a "program" or tagline, and it's not about applying your external brand to internal vehicles.

It's the merger of marketing – what you SAY about your brand – and human resources – what your employees DO. An internal brand is the "glue" that binds the culture and organization together so the company can make good on its external promise. Think of it as activating your organization's DNA.

INTERNAL BRANDING AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

In the simplest terms, internal branding drives employee engagement. It helps inspire and engage employees, and connect them to your organization. Engaged employees are the ones who will deliver on your brand promise. A vision is only a vision, a goal is only a goal, a strategy is only a strategy until people act upon it. An organization's assets are untapped until people tap them – and that's when strategy becomes action that drives performance.

However, organizations don't automatically inspire employees to give beyond what's required. There needs to be a greater call to action to drive engagement. And in turn, engagement will drive business results.

According to a 2007 study³, organizations and business units with high engagement levels have 12 percent higher customer advocacy, 18 percent higher productivity, and 12 percent higher profitability than those with average engagement levels. Conversely, those with low engagement levels have 31 to 51 percent more employee turnover, 51 percent more inventory shrinkage and 62 percent more accidents than companies with average engagement levels.

Done right, internal branding promotes employee engagement – and that comes with several payoffs. For one, a strong internal brand creates and sustains strategic alignment with company goals among employees. It can help revitalize customer experience and service, build employee loyalty and maximize productivity. Internal branding can impact organizations' abilities to retain employees and attract new talent.

Above all, and most importantly in light of the customer experience data discussed earlier, internal branding instills a passion in employees to advocate on behalf of the brand, and ultimately to fulfill the brand promise.

Internal brands are rooted in the same thing external brands are: the equity of the brand and the reputation of the organization. Together, they give the whole picture of the organization – what it's about both inside and out. It's a way to activate the external brand, and bring it to life within the organization. Naturally, the internal brand shouldn't be the same as the external brand, because the audiences are different, and the outcomes you seek are different. In all cases, though, the internal brand needs to work with the external brand, and sometimes it will need to work externally as well.

Telling your story

Internal branding is about telling your story and driving the desired behaviors to deliver on your brand promise. To do that, you need to connect employees to the organization, to help them understand who you are, where you're headed, and how they fit in and contribute. You want to tell a story to instill employee pride in good work, and you want to drive the most critical behaviors that will reinforce and deliver on your brand promise.

When do you need internal branding?

How do you know when you need internal branding? Here are some questions to ask yourself. If they resonate with you, you probably need to be thinking about your internal brand.

- Do you rely on employees to deliver your brand?
- Do your employees believe in the products or services your organization offers?
- Are they standing 100 percent behind the mission of your brand?
- Do they live it?
- Are you going through a significant change in your organization?
- Do you need to rally employees around a key initiative or business priority?

References

3. Gallup 2007

HOW TO CREATE AN INTERNAL BRAND

Developing an internal brand is a strategic process, not unlike the effort and thinking that goes into developing an external brand. With the correct process and a focus on the outcome, you'll be able to develop a sound, effective internal brand.

This report outlines one approach to creating an internal brand. It's an iterative, eight-step proven model – the iBrand model (see Figure 1, below) – that's been successful with hundreds of organizations dg&a has worked with. The iBrand model is based on years of experience with what works, and what doesn't, when creating internal brands for organizations of every size, culture and industry. Of course, the process can be adapted for use within any organization, but the core principles remain the same:

1. Identify the business outcome you seek.
2. Determine where your key audiences are coming from and engage them.
3. Identify communications goals.
4. Develop core messages and test them.
5. Create an internal theme and visual identity that's grounded strategically.
6. Develop communication plan and align management.
7. Develop tools, train and communicate.
8. Evaluate.

Fig 1: dg&a's internal branding approach, ibrand



STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE BUSINESS OUTCOME YOU SEEK

This first step speaks to the need for us to be business people first and communicators second. The principle behind this step is that if we know what success looks like from a business perspective, then we can be focused on driving the expected business results.

Defining the business outcome up front helps ensure we're all focused on the same results, and that we can deliver on the vision for success. To articulate the business outcome in terms that will guide your internal branding process, you need to understand the landscape. The two most common types of internal branding drive two different outcomes – one broader, one more specific.

The outcomes can be:

1. Organization-related

- This can extend to vision and values, or culture change initiatives, resulting in broad engagement. This category is generally about furthering an emotional connection between employees and the organization.

2. Initiative-related

- In this case, the outcome and the branding are about driving specific behaviors, as they relate to an initiative or business goal within the corporation.

It's important in this step to secure alignment from the team, and from leadership, on what business outcomes you seek. Everything you do from here on will be rooted in these outcomes, and the outcome will give you the standing to make decisions and guide the project as input is given later on.

STEP 2: DETERMINE THE NEEDS OF KEY AUDIENCES

A key factor in the success of any internal branding initiative is audience involvement. Smart communicators involve key audiences in the process of building the internal brand so the audience will believe it, own it and advocate for it. We all know that people don't like it when things are "done to them", so make sure your audience's voice is reflected in the brand as you build it.

Audience involvement is also critical to understand the "reality" of the situation you face so that when you establish the messaging and branding, your words align with employees' actions. If you say one thing, and employees hear or feel something entirely different, your internal brand is going to fall flat.

Ultimately, this step is about knowing your audience and what's important to them so messages are developed with them in mind. One tool that's especially helpful is an audience mindset analysis. The key communication principle here is that "the more I know about you, the better I'm able to communicate with you".

Questions that help identify audience perceptions

- What’s keeping them up at night?
- Why do they have a particular attitude about the program?
- What concerns do they have?
- What issues are they struggling with?
- What might the skeptics say?
- What positive perceptions do they have?
- What excites them the most?
- What details or assets can we leverage?
- What are the realities of their job that may impact what they need from communication or how they get their information?

With data in hand – primary research if possible, well-informed secondary information if not – you’ll want to conduct an audience analysis. To do this, you’ll need to list and prioritize your key audiences, and then begin to articulate where each one is coming from. Figure 2, below, outlines a few ways you can segment audiences.

Once your audiences are prioritized, look at the most important two to three groups, and articulate what each one’s perceptions are regarding the topic at hand. How do they currently think about it? What do they feel, both positive and negative? (The list of questions, left, will help as you’re working on this).

Once you understand the audience’s mindset, you then need to think about what you want this audience to do as part of the specific topic. With a firm grasp of where your audience is coming from, and what you ultimately want them to think, feel and do to drive your business outcome, you can then develop your specific communication-related goals.

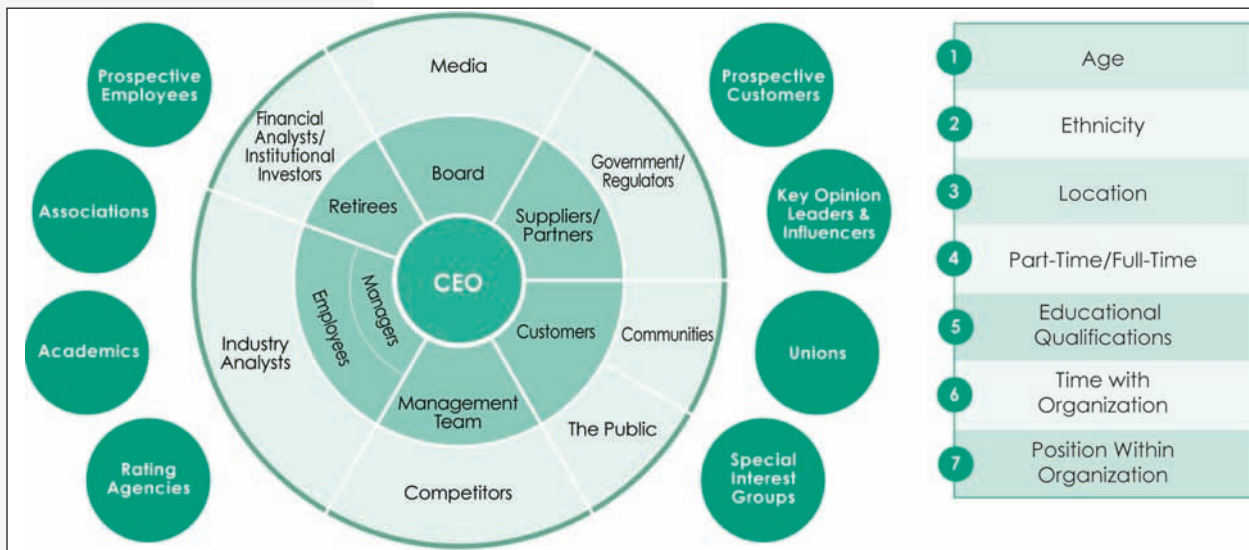
STEP 3: IDENTIFY COMMUNICATION GOALS

These are the specific goals we want this communication initiative to accomplish, and will be derived from the business outcome and audience mindset. To achieve your business outcome, given the audience’s mindset, what do you need the communication to do?

Some examples of categories for communication goals are:

- Raise awareness about a product, service, department or initiative.
- Provide target audience(s) with relevant and timely information.

Fig 2: Audience segmentation to assist with internal branding



Message maps

More information on how to use message maps to develop core messages can be found in Melcrum's Practitioner's Guide to *Essential techniques for employee engagement*.

www.melcrum.com

- Drive understanding of vision, mission, values and so on.
- Increase employee participation in initiatives or activities.
- Build support for change or calm fears about impending change.

Goals should be narrow, and "SMART" – a common approach, defined below:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**ime-bound

STEP 4: DEVELOP CORE MESSAGES AND TEST THEM

Now it's time for the heart of the process – the messages that your internal brand needs to convey. There are many approaches to messaging, and you may already have a process in place that works for you. What's important is that you take a strategic and coordinated approach to messaging in your organization, and that you develop messages that are rooted in the business outcomes and goals you're trying to achieve. Here's an overview of dg&a's messaging methodology – the **messagemap™**.

A message map is the foundation for all communications relating to an organization, or a specific project or initiative. It helps develop the core concepts behind a specific initiative or strategy up front, before trying to populate messages

Fig 3: The message map in stages



to use across a variety of tactics. The message map is developed in a facilitated session with all the key subject-matter experts at the table – this ensures alignment, and helps drill down to the core messages.

Anatomy of a message map

A message map (see Figure 3, previous page) has four distinct levels:

1. Key message or elevator speech
2. Supporting messages
3. Proof points
4. Anecdotes and illustrations

1. The Elevator Speech

The top level – or “the Elevator Speech” – is a one or two sentence message that summarizes a topic at the 40,000-foot level. This is what someone would say if they were going from floor eight to floor five in an elevator, and were asked, “What’s this key initiative about?”.

Another way to look at that elevator speech is that it should fit on the back of a business card. It needs to be short, compelling and to the point. As you can see from the above diagram, the elevator speech will be the basis for your internal brand. The brand should reflect and complement the key concepts (not necessarily the words) articulated in the elevator speech.

2. Supporting messages

The second layer of the message map – the supporting messages – help amplify the elevator speech. Supporting messages typically address five main categories:

1. What it is (a description of the topic)
2. Case for change
3. What’s happening
4. Benefits
5. Expected behaviors and actions

3. Proof points

The third layer, proof points, contains the facts and supporting information to corroborate your supporting messages. If someone asked you to “prove” your supporting message, these are the facts, figures and additional messages you would use to build your case.

4. Anecdotes and illustrations

Finally, the last layer is made up of anecdotes and stories. This is one of the most important components of the message map. This level includes the stories that help create an emotional connection with your audience by bringing messages to life and connecting the elevator speech, supporting messages and proof points.

Testing your messages

Once you’ve articulated the messages and created your message map, it’s time to test them. This is so important to the process that we recommend doing a round

When to use sub-brands

Larger companies often have an overall internal brand, but may want to create sub-brands for specific initiatives or projects. This can be done, but carefully. Guiding principles to keep in mind:

- Be careful about branding everything; your overall brand loses impact when it's surrounded by clutter.
- Sub-brands should work with master brands, and support them so that messages are clearly reinforced.
- Make sure there's a clear need for a sub-brand; at times programs can just as easily fall under the master brand.

of focus groups at this point to get your audiences' reactions first-hand. Generally, members of the functional team will "test drive" messages among their team members as well.

Once you have a completed message map, you're set to begin ideating your internal brand. First, though, you need to prioritize. Even though a good message map is only one page, an internal brand can't possibly convey everything. You'll still need to drill down to the two or three most important messages that will move audiences to action (see advice, left, for using sub-brands).

People are much more likely to listen or care about what others say if the messages are meaningful to them, or if they're interested in the messages. That's why you should only include those messages that connect to your outcome – don't clutter the communication. The fastest way to disengage folks is to overwhelm them. Use the outcomes identified in step one as a filter for the messages that should be included in your communication. Using the message map, you can easily pull the two or three points that speak to your audience and the outcome you want to achieve.

STEP 5: CREATE AN INTERNAL THEME AND VISUAL IDENTITY

At this point, you're well-informed about audience needs and mindsets, and you have a set of messages that drive to the outcome you seek. And, you know that the key players (management/leadership) are in agreement with your course. Now it's time to use all we've learned and established throughout the process to guide your theme and visual identity development.

Keep in mind, this isn't about picking wallpaper; it's about getting messages across in a strategic way.

For the ideation session itself, it's usually best to start with the theme, or rallying cry (sometimes called a tagline or slogan). An effective theme or rallying cry must be:

- Relevant to and resonate with all our audiences.
- Clearly tied to the business goal.
- An inspirational concept all audiences will want to support.
- Simple and instantly understandable – but carry many meanings.
- Memorable and unique.
- Complementary to the external brand.

At this point, you're looking for lots of ideas – don't filter them for quality yet. Ideally, at the end of the session you'll have dozens of different options (there may be several versions of the same concept). If there's not one clear favorite (and there often isn't), have participants indicate their top two or three choices, and narrow them down so that you have three to five solid options. Then, in a smaller group, analyze the top choices to determine which best represent the concepts you want to communicate, and which clearly connect to your strategy and goals.

Tests for a good theme

Here are some questions to ask to check if you're on the right track with your chosen themes:

- Is it brief? It needs to be as few words as possible, and communicate one simple idea.
- Is it specific? Avoid vague words or generalizations.
- Say it out loud! Could you use it in a speech, presentation or other communication? Could you hear others using it?

Visualizing your theme

Once you establish your brief, impactful theme, you can start to look at ways to represent it visually. Remember, the visual identity should also reinforce the messages and actions you're trying to drive through imagery, colors and typography. The two should work together to communicate your whole message.

Obviously, your visual identity should work with your external brand and existing logo. Look for simplicity, contrast and color in an eye-catching logo, and make sure it will work on various types of vehicles. Consider all the possibilities for the use of your internal brand – will it be used on posters and signage? What about on small items, such as post-it notes or stickers?

Your theme and identity can then be leveraged creatively as your communication plan is developed. A theme and identity provide consistency audiences can identify with, and will make for a cohesive communication strategy.

STEP 6: DEVELOP YOUR PLAN AND ALIGN MANAGEMENT

So now you have your internal brand, what do you do with it? At this point your next step is to develop an overall communication plan with employee needs in mind. Your research and information from steps 1 to 4 will be invaluable here, as you shape the strategies and tactics that will launch your internal brand.

As part of the plan, identify the:

- key audiences you need to reach;
- best communication vehicles and voices for communicating the message (e.g., in-person meeting, newsletter article, letter from the president and so on);
- roles and accountabilities; and
- appropriate timing.

It's also important to remember that repetition is critical to ensuring your audience receives the message and understands what's expected of them. When employees hear the same message from their supervisor (their preferred source), the CEO, through the intranet or through the grapevine, they're more likely to take notice, believe it – and most importantly – act on it.

As you build your plan, keep in mind that internal brand and messages will need to be reinforced on an ongoing basis – and applied to existing communication channels as appropriate. Figures 4 to 9 on the following pages describe some of the channels you might consider to launch your internal brand, and some tips and best practices for each channel.

Fig 4: Face-to-face meetings

| Communication Channel | Most Effective To ... | Tips & Best Practices |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Face-to-face meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate discussion regarding important conversations and topics that require immediate action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Although it takes more time to have a conversation, it often saves time and confusion in the long-run • Discuss complex or sensitive topics and tough issues • Share high-level or detailed news/updates • Ensure messages reach receivers • Connect with individuals and teams, and understand where they're coming from • Gather immediate feedback and input • Engage your audience so they feel part of the process/dialogue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use as often as possible, but never meet for the sake of meeting • Insist on an agenda and stick to it • Agree on meeting goals and what you want to accomplish up front • Respect time allotments and stick to them • Before you adjourn, ensure everyone knows their responsibilities and next steps • If appropriate, use flip charts or other tools to capture the discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This shows your audience you care about what is said and allows for people to build on each other's thoughts • Ask lots of questions and really listen to what's being said (or not) |

Fig 5: Written communication

| Communication Channel | Most Effective To ... | Tips & Best Practices |
|--|---|---|
| Written Communication (e.g. letter, memo, desk drop) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share detailed information or direction • Provide additional information on complex topics that can be confusing • Provide copies of reference materials, policies, etc. so recipients have a paper record • Reach audiences that travel frequently, have busy schedules or aren't frequently connected (e.g. senior executives, remote employees) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use primarily for individuals who don't access other communication channels frequently • Keep messages short and to-the-point • Use when additional dialogue or conversation isn't necessary • Make it visual for an easier, more memorable read |
| Email | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide directional, important and timely information to targeted audiences • Share detailed information and data • Direct the receiver to a Web site or other online sources for additional information • Keep people informed on status of topics, especially those that are changing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep messages focused and easy-to-read • Don't put anything in an email you wouldn't want publicly broadcast • Make the subject line relevant and meaningful • Use as a replacement for hard-copy memos, letters, etc. as appropriate • Keep messages concise – attach longer messages and formal reports if needed • Copy appropriate leaders so your audience knows the level of importance or urgency |

Fig 6: Voicemail and intranet communication

| Communication Channel | Most Effective To ... | Tips & Best Practices |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Voicemail | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate urgent, brief messages that require quick action • Request a same-day or next-day response • Ask simple questions that have quick responses • Reach individuals and small groups (when a meeting isn't possible) • Communicate with team members who are traveling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use if additional dialogue or conversation isn't necessary • Avoid leaving a message about numerous topics • Begin with a "headline" so the listener is prepared for the content that follows • Keep messages short and to-the-point; don't ramble • Always review an outgoing message before sending it • If you need a response, indicate what you need and by when • If more than one person is receiving the message, start by identifying the recipients |
| Intranet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information and updates that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Aren't time-sensitive ◦ Are applicable to multiple audiences • Provide access to additional tools and information • Provide detailed information or data to broad internal audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep content simple and up-to-date; consider noting when the content was last updated for credibility • Ensure the site is easy to use and navigate • Include a contact person that can provide additional information • Ensure messages align with what the public sees and hears • If your audiences don't regularly check the Intranet, send them an email with a link to the information |

Fig 7: Internet and social media channels

| Communication Channel | Most Effective To ... | Tips & Best Practices |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Internet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share information appropriate for internal and external audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep content simple and up-to-date Ensure the site is easy to use and navigate |
| Blog | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create dialogue between employees and their leadership Reach audiences that already use the Internet frequently | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define a topic for your post and stick to it Keep messages informative and timely Be authentic: blogs are a personal form of communication and require a different tone and point of view than other channels Post messages frequently Post information only after it's been communicated to key stakeholders – blogs aren't a primary communication channel Appoint someone to moderate the discussion Don't just post messages – reply to others' comments to create dialogue and an exchange of information Develop and articulate guidelines on using personal blogs to disclose company information |
| Podcast (video or audio) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share updates with people on the move (i.e. remote/traveling employees) Provide information and training on specific programs/initiatives Reach audiences that use the Internet or portable devices frequently | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use informal language Keep your message short and memorable (appeal to visual and audio senses) Build a following by releasing new podcasts regularly |

Fig 8: Company publications and surveys

| Communication Channel | Most Effective To ... | Tips & Best Practices |
|--|---|--|
| Internal publications (e.g. company newsletter) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform specific audiences of key business topics, news and updates • Build excitement for key initiatives and programs • Share tips/best practices • Highlight employees and their work for interest/relevance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use to reinforce messages that have been previously communicated elsewhere and/or are more evergreen • Provide updates that can be shared or applied broadly |
| External publications (e.g. annual report, social responsibility report, employee annual report) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information with a longer "shelf life" • Communicate messages appropriate for both internal and external audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share with employees before releasing to the public to ensure alignment • Use an overarching story or theme to put the data and messages in context for the audience |
| Notice boards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information that does not require action and is not urgent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure messages are easy to read • Avoid clutter – remove out-of-date postings regularly • Establish guidelines for postings • Ensure materials are audience appropriate |
| Employee surveys (e.g. commitment or event-based surveys, focus groups, etc.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather employee feedback and insights • Measure the effectiveness or impact of programs, initiatives, etc. • Show employees their opinion matters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember to capture individual employee views as well as the aggregate view of all respondents • Keep employees involved throughout the process – let them know what you heard and, if appropriate, what will change as a result of their feedback • Share survey results and communicate the areas of improvement on which you'll focus |

Fig 9: External media and word-of-mouth communication

| Communication Channel | Most Effective To ... | Tips & Best Practices |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| External media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce messages that impact both internal and external audiences • Build employee pride for individual or organization accomplishments • Address incorrect messages or perceptions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure alignment, always communicate with appropriate internal audiences before communicating externally |
| The grapevine | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive alignment or engagement among employees • Reinforce messages employees have heard elsewhere | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equip thought leaders who typically feed or influence the grapevine, as well as supervisors throughout the company, with messages developed based on your audience's need • Be careful not to over-script leadership, or it will be painfully obvious to employees • As much as we'd like to control it, we can't – the best bet is to ensure the right messages get out with regular frequency |

Management support

Once the communication plan is established, management must be re-engaged to validate the plan and, most importantly, ensure they are aligned on their role in communicating. It's a truism: Alignment needs to happen before communication. Even the most brilliant internal brand and supporting communication plan will fall flat without management support.

It's only once management is on board and understands how you're going to bring the brand to life that you can begin to introduce it companywide. This will ensure that they become your advocates – or champions – not only with their teams, but with all employees.

STEP 7: DEVELOP TOOLS, TRAIN AND COMMUNICATE

As communicators, we often create great tools, but the people for whom they're designed don't understand how to use them. In many cases, that's because there often isn't accountability or measurement associated with the tools. People also aren't going to admit that they don't know how to use something. We can solve this by ensuring the appropriate tools, training, accountability and measurement are in place.

Four factors that drive and affect business results

1. Tools

These can include toolkits, executive key messages, scripts and so on, all targeted to various audiences and created with audience needs and mindset as guiding

Fig 10: Factors that drive business results



Leadership communication

A special note about measuring leaders' communication effectiveness: people only do what they are accountable for because at the end of the day, their reputation and jobs are on the line.

Leaders need to know their role as leader communicators and be accountable for it. Ideally, communication should be a part of a leader's individual performance metrics so communication is seen as a natural part of the business and progress can be tracked.

principles. As you develop the tools, think specifically about what you want people to do. In the case of a new internal brand, it may be helpful to create guidelines for how the brand can be used, and where it's most effective or appropriate.

2. Training

Training in the context of internal branding can be crucial. Communication is a learned skill, and one that's not always emphasized among leaders – but it's a critical competency for leaders at all levels. Communication can be formal or informal – leaders who have good communication skills and habits can be “trained” through informal conversation or written suggestions. For those who will have the largest role in communication, it's often a good idea to consider more formal training.

3. Accountability

Accountability is driven by the members of management you enlisted support from in step 6 – they're the champions you'll need to help you move people to action. To ensure you've covered all your bases, identify accountability measures by key audience – how will each group be held accountable?

4. Measurement

Measurement is also critical to monitoring and proving your success. In this case, you will measure exactly how leaders are reacting to and delivering the messages so you can adjust strategy as necessary (see the note, left, for advice on measuring the effectiveness of leadership communication).

Without these four components, your internal brand and communication plan won't drive business results as well as you want it to.

STEP 8: EVALUATE

Evaluation is one of the most critical steps of the iBrand process. This is where “the rubber meets the road” and you determine whether your brand is a success or not.

In general, your measurement strategy should connect back to the outcome and goals you determined in steps 1 and 3. You can do this by measuring:

- overall employee engagement, commitment or satisfaction;
- understanding of messages;
- leaders and how they communicated;
- specific behavior changes; and
- business benefits or change.

It's often said that what gets measured gets done. Although it may appear overwhelming to measure the impact of internal branding and communications, the reward is worth the effort. Measurement lends credibility with an organization's employees and its leaders and is critical in ensuring communication

continues to be represented at the table as a driver of value for the business/organization.

The key to successfully measuring communication is to focus metrics on the outcome (the action you seek), not the output (how you communicate). Since the goal of internal branding is to drive action and behaviors, it's not enough to know that a message was distributed to employees. Rather, measurement needs to focus on whether the message was received, heard and acted upon.

Measurement doesn't have to be complicated, time-consuming or expensive. However, it's important to remember that when measuring the impact and effectiveness of communication, both qualitative and quantitative results are ideal, so you know both the "what" and the "why".

Take action and drive results

Measuring the impact of communications isn't enough, though. Employees often feel "over-surveyed", and don't always see results or action steps once measurement is complete, which often impacts the response rate. Once you know where you are and where employees are in relation to business goals and strategies, use the information to take action and drive results.

Scorecards⁴ are a great evaluation tool. They're an easy way to combine several metrics into an overall assessment. If you have an existing scorecard your company uses, see if you can incorporate a communication-specific line item. If not, you can also create a scorecard focused specifically on the impact the initiative has over time.

Ultimately, what you find out during measurement should take you back to the beginning, as you use feedback and results to assess how to further carry the message.

IN CONCLUSION

Internal branding is about telling your story and driving behaviors to deliver on your brand promise. The process outlined in this report gives you the strategic basis for a solid, effective internal branding campaign, and will set you up for success in your organization.

Keep in mind what's at stake – the equity of the brand and the reputation of your organization. But also, keep in mind the opportunity you have as a communicator – to leverage internal branding to differentiate your organization, product or service in ways no one else can, and ultimately to drive business results in the organization.

References

4. A balanced scorecard is a concept for measuring whether the activities of a company are meeting its objectives in terms of vision and strategy.

CASE STUDY: BAYHEALTH MEDICAL CENTER

Speaking with “one voice” at Bayhealth Medical Center

Bayhealth Medical Center – the second-largest healthcare system in Delaware, US – was formed from a merger of two established hospitals. Given the marriage of two cultures through the merger, management realized the organization needed to speak better with “one voice” about its mission, vision, values, the leadership behaviors that were critical to the culture, and how each staff member could contribute to the organization’s growth and success, all while appreciating the differences between the hospitals.

Management knew creating a new culture was a long-term effort – so they partnered with dg&a to involve and engage key stakeholders in answering fundamental questions and have a hand in delivering a solution. Key elements of the strategic approach included:

1. Aligning management first, then equipping supervisors with the information they need to align and motivate staff.
2. Defining messages in context of the re-organization, and the cultures and personalities of the individual hospitals.
3. Putting a “human face” on Bayhealth’s mission, values and behaviors through a strong internal brand created using the iBrand eight-step process.

Along the way, management found out much more than just their key messages; they learned things they could do to better manage their organization. Beyond several policy changes and easy fixes, the work led to an internal communication plan with strategic messages and tools to energize, involve and align “many faces” with “one mission.”

Identifying outcomes

Given the desired outcome of helping the organization speak with one voice about its mission, vision, and values, the next step was research and audience analysis.

Who are we talking to, and what do they think?

Primary research included a survey, interviews and focus groups. Individual interviews with 12 senior management, board and community members indicated that merger issues remained, including a lack of alignment with the hospital’s direction and lack of appreciation of differences between the two hospitals. We drafted a set of initial messages based on the information gathered during the interviews (i.e. mission, key components, behaviors and values) to test in focus groups.

Measurable communication goals

With an understanding of the landscape, Bayhealth was able to set five specific communication goals:

1. 85 percent of staff understand all key messages.
2. 75 percent of staff understand Bayhealth mission.
3. 75 percent of staff understand Bayhealth vision.
4. 75 percent of staff understand Bayhealth behaviors.
5. 75 percent of staff understand their role in helping achieve the mission.

CASE STUDY CONTINUED:

Bayhealth Medical Center

Speaking with “one voice” at Bayhealth Medical Center

Messages that resonate

Focus groups were conducted to validate messaging and provide fodder for the theme development. Feedback showed staff thought and spoke differently about Bayhealth, especially in terms of mission and values. For the first time, staff wrestled with the issue of whether it's okay to have separate personalities at each hospital, but the same culture overall. All shared a sense of pride and seemed to want the same thing – for Bayhealth to provide the best community healthcare services. This unifying theme formed the basis of the messages. Finally, interviews with the communications team corroborated a need for a core set of messages for the organization and validated the theme.

“A corresponding visual identity was developed that showcased the ‘many faces’ of Bayhealth, and the brand was applied throughout the subsequent communication campaign.”

Many Faces. One Mission.

Building on the insights gathered in steps 1-4, the internal brand developed clearly articulated the Bayhealth messages under the theme “Many Faces, One Mission”. The theme represented the diversity of identities within the organization, but emphasized the universal desire to provide the best community healthcare services – a desire that united all Bayhealth employees. A corresponding visual identity was developed that showcased the “many faces” of Bayhealth, and the brand was applied throughout the subsequent communication campaign.

Alignment is critical

The launch plan shared ways to deliver the messages in the most meaningful ways for staff. Senior management then approved the messages and launch plan with its corresponding suite of internal tools for bringing the messages to life within the organization. To further build alignment and support, upper management and supervisors were invited to a meeting to learn about the new messages and how they were developed. This meeting helped ensure alignment and understanding in their role as they reinforced the messages with staff and actively demonstrated the values and behaviors.

Bring the message to life

The centerpiece of the launch plan was a vision brochure that clearly articulated the Bayhealth messages, and used personal stories of staff, volunteers and patients to put a face on Bayhealth's values. The brochure included a pocket card with the key messages, as well as a response card employees could send to the CEO with feedback on what they read. In addition, supervisors received a toolkit that included the brochure, key messages for different audiences, Bayhealth background, listing of facilities, overview of services, important facts/figures and graphic standards.

The vision brochure was mailed to each employee's home so it would stand out from other materials received at the office. Directors held department meetings to share and further reinforce the mission and specifically discuss its relevance and applicability to their department. The materials and messages also were integrated into employee orientation programs, Bayhealth's patient service program, rewards and recognition programs and staff performance reviews.

Realize success

To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, a survey was conducted with staff to gauge awareness and understanding of the mission, behaviors and values and their role in bringing these to life. Results were up

CASE STUDY CONTINUED:

Bayhealth Medical Center

Speaking with “one voice” at Bayhealth Medical Center

across the board, with most dramatic increases in understanding of Bayhealth’s mission, values and overall messages.

For the first time, management was aligned on its key messages and understood the critical role it plays in bringing the Bayhealth vision to life and growing their business. As part of a strategic internal communication plan, the hospital discovered messages that resonate with their key stakeholders and unearthed issues that remained from the merger so they could finally be addressed.

Follow-up research with employees showed an understanding of key messages increased at every level, exceeding the aggressive goals set forth at the beginning of the project. In fact, the program surpassed every goal and was able to drive a 14 percent increase in staff understanding through “Many Faces. One Mission”.

The results

Having set the five specific communication goals, and having undertaken the steps identified in the iBrand model, Bayhealth achieved the following results:

1. **Objective:** 85 percent of staff understand all key messages.
Result: 90 percent understanding – 5 percent increase over goal; 14 percent overall increase.
2. **Objective:** 75 percent of staff understand Bayhealth mission.
Result: 87 percent understanding – 12 percent increase over goal; 24 percent overall increase.
3. **Objective:** 75 percent of staff understand Bayhealth vision.
Result: 87 percent understanding – 12 percent increase over goal; 24 percent overall increase.
4. **Objective:** 75 percent of staff understand Bayhealth behaviors.
Result: 79 percent understanding – 4 percent increase over goal; 16 percent overall increase.
5. **Objective:** 75 percent of staff understand their role in helping achieve the mission.
Result: 94 percent understanding – 19 percent increase over goal; 8 percent overall increase.

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