

Commbites

Occasional newsbites from Susan Walker www.commevaluation.com

Is engagement two-way?

Share some key learning points focusing on three key questions for communicators: engagement, trust and communication value

Engagement has many definitions. But it often seems one way — organisations seeking the magic formula to gain more from employees — commitment, motivation, the extra discretionary effort, call it what you will.

And they have good reason — apart from the “gut feeling” this must be good for the organisation, research identifies six key attributes that engaged employees share:

- **more productive**
- **more profitable**
- **give better customer service**
- **work safely**
- **less likely to leave**
- **go the “extra mile”**

But engagement cannot work one way — to create and maintain this relationship, organisations need to give as well as receive.

Communicators can play an active role in helping their organisations understand their part in that relationship — and how to communicate this to their people.

So what are the key drivers of engagement among the workforce?

A variety of sources seek to give the answer. Clearly engagement will vary depending on the type of organisation, role and even by age and service length.

However, looking across all the key drivers, six common areas emerge which will be important to communicate:

- **a clear, common purpose that people can identify with and be proud of**
- **how they can be involved and contribute towards that common purpose**
- **a culture of listening, both reactively for emerging issues and proactively for ideas/innovations**

- **defined paths through which they can develop their skills and abilities**
- **to line managers the crucial role they play, providing support/training when needed**
- **the value placed on each individual and team by the organisation, especially recognition from senior management**

Owners to deliver these keys to engagement include management at senior and line level, and functions like HR and customer service.

Of course these messages must be based on reality — spin never works, as politicians find daily.

So communicators need to communicate both sides of engagement model to their senior management.

Convincing them will be helped by the growing body of data which reveals the link between engagement and business success.

On one hand we complain about “information overload” but on the other, spending some time surfing the web can reveal useful information for communicators. Look at the YouTube video from mcdaniel partners on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eo8toa2FKAK> for a visual insight into engagement...

Can trust ever be regained?

Trust in senior management has never been high — but after our experiences in the past few months, can it ever be strengthened?

The subject was considered so vital it was discussed at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Falls in confidence levels and trust in CEO's and their teams were addressed during sessions looking for answers.

But even the global business leaders and politicians attending could find no easy solution, although they recognised the value of trust in relationships with the public, customers and workforce.

Recent MORI research into trust reveals the depth of this problem.

When asked who they could trust to tell the truth, the UK public put journalists at the bottom of the list, followed by politicians and ministers.

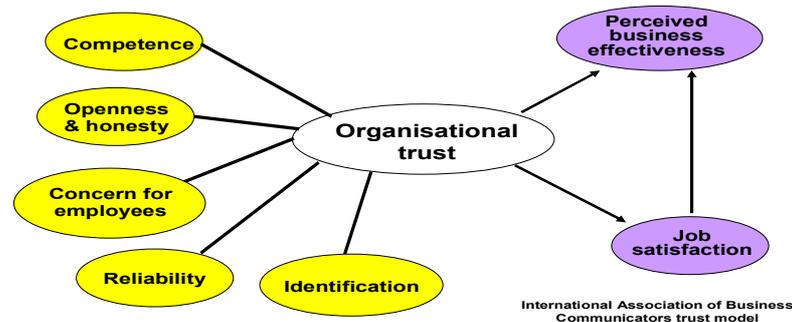
Then, in fourth place for most distrusted group, came business leaders with six in ten actively distrusting them – a figure which is likely to be even higher today.

Research from IABC (see below) gives some insight to a solution.

Organisational trust, an ingredient of business effectiveness, links with:

- **competence:** belief senior/line managers know their job
- **openness/honesty**
- organisations showing **concern for their people**
- **reliability**—confidence the organisation will do what it says
- **identification:** pride and identification with their organisation.

Drivers of trust



Is the value of internal communication proved?

Yes, it is the usual question for communicators: how can we prove our value to the organisation? The quest for this ROI is elusive. Apart from tracking the effect of a specific initiative, it is hard — and often impossible — for individual firms to relate their own communication with profitability.

However, many research studies link good communication with business success while the Sunday Times Best Companies have a strong correlation with good communication, particularly:

- *personal involvement/time/visibility of the MD/CEO*
- *opportunities/encouragement of upward communication: both questions/suggestions and ideas*
- *more use of new media such as blogs*

Look out for...

Gower Handbook of Internal Communication: comprehensive guide both to practical operational aspects plus sharing wisdom and new ideas. Susan has written the measurement chapter of the Handbook. Due to be published July 2009.

If you are interested in purchasing a copy, you can get a 35% discount on the list price of £99
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