



Tapping your most valuable network... your employees

By Catherine Ducharme

We rightly assume our external audiences aren't informed about our organizations, so we devote time and effort to developing communications programs to inform them.

The audience we tend to take for granted are the people who are committed, invested in the success of the company and who will work the hardest to achieve company goals. Your internal audiences -- your staff, your board of directors and your sales channel.

Their external interactions and internal attitudes play a key role in the success of your company and its bottom line.

Given their importance and influence, ask yourself "am I maximizing the value of these stakeholders?" All too often we make huge assumptions that they know everything there is to know about the organization. But do they?

- Do they know what your brand represents?
- Do they know how to describe the company consistently?
- Do they know how the organization differentiates itself?
- Do they know the benefits of the product you just launched?
- Do they know where, when and how the company is succeeding?

To develop your brand and increase your profile you need to equip your internal audiences to be excellent ambassadors. They need to be involved, informed and encouraged to talk up the company within their networks. Without internal communications programs that provide context, strategies, messages and updates, you are failing to take advantage of the most powerful communication channels to deliver and extend your messages.

One big happy family – Your employees

Ambassadors aren't created by osmosis you need to invest in the process. Employees deliver your brand promise and carry the reputation of your organization. They network, convey messages, inform and recruit. They also drive the internal engine.

Here are six practical things you can impart to staff to ensure they have the information to be effective ambassadors.

1. Your strategic plan – let staff in on the game plan and indicate how they can contribute
2. Your brand position in the context of how branding works and how employees deliver the brand promise
3. How to succinctly, consistently and briefly describe the organization to others
4. The three key things you want external audiences to know about the organization
5. Recent successes -- bragging rights for staff to pass onto others
6. Product launches – as part of your external launch plan include an internal plan so employees can speak to and take pride in your products.

Remember your staff are your external ambassadors, for better or worse, informed or uninformed. Involving, engaging and equipping them needs to be an integral part of your employer brand communications plan.

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