

Competing on the curve

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icandiCQ at the 11th annual Melcrum Summit in London

icandiCQ strategist, Ilona Fookes, recently attended the Melcrum Summit in London. The annual Melcrum Summit connects communication leaders and professionals from across the world and a wealth of knowledge, insights and key learnings were shared with topics of discussion themed around the role of communicators in a changing workforce and how internal communication needs to be re-engineered for agility, productivity and impact.



Interestingly, as South Africans, we easily think we're 'behind' and that we need to 'catch up' with what our fellow communicators across the shores are doing. Fact is our challenges and focus areas are the same - lack of clear strategic narrative as a barrier to implementing a communication strategy, the usual budget and resource constraints and the issue of developing the right mix of skills within internal communication as a profession. Makes sense that we face the same challenges, in this globally connected world.

Ilona also attended the pre-conference workshop which focused on a diagnostic tool that measures the importance and performance of IC in an organisation. Melcrum has developed this powerful tool which provides communicators and senior leaders with a 'health check' on communication and where areas for improvement lie.

The workshop also addressed measurement and communication audits. Having done a number of communication audits in the past for companies that include Nedbank (where we have been an [internal communication partner](#) for a number of years) Old Mutual, Nestle, DBSA and [PwC](#), icandiCQ is pleased to report that their methodologies align to global best practice.

Following measurement, it's clear that integrated reporting is a strong focus area - it's good to measure, but as a function communicators need to start reporting effectively to secure their place around the boardroom table.

The ROI debate was also a talking point at the workshop. [Here's an interesting debate to look at](#). Which side of the fence do you sit on? At icandiCQ, we believe measuring ROI on internal communication has its place, but should be used selectively and not as a measurement practice across every activity and initiative.

Key themes and insights from the Summit

According to Kjaer Global, the future workplace will see us focusing on communicating within a cloud culture where output and ideas are rewarded, where we're catering for the global citizen and where a brand's worth will depend on how it engages with the world - a 4P (people, planet, pleasure, profit) bottom line will be the norm.

The line between internal and external is blurring and it's great to see this in action at GE, where an interesting case study was presented that showed how employees created the strategic narrative and how this is echoed in the company's external brand positioning. As a brand consultancy, icandiCQ specialises in building brands from the inside out - and blurring the line between internal and external brand engagement is what we believe in and do best.

The conference also addressed topics on how to use data to shift from output to outcome, strategic change and honest conversations with leadership and how video should change to cater for the YouTube generation.

Another interesting case study from Pfizer illustrated how IC's role during change is to be a facilitator of change rather than just a messenger.

A presentation by Benedikt Benenati, communication director at Kingfisher, highlighted that IC models should create a culture where people can connect horizontally not vertically; working, learning and changing together.

Marks & Spencer showcased how they drive engagement through their Plan A sustainability programme. What stood out, and supported a common theme across the conference, is the way in which the programme integrates communication across all audiences - employees, clients, suppliers and shareholders.

The case study also highlighted the importance of social capital and the expectation employees have for companies to contribute to a better world, as a key driver to engagement in the value driven experience of the future (which aligned to futurist, Kjaer, trend forecast).

Royal Bank of Scotland shared how they established a centre of excellence to improve communication and marketing as a function in the business. They highlighted that IC's role has evolved to becoming a networker and partner in the organisation. IC is the great connector. By refocusing and building capabilities in communication and marketing, they have opened channels of communication that support dialogue, improve engagement and have created a clear line of sight between employees and strategy.

This case study also illustrated that it is clear the IC function is changing - another common theme. As communicators we need to move from just being an implementer to being a trusted advisor who helps shape strategy.

Syngenta, a global agri business across 90 countries, demonstrated, it is possible for IC to be an integrated function that partners with leaders to drive change, connects employees' contribution to strategy, develop communication as a core leadership capability, shape the culture, drive integrated ways of working and build the brand. They have repositioned IC to prepare for a future, where internal and external will be synonymous, where controlled communication moves to open collaborative discussion, where IC will be from all to all, where leaders who can't communicate effectively won't be leaders and where IC will partner with senior leaders on internal and external communication.

Zühlke, Chief Knowledge Officer, Jorg Dirbach, shared how the company has used Yammer to make knowledge management social. By integrating knowledge and information exchange, they've created a platform for enterprise collaboration.

An interesting discussion about engagement highlighted that collaboration is dependent on having the right tools and technology combined with cultural readiness.

Finally, a compelling presentation by RSA, one of the major insurance groups in Europe, focused on engagement and how they moved the organisation from being disengaged to the most engaged insurance company globally according to Gallup. They did this by implementing an engagement strategy that ticked the following 8 steps to engagement "heaven":

- Board level advocacy: sell ideas to leaders by supporting opinion with data
- Hold leaders accountable
- Bottle and share best practice: regular idea exchange
- Celebrate the best
- Support leaders who score low in communication effectiveness
- Fix big issues
- Emotional connection: don't make people feel like they're going through a process
- Alignment (between strategy and internal and external)

Commenting on the conference, Ilona said, 'The Melcrum Summit has provided a lot of food for thought and a comment that has stuck with me is that the biggest barrier to change and innovation is that we don't take time to THINK. This conference

provided the platform for thinking, sharing and discussion. I am excited to share these learnings with our clients so that we can work together to shift communication to compete on the curve and make it more agile, outcomes-based and impactful.'

If you would like to have a meaningful conversation about re-engineering internal communication in your organisation or for more in-depth feedback from the conference, contact icandiCQ. Email kim@icandicq.co.za or call 011 234 8384.

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