

Employee engagement challenges in 2011



By [Daniel Munslow](#)

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Engage. Educate. Enrich. That's a powerful three-word mantra for internal communications in 2011. The role of corporate communication has become more important than ever, with an era of new possibilities and challenges to engage workforces.

In the past, communication was largely driven by output and the amount of information in the business. Now, communicators are challenged to find more creative and impact-driven methods of proving engagement. Now, in 2011, corporate communicators and executives need to take stock of the toll the last two years have had on their workforce.

The question is simple: How engaged is your workforce? The answer, sadly, is not as simple.

Slip easily down the list of priorities

Employee engagement can easily slip down the list of priorities during tough economic times. It could be because of restructuring, shrinking budgets, retrenchments, M&As, or simply because your organisation doesn't believe that internal communication is important.

Therefore, internal communicators need to look at implementing cost-effective and sustainable engagement initiatives that can last throughout the year and deliver meaningful impact on the business. They also need to spend more time developing leaders and employer as brands within the business to cultivate better engagement and a more robust culture of communication.

Measuring the levels of engagement has never been more important, as most companies have experienced a loss of trust and credibility in the eyes of their staff. Meaningful measurement can then be used to formulate more effective strategies based on fact, as opposed to assumptions.

Financial impact and performance are probably among the most critical and difficult to communicate to employees, and many organisations are failing to communicate these strategies and responsibilities. It is therefore not surprising that large numbers of employees are currently disconnected from their companies, creating a danger of trapped staff. This correlates directly back to performance and to the bottom line!

Ensure talented individuals are ready

What communicators should be striving for this year is to ensure that talented individuals are ready to accept new

opportunities as the job market recovers and the scope of responsibilities increases.

Research from 2010 showed that 80% of managers across a variety of companies believed that staff was aligned to the organisational direction, yet 80% of staff said management didn't know what was going on across the organisation. Trust levels in senior management across multiple countries is at a low point - with only about 20% of employees believing in their leaders.

2011 should be a year to change this! Engaged employees are more productive and, as a result, can make more money for the company. More importantly, as employees are the creators of customers' brand experiences, engaged employees are better at retaining loyalty and shaping a positive relationship between the brand and its stakeholders.

In order to effectively deliver the company's business objectives, which are usually encapsulated in the mission statement, employees need to live the values and behaviours of the organisation. This information should be reinforced on a regular basis throughout the year, demonstrating a company's ongoing commitment to the ethos and way in which services are delivered.

Constitute a small percentage

Engaged employees, in most companies, constitute a small percentage of staff - those that are genuinely committed to quality and growth. Gallup research shows that only 29% of employees are actively engaged in their jobs (they believe in the company and will likely stay), 54% are not-engaged (are accessible or at risk - when something comes along, they will take it), and 17% are actively-disengaged (they are trapped, and will proactively undermine the company while there). The latter two make up 71% of a company's workforce!

These numbers have not taken into account the turmoil of the last two years, and could see even higher numbers among the disengaged staff.

It is the responsibility of corporate communication, in conjunction with other departments, to ensure engagement. Globally, it is communicators that are being held accountable for true cultural engagement in the workplace. 2011 represents a great opportunity to realign employees with your brand and encourage them to remain committed to your business objectives.

ABOUT DANIEL MUNSLOW

Daniel Munslow is the owner and founder of MOC Consulting and former director on the International Association of Business Communicators' International Executive Board. He has 16 years' experience in business communication consulting. He has worked across Africa, as well as in the Middle East, the US, Europe, and AsiaPac.

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