Communications Reflect Your Strategy

Beacon To Your Business Success

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The biggest problem with our business in our society, in a capsule sentence:

People with one set of experiences, values, wants and perceptions make mis-targeted attempts to communicate with others in trying to get what they want and need.

Success is just in front of our faces. Yet, we often fail to see it coming. Too many companies live with their heads in the sand. Many go down into defeat because it was never on their radar to change.

One of the biggest cop-outs that businesses in denial use is the term Messaging. They say, "We're in the right business. We only need to improve our messaging." That's a rationalization to avoid confronting key strategic issues.

7 Biggest Communication Obstacles:

1. Lack of people skills, manners
2. Wrong facts
3. Denial-avoidance of the real issues
4. Non-communication
5. Saying the wrong things at the wrong times, for the wrong reasons
6. Failure to pick up subtle clues
7. Failure to master communication as an art

7 Levels of Communicating:

1. Sending out messages we wish-need to communicate.
2. Sending messages which are intended for the listener.
3. Communicating with many people at the same time.
4. Eliciting feedback from audiences.
5. Two-way communication process.
6. Adapting and improving communications with experience.
7. Developing communications as a vital tool of business and life.

Lack of communication is symptomatic of fear, which is the biggest handicap for any company. Because of fear, productivity suffers, turnover increases and profitability drops. There are four main fears in the business environment:

- Reprisal. This includes disciplining, termination, transfer to an undesirable position. When employees fear reprisal, more effort is spent on affixing blame to others than achieving pro-active progress.
- Communication. Rather than risk going out on a limb, employees either don't learn or use their communication skills. This stymies employees' professional development and hampers company productivity.

- Not knowing. Rather than admit areas where information is lacking, employees often cover up, disseminating erroneous data, which comes back to hurt others. The wise employee has the building of knowledge a part of their career path...sharing with others what we most recently and most effectively learn.
- Change. Managers and employees with the most to lose are most fearful of change. Their biggest fear is the unknown. Research shows that 90% of change is good. If people knew how beneficial that change is, they would not fight it so much.
- Each member of the organization should understand and covet the position they play. It is just as important how, when and why we communicate with each other:
- Shows that the company is a seamless concept...an integrated team working for the good of customers.
- Indicates sophistication by each representative...that every team player knows how to utilize each other for mutual benefit.
- Reminds customers that the company is detail-focused and quality-oriented...with an eye toward continually improving.
- Underscores how internal communications are comparable to the way we will interface with customers.

Pictures Convey Impressions, Symbolic of Corporate Culture.

One of the hottest and most accessible vehicles is the photograph. With cameras now on phones, people are snapping more pictures than ever before. Some get distributed on the internet, through social media and in direct transfer to friends.

This resurgence in photography comes after a conversion of the industry from film to digital. Photography is presently at an all-time high in terms of societal impact. The irony is that its principal corporate contributor (Eastman Kodak) fell by the wayside, a victim of changing technologies. The same fate had fallen the electronics industry, whose innovator (the Thomas Edison Electric Company) fell behind others in leading the trends and usage.

Photographs convey thoughts, ideas and experiences. Hopefully, their usages represent thoughtful communications. Organizations can see photography as a boon to their business, if utilized properly.

Every business person and company needs a website and social media presence. Photographs convey what you're doing new. They're indicative of the scope of your business activity.

Use photography to personify the company. Pictures draw relationships to the customers. Think of creative ways to show employees doing great work. Show customers as benefiting from the services that you offer.

Most companies would do well to devote a portion of its homepage to its charitable involvements. Show employees as being engaged in community activities. Promote and graphically portray your company's designated cause-related

marketing activities. Interface with outside communities tends to grow your stakeholder base.

Don't just view photography as something that everyone does. Establish company ground rules for the usage of pictures. Tie activities to customer outcomes (the tenet of Customer Focused Management).

Nourish Communications Skills

It is important to generate ideas and suggestions via writing memos, E-mail messages and internal documents. Their succinctness and regularity of issue have a direct relationship to your compensation and the company's bottom line.

Before presenting ideas to a customer or prospect, consider organizing your approach:

- Predict reasons why someone might oppose your suggestions.
- Seek out supporters, early-on.
- Determine goals. Is the objective to get the idea accepted or get credit for it?
- Understand your audience. Understand differing personality types of your audiences.
- Think of yourselves as leaders, who are good communicators.
- Listen as others amplify upon the idea, which shows their buy-in potential.
- Determine as much accuracy in others' perceptions to your ideas. Don't fool yourself or be blind-sighted to opposition.
- Throw out decoy ideas for others to shoot down, so they don't attack your core message.
- Use language that is easily understood by all. Avoid technical terms, unless you include brief definitions.
- Don't over-exaggerate in promises and predictions.
- Other pointers in effectively communicating include:
- Speak with authority.
- Make the most of face-to-face meetings, rather than through artificial barriers.
- Remember that voice inflection, eye contact and body language are more important than the words you use.
- Charts, graphs and illustrative materials make more impact for your points.
- Don't assume anything. If in doubt about their understanding, ask qualifying questions. Become a better listener.
- Sound the best on the phone that you can.
- Use humor successfully.
- Get feedback. Validate that audiences have heard your intended messages.
- Attitude is everything in effective communications.♦

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Hank Moore has advised 5,000+ client organizations, including 100 of the Fortune 500, public sector agencies, small businesses and non-profit organizations.