

BEST PRACTICES FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSIONALS: ENGAGING YOUR EMPLOYEES IN THE INFORMATION AGE



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Among the many challenges faced by organizations today, the challenge of harnessing knowledge for employees within an enterprise is certainly one of the most significant. Employees in large organizations are overwhelmed with information from multiple sources; however, the real question is whether the information that is shared with employees transfers into useable knowledge that helps employees perform in the most productive and cost-effective manner.

Internal environments are equally influenced by what's happening externally. The Web has not just revolutionized the way information is consumed *externally* but also the way employees communicate with each other *internally*. Employees are uploading content, participating in conversations across different departments and regions, and absorbing and sharing information seamlessly across boundaries.

With that said, the *means* to keep employees informed about relevant internal and external news and information spans many media types – from traditional print to digital newsletters, intranet portals, video, digital signage, and even radio.

Observing the internal practices of organizations around the world reveals how they perceive the need to disseminate news and information internally and how they utilize different tools to engage, inform, educate, and even entertain their employees.

Think Traditional Publications Are No Longer Relevant? Think Again...

While many believe that traditional print publications such as newsletters, fliers and letters are all but obsolete in the age of digital and "green" communications, some global companies are still using traditional print publications to communicate with employees, especially those who do not have regular Internet or email access.

According to Fred Leich, director of employee communications at Con Edison Electric Company, "We use a diversity of media to reach out to all employees." To meet the needs of mobile workers who are "always on the go," Con Edison publishes a one-page print newsletter called *Update*, which contains 200-250 words on a particular topic (such as an important company announcement) and is

distributed in the lobby of the company's New York headquarters.



The company also offers a traditional corporate newsletter, *The Con Edison Times*, published once a month and mailed to employees' homes. However, due to "tremendous mailing costs," Leich predicts the publication will soon be a thing of the past.

Tesco, a supermarket retail chain located in the U.K., outsources the production of its biweekly printed corporate communications newsletter, *The One*, to Headlines Corporate News, which regularly delivers internal communications for more than 40 corporate clients. Greg Sage, head of internal communications at Tesco, comments, "We want to provide all our staff with clear, honest and current information about the Tesco business. *The One* immediately engages our staff and allows us to talk to our people in a straightforward and entertaining way. We also hope it will help them to champion Tesco with customers, friends and family, as well as reinforce the Tesco values through its style, tone and content." One staff member notes that, "I like finding out about everything that's going on. It makes you realize you're part of something bigger."

Peter Doherty, managing director at Headlines, adds, "Tesco has been characteristically brave in breaking away from traditional, top-down corporate communication to talk to people on their terms. We've created a paper that's so good you'd pay for it. It's entertaining, provocative, fun to read – and at the same time delivers

essential corporate news and messages, to help people get more from their work and do a better job for Tesco and its customers."

As part of Tesco's "green" initiatives, *The One* is printed on paper sourced exclusively from sustainably managed forests and copies are recycled after use.

All the News That's Fit to Print...In Digital Format



While those companies with "outlier" employees may still feel the need to rely on print publications to move their corporate communications messaging, most global organizations

have firmly embraced digital communications to get their messaging out.

Kathleen McKenna, Verizon's vice president of global employee communications, comments, "One of the greatest challenges of reaching a global work force is ensuring employees remain connected in a rapidly changing business environment."

McKenna relies on Verizon's external communications team to help balance what employees learn about the company via mainstream media and what they hear internally. According to McKenna, "It's very beneficial for employees to understand when we're making announcements about products, what it is we're doing and the why of it. That's what I think employees are most looking for – to help them connect the dots and to find out how it ultimately affects their jobs and how they deliver services to the customer."

McKenna and her team oversee an online e-newsletter, *Update*, that is published three times a week. Thanks to the level of interactivity it allows, the company is kept abreast of any questions or issues employees may have. Story ideas often originate from comments and feedback.

"We cover the business like a beat system. I

have people on my team who are assigned to a business unit and it's their job to be out there talking to leadership and mid-level employees about what's going on in the business. We have a robust system for keeping tabs on everything and developing story ideas. We often hold stories back because we are so content-rich on a particular issue," McKenna points out.

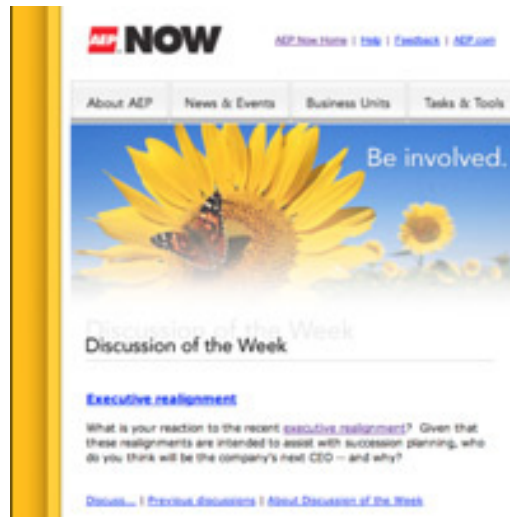
Communications Online, Available All the Time

Many global enterprises have developed an online website presence (intranet) specifically for employee communications, including breaking company news and announcements, compensation and benefits information, corporate policies and procedures, and interactive media.

For its global Social Intranet Study 2011, intranet and Web consulting firm Prescient Digital Media surveyed 1,400 companies of all types and sizes. Summarizing the results, Prescient's president, Toby Ward, highlighted the four most prominent features on corporate intranets:

1. Employee directories and personnel information
2. Information on HR policies and compensation/benefits
3. Corporate news and industry news
4. Cafeteria menus

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At American Electric Power, which has 20,000 employees in approximately 500 offices around the U.S., Intranet Strategy Manager William Amurgis and Senior Interactive Designer Joshua McClurg-Genevese knew they needed something that would “connect people together that are far-flung” from the company’s New York headquarters.

They wanted a resource that was fresh, with an attractive, airy look and feel, Amurgis says. “We try to make sure we order things appropriately on our intranet – from the main news on top of the page to the quote of the day on the bottom.” The latter feature reinforces the point that new information is added on a daily basis. To ensure that the overall content remains fresh, everything on the front page also changes at least once a day.

The majority of stories on *AEP Now* are written by the same internal communications team that oversees the company’s print publications; the remaining stories are harvested externally, thanks to a reprint agreement set up between AEP and media outlets such as The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. In addition, employees are invited to register their reactions to news stories. Other popular features include the already mentioned quote of the day, which Amurgis manages, as well as the photograph of the day, which McClurg-Genevese oversees.

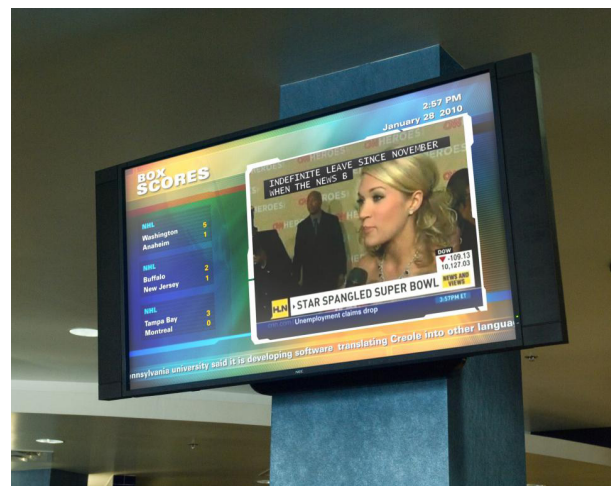
Nokia North America has also completely done away with print publications. Newsletters are drafted in an electronic HTML format which, thanks to email, can be more easily distributed. Frequency varies for each publication, but distribution typically is daily, weekly or monthly. The online global news hub runs four to five stories a day on relevant topics concerning Nokia businesses or initiatives.



Digital Signage Network – Employee Communications Delivered Via LCD Monitors

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company came up with its digital signage network as a pilot program in December 2008. One of the company’s primary goals was to establish a new and effective way to provide internal and external news and information to the company’s non-wired work force.

Many employees do not have a company-provided email address or access to the Aeronautics intranet. Instead, they rely on posted fliers, weekly meetings with their immediate supervisors, and intra-company or home mailings to remain informed about what’s happening inside the company.



To supplement these communications, the company installed eleven 46-inch LCD monitors at three separate site locations within Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company. Content on the digital signage

network is updated on a daily basis by the communications team and is broadcast via a 15-minute loop. During the first five minutes, a media window on the right side of the monitor allows viewers to watch “live” external cable news, either FOX News or CNN Headline News. The left side of the monitor displays RSS feeds that include local three-day weather forecasts, the LMT share price and Dow Jones and Nasdaq indexes, and professional sports scores. United Press International (UPI) headlines are “scrolled” along the bottom of the monitor.

Results of an employee survey confirmed wide acceptance of the digital network as an effective internal communications tool. It also demonstrated that implementing a digital signage network not only improved communications with this work force, it strengthened employee communications throughout the company. As a result, Lockheed expanded the network to additional locations and determined that the digital network needed a strong and visible brand presence, giving birth to its Velocity News Network.

Seeing is Believing with “Roving Reporter” Video

Video is fast becoming a medium for communicating with prospects, customers and employees because of its ability to both engage and inform. When Philips North America was looking for the best way to educate employees about its products while creating a sense of pride and an increased demand for new technologies, it turned to video. Philips saw video as fun and relevant, encouraging employee participation in a way that drier, more passive internal communications vehicles could not.



Philips Network News (PNN), along with its Roving Reporters, serves up a weekly global broadcast to employees every Monday. Young company managers-turned-correspondents provide employees with a “behind-the-scenes” look at product launches and other special events, with subtitles and contents customized to each region. Employee engagement has soared as a result of the transparency and better level of understanding that PNN delivers.

A Radio Newsletter?

HCL Technologies (HCLT) in India discovered that managing Gen Y employees called for an innovative approach and a new set of capabilities. According to HCLT’s CEO, Vineet Nayar, “At HCLT, we focused on one specific trust-building action – pushing the envelope of transparency. When you bring this information out in the open and make the challenges public, employees feel included.”

HCLT launched a unique medium for employee communication through its wholly owned subsidiary, HCL Comnet. Comnet Radio is the world’s first “radio newsletter,” designed to deliver the company’s internal communications. Unlike ordinary radio channels, this medium plays pre-recorded messages about the latest company happenings and news; it also provides an interactive platform for employees to communicate within the company. All this information is packaged with popular songs and played as CDs, without using air-waves.

Comnet Radio is an exclusive internal communications tool, accessible by all employees through their desktop intranet and played at breakout and canteen areas within office premises.

Filtering Out the “Noise” to Deliver What’s Relevant in the Most Resourceful Way

No matter what the messaging delivery mechanism may be, every company has a need to “filter” the noise that leads to information overload. With the amount of news and data streaming in from all angles, it can be difficult to drill down to the relevant information that needs to get out to employees.

Factiva Managed News Summaries distribute

relevant news that's ready to use, helping employees stay informed in a fraction of the time. Factiva experts work closely with clients to establish key topics, industries, companies, regions and sources to ensure the most effective news delivery program:

- Daily, weekly or monthly delivery schedules
- Multilingual – available in 15 languages
- Flexible news inputs, including RSS and Web content
- Delivery via email as a Word or HTML attachment or embedded in the email, and in BlackBerry-friendly formats
- More than 30 industry sectors

The focus of the Factiva Managed News Summaries service is on keeping recipients well-informed and at their competitive best with news selection and dissemination from a trusted source. The editorial team at Factiva:

- Selects and prioritizes content
- Produces summaries of articles in English-to-English and native-to-English for Spanish, French, German, Japanese and Chinese
- Adds attention-grabbing editorial flags to highlight news (Hot, Must Read, Blogs, etc.)
- Distributes news directly to a company's internal audiences via email with headlines and lead paragraphs that link directly to relevant articles

The underlying mission of Factiva Managed News Summaries is to ensure that employees are well-versed and well-informed to pursue new business opportunities and redirect strategy based on breaking news:

- Marketing professionals, corporate communications and PR teams can create awareness of competitor activities, industry updates and their company's coverage in the news
- Information professionals and knowledge managers can easily organize and share valuable, actionable information
- Competitive intelligence professionals can capture the most relevant news about their

company, their primary competitors and new developments in their industry

- Sales operations can extend the reach of their CRMs and SFAs, and deliver critical news and information to their sales teams and marketing departments
- Webmasters can 'push' headlines out to their constituents, driving traffic back to their intranets

Interview with Tiki Archambeau, manager of editorial products at Dow Jones

KK : How did you become associated with Factiva Managed News Summaries?

TA: In June 2007, I was recruited to launch and manage a news operation for a startup called Generate Inc. It had a flagship technology product but needed a way to gain regular customer participation. Thus, the newsletter concept was born. In April 2008, Dow Jones acquired Generate. That fall, Dow Jones's newsletter operation (called Managed News Summaries) was discovered to have overlap with the service Generate was providing. The groups merged, resulting in many changes. I am now the manager for MNS Americas operations, with some involvement in AsiaPac as well.

KK: When was the service launched?

TA: For Dow Jones, MNS was launched in 2003. For Generate, the service was launched in 2007. The cumulative portfolios offer a variety of features that meet the needs of those seeking high-end information awareness solutions.

KK: How has the feedback of customers been so far?

TA: The response has been largely positive. MNS takes pride in its very high renewal rates. Three customer quotes sum up our value fairly succinctly: *"We are still new to this process and there is always room to grow. However, the editorial team is second to none. The team has quickly adapted to our needs and interests and asks good questions about content."* *"The DJ team has been really supportive and flexible in its approach."* *"Highly responsive and enthusiastic approach; from agreeing on the final solution to the delivery of the first news communication took 24 hours without*

any issues – I like that.”

KK: In your view, how essential is this service for large organizations?

TA: Vital. In large organizations, one of the biggest obstacles is getting employees to use applications or to regularly review a central point of information, such as an intranet page. A closer look reveals that employees consistently use two tools to accomplish their jobs: browsers and email. Wise organizations know that proactive technologies are more effective than reactive or passive ones. The Managed News Summaries are proactive. They are not a novel concept, but they find qualified users and provide qualified information.

KK: Have you been able to measure the impact of this service?

TA: We have observed that new leads become generated from word-of-mouth advertising. End users share these newsletters with colleagues and friends, which is the best form of advertising there is.

KK: What is the value of the human editorial process?

TA: The true value of the human editorial process is the ability to qualify articles quickly based on a set of criteria. Compare to a Google Alert: a person sets up search criteria – presuming he or she is knowledgeable about Boolean logic – then watches as a flood of information arrives, some relevant to their needs, some not. A search for “IBM news,” for example, may produce relevant business news about IBM, but will also produce product reviews for a ThinkPad and stock prices. Human editors who respond dynamically to content trends and have the ability to understand relevance easily filter out this kind of “chatter.” An automated formula does not have that level of comprehension.

Conclusion

Sharing information with employees is a critical means of engaging staff and deriving maximum productivity. Organizations across the globe are undertaking a wide range of initiatives to manage internal and external news for their employees, using a variety of delivery mechanisms. With each initiative, information professionals must rely on

powerful search tools that can filter across a broad or a specific range of sources to deliver information that is most beneficial to employees.

About Factiva

Factiva provides managed news services to keep employees in the loop with pertinent company and industry information, enabling businesses to remain one step ahead of their competitors. Factiva experts work closely with internal communicators to establish relevant topics, regions and companies and ensure a quick and effective news delivery program. News inputs include RSS and Web content delivered daily, weekly or monthly, via email as a Word or HTML attachment. The service is multilingual and can be tailored for iPhone or BlackBerry use. To learn more, please click [here](#).