

How to communicate with global and hard-to-reach audiences: executive summary

The product of 6 months' global research, this report is the most extensive resource available on communicating with dispersed and non-wired employees. With 20 in-depth case studies and insight from some of the world's leading thinkers on internal communication, it provides all you need to overcome the issues of communicating with a global workforce. Below is a summary of the report's 4 chapters:

1: Working with national cultures

Organizations increasingly need to navigate their way around the world to succeed. The communication function also needs to be able to think global and act local, understand the corporate strategy and work out how to use communication to help people in far-flung parts of the world play their part in delivering it.

So what are the key global demographic trends that need to be made clear? What should be taken into consideration when communicating with different national cultures? How do engagement levels differ across the globe, and what should be remembered when carrying out measurement exercises in different countries? Furthermore, what are the secrets of fast, accurate and meaningful translation?

This chapter looks at:

- Demographic trends.
- Understanding national cultures.
- Practical considerations.

Case studies in this section include the benefits of having an in-house translation unit at **Nordea** and how **IBM** connects the global organization through its intranet. Fourteen expert opinion pieces are also provided, written by thought leaders including David Ferrabee, Stephen Harding, Steve King, Takeo Nishitani and Johan Siebers.

2: Communicating with hard-to-reach groups

Increasing globalization means more and more teams are working virtually. According to Nemertes Research in 2005, between 50 and 70 percent of employees now work remotely from their manager. Yet relationships with leaders are paramount for engagement.

Technological solutions

When real face-to-face communication is impossible, new technologies such as blogs, podcasts, videoconferencing and social networking can help team members connect with each other, collaborate and share ideas.

Getting back to basics

Some employee groups are hard to reach, not because of their location in the world, but the nature of their job. In these types of roles, finding even the smallest window for communication can be a challenge, and finding a channel that works means thinking creatively.

Making it two way

If even communicating the basics in this kind of environment is a challenge, genuine two-way communication, research and feedback is even trickier. But it can be achieved as the suggestions in this section demonstrate.

This chapter covers:

- Understanding the opportunities of new technology.
- Communicating where access to technology is limited.
- Improving two-way communication and team working.

The topics covered in this section's **10 case studies** include connecting a remote sales team through podcasts at **Atlanta**

Pharma, using face-to-face methods to overcome language barriers and build trust at **Volvo 3P**, communicating with pilots and service staff at **British Airways**, introducing feedback forums to make communication more engaging at **Siemens**, and global communications across an integrated supply chain at **Motorola**. Expert opinion comes from Susan Carroll, Steve King, Sally Harris and Angela Sinickas.

3: Managing consistency and alignment

Today's communicators work in complex businesses. Teams can be spread across the globe, working in matrix structures or through outsourced suppliers. Increasingly, remote workforces have little face-to-face contact with managers and sometimes little opportunity for communication at all. Large organizations are made up of a mixture of stakeholder groups, all with distinct communication needs and preferences.

The task of the communication function is to try and create consistency and alignment across all of them. All employees need to be facing in the same direction, focused on delivering the corporate strategy and behaving in line with its values. This means they need to understand the common cause they're working towards as a single company, and then be able to relate this to their own day-to-day role. This will enable them to recognize the actions they need to take personally to help the company achieve its goals.

This chapter looks at:

- Communicating a vision that is globally consistent and locally relevant.
- Practical tools for global communication.
- Communicating with outsourced teams.

Case study examples include creating communication consistency across national cultures at **Pitney Bowes**, ensuring consistency through common brand values at **Motorola**, ensuring communication meets the needs of a global sales team at **Cisco** and communication for offshoring at **Serco**. Extensive expert insight pieces come from Liz Guthridge, Bill Quirke and David Grossman.

4: Building an internal communication network

Today's complex business structures are fraught with communication risks. Inconsistent messages and timing, information overload and duplication of effort are almost inevitable to some degree. But building an effective internal communication network can help mitigate the risks.

Initially, however, there can be tension, as communicators used to freedom and autonomy in their roles look suspiciously at the central team that's trying to build the network. Striking the right balance between being supportive and just plain obstructive and bureaucratic is key.

So, does the "right balance" involve careful communication planning, seeking to integrate messages across stakeholder groups and avoid potentially damaging or embarrassing clashes of timing? Or are the days of being able to control communication long-gone? Is it in fact impossible to coordinate and plan in a complex global organization, however much one might like to?

This chapter contains case studies and advice based on practitioners' experiences of developing and running internal communication networks. Specifically, it covers:

- Building the network
- Communication planning

Best practice case studies include restructuring an internal communication network at **ABN Amro**, building a virtual communication network at **Shell**, communicating to a global workforce at **Sun Microsystems** and creating alignment in a decentralized organization at **McDonald's**. Expert advice is provided by Kathryn Yates and Bill Quirke.



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- Expert insight from some of the leading thinkers in internal communication, including **Bill Quirke, Angela Sinickas, David Grossman, Kathryn Yates** and **David Ferrabee**
- Practical advice on communicating a vision that is **globally consistent and locally relevant**

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