



Global research and training for internal communicators

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Change programs will fail if employees don't grasp the rationale

Change programs are destined to fail if employees don't understand *why* the organization is making the change, according to Melcrum's latest study into managing change communication.

In one of the 27 frank interviews with change and communication experts, published in the comprehensive new report [*Delivering successful change communication*](#), Roger D'Aprix, vice president of ROI Communication and author of *Communicating for Change*, stresses the importance of keeping the employee perspective in mind at all times. "That's one of the great failings of companies in the midst of change and all the chaos that surrounds it. People tend to forget that there are human beings on the other side."

But to create a compelling rationale for change, communicators must look outside the organization, says D'Aprix. "I firmly believe the only way you can rationalize the change is by reference to the marketplace and the forces that are driving the organization."

Communicators not linked to external aspects of the business

The problem, he continues, is that internal communication professionals are not nearly well enough linked to the external aspects of the business. "My observation is that communication people have been craft people. They've focused on the media and content they create without understanding the organization they're part of, and more particularly the marketplace. This aspect needs work and communicators must pay more attention to it."

In the report, D'Aprix summarizes the critical issues employees need to understand, particularly during continuous change, i.e. when change has become "business as usual" for the organization. Employees need to know:

1. Who is our competition?
2. What is the competition doing?
3. What choices does the customer have in dealing with us as an organization?
4. What are the customer's needs and demands?
5. What about our shareholders and the financial community – what are their needs and expectations?
6. What technological forces are affecting our organization, our products and our services?

The role of leadership emerges as a common theme

The role of leadership during change is another common theme running through the 21 case studies published in the report. Senior communicators from leading global corporations including Shell, Intel, Vodafone and Ford Motor Credit, agreed that visible leadership was crucial to keeping their change programs on track, even when the changes being communicated were unpopular.

In a case study on sustaining employee engagement during a major restructuring at Ford Motor Credit, communications director Chris Solie describes how honesty and vision from the company's leaders was key to maintaining morale and engagement. "Employees respect our CEO for giving them the hard facts and presenting them with a plan for the company's future."

"Leadership at a time like this has to be extremely visible and doing lots of face-to-face communication," agrees D'Aprix. "The good, solid leaderships do this fairly naturally. The bad ones keep it all secret and quiet, and pretend that everything is fine. That's a recipe for disaster."

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Notes for editors

[*Delivering successful change communication*](#) is Melcrum's latest report, which helps internal communication professionals understand and overcome the challenges they face when planning and implementing their change communication programs.

The four chapters of the report are:

1. The psychology of change
2. The role of internal communication
3. Supporting key stakeholders
4. Successful change in action

Delivering successful change communication includes 21 best-practice case studies from 14 leading organizations: Avaya, Ericsson, Ford Motor Credit, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, Intel, Mayo Clinic, Parclforce Worldwide, Royal & Sun Alliance, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish & Newcastle, Shell, Sun Microsystems, Visa Europe, and Vodafone

Also included are 27 in-depth interviews with international change communication thought leaders: Octavius Black, Darren Briggs, Colin Carnall, Roger D'Aprix, Linda Dulye, David Ferrabee, Jean Gomes, Gary Grates, Liz Guthridge, Christopher Hannegan, Sally Harris, Brendan McCann, Tony Quinlan, Bill Quirke, Nicholas Ranken, Robert Schaffer, Angela Sinickas, Andy Szpekman, Arnie Witchel and Kathryn Yates.

Melcrum is a research and training business with offices in London and Chicago. Founded in 1996 by Robin Crumby and Victoria Mellor, Melcrum has customers in over 90 countries. Through its global networks, Melcrum connects more than 18,000 professional communicators in sharing what works.

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