

Are Your Employees Plugged In?

As organizations become decentralized and experience increased market reach, the demand for a comprehensive internal communications program has grown in tandem. As the need for inter-office communication rises, progressive companies channel energies to ensure their core values and brand is “evangelized” throughout the organization. How are they doing this? By tying all of their internal communications into their core values and brand.

Internal (Employer) branding and communications helps employees and stakeholders (such as sponsors/ suppliers, franchise staff, external call centers, etc.) to understand the organization’s mission, vision, values, and culture. It is important for any company with multiple departments or multiple locations to have an internal branded communications strategy in place. There are many valid reasons for an internal branding communications strategy.

We have narrowed the business case need for branded internal communications to three points:

- Cost effectiveness
- Consistent messaging
- Employee engagement

Cost Effectiveness

Inter-office communications is an integral part of any organization. Organizations need to communicate with each other both within their own department and with other departments and locations. It is much more cost effective to have consistent templates, imagery and communications tools for company-wide use than it is for each person or department to develop their own look, graphics, design and messaging. It saves time and resources to have branded tools readily available.

Consistent Messaging | The Employer Brand

In order for a brand to resonate both internally and externally, the entire organization must understand the mission, vision, values and culture. It is inherent to the organization’s way of doing business – from customer service, direct marketing, to the treatment of your employees and partners. Development of an employer brand is key. A company’s employer brand needs to be tied with external branding, yet focused on the organization and individual. The employer brand has value and delivers commitment to the employees and stakeholders. Initiatives, policies and practices align with these values.

According to the U.S. Employee Engagement Survey published in Gallup Management Journal, a startling 69% of workers are either not engaged or are actively disengaged on the job. Further research indicated that approximately \$370 billion is lost annually due to lower productivity from actively disengaged workers.

— 2005 Q3 Survey, Gallup Management Journal.


Consistent messaging helps develop brand engagement, which is the process of forming an emotional and rational attachment between an individual and a brand. The attachment is built through visual, written and experiential messaging. Communication vehicles such as the new-hire orientation, a corporate newsletter, emails, training videos, intranet, blogs, etc, when branded together, generate greater employee awareness and brand engagement.

There are three major areas where brand engagement is relevant within an organization:

- HR Recruitment
- Employees
- Stakeholders

HR Recruitment

Strong internal branding that is simple, concise and visually appealing will increase interest in your company from talent you may want to hire. The medium must be appropriate for the audience and recruitment environment. We are at a point in society where an entire generation of employees has experienced computers in their lives since they were born. If a company is looking for a younger talent pool, a company's website may benefit from a design and/or content refresh. Another enhancement may involve adding an employee Blog to the HR section of the site. Branded internal communications with a fully developed employer brand will demonstrate seriousness and dedication to your prospective employees.



A company's employer brand needs to be tied with external branding, yet focused on the organization and individual.

— Spotlight Creative Team

Employees

It is important to ensure that the employer brand promised to employees is delivered upon once they are hired, as well as throughout their career with the company. When employees internalize the brand, they begin to strengthen their understanding of the meaning of the brand and how it is communicated. Supported strong employer brand has been shown to result in increased performance and decreased employee turnover.

Stakeholders

It is equally important that stakeholders understand the organization's brand and what it stands for. Employers need to make sure that their activities contribute to expressing the brand on a daily basis. Consistent, branded messaging requires ongoing internal efforts and tailored communications to the various organizations. These ongoing efforts will ensure employees and stakeholders understand what the brand promises to its customers, and help all employees to clearly understand how their actions support the overall success of the brand.

Employee Engagement

Employees who receive (and develop) consistently-branded internal communications become invested in the brand. They become “evangelists” that will promote the brand effectively and successfully. It's important to reward those that “live” the brand. The perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of those employees and stakeholders with whom the messaging resonates will become walking billboards for your brand.

Active employee engagement affects all areas of the organization, including recruitment efforts. It ultimately increases sales and even eases the burden of communications during a time of crisis such as a natural disaster, tragedy or market downturn.