

employees now have personal blogs or Facebook and Twitter accounts, companies are realizing that they are no longer in charge of the corporate message. Even if an employee is blogging or tweeting in their own personal capacity, outside their designated work hours, and from their personal device, that does not mean that their association with a company is relinquished. In contrary, both in case of positive and negative publicity, **individuals and their style of communication are affiliated with their role and position within the workplace.** In that context, employees always have to be aware that their personal reputation is interlinked with a corporate brand, and vice versa.

In the age of social media and mobile applications, some companies are more innovative than others as they seek to engage and train their employees to be better at the way they communicate. Some see this as a form of mitigating potential risks; others see it as the opportunity to convey corporate messages to an extended audience (employee's personal network). While such an approach can generate positive publicity, one (un)intentional tweet from an employee could unwittingly put a company at the heart of a media storm. In order to minimise potential conflict, a large number of employees have some form of disclaimer on their blog or twitter accounts, clarifying that opinions expressed across those channels are of a personal nature and they do not represent the company's views. Although prudent, it is naïve to think that a generic disclaimer can disassociate an individual from its employer if their external form of communication is perceived to be deceitful, racist, vulgar, xenophobic, aggressive or threatening. At the end of the day, no social media disclaimer can prevent dismissal!

Integrating social media with personal and corporate communication is only possible when a company fully understands the interplay between internal and external communications. After all, **social media and personal blogs are public-facing tools that are based on the principles of internal communication.** Recent studies suggest that social media is critical to employee engagement, as an increasing number of

individuals are proactively posting messages, pictures and videos about their work, supervisors, company products and corporate values or social responsibility. Even though some are complementary, some are less so; the fact remains that so called 'employee activists' exist and they are here to stay. As they gain numbers and strength, companies need to be prepared to facilitate the activism of these employees and channel their outputs in a positive direction.

For those enterprises that operate in different countries and in different sectors, **the issue of intercultural communication should be high on their agenda.** The aim of this form of communication is to share information across different cultures and social groups. In the process, one has to take into the account specific ethnic, religious and sociological attributes when shaping a customized message for different groups in different parts of the world. What makes this process effective is the sense of trust. **When trust exists, cultural differences may be easier to bridge and 'lost-in-translation' issues resolved.**

In order to build that trust, a company needs a coherent external communication strategy which is reflective of its internal needs and external aspirations.

Finding a balance between being professional and being interesting is difficult in communications, especially if an employee is expressing both personal and work-related views from the same social media channel. On the one hand, employees need to consider employment related issues, such as bringing their employer into disrepute in the event of hate speech, cyber bullying, defamation or even certain criminal offences. On the other hand, the employer needs to be more prudent and ensure that their IT and social media policies are both flexible and more importantly up to date. Ultimately, external communication should be adapted to the needs and interests of the recipient in order to generate the desired effect without compromising the integrity of the information.

Matrix – External Communication

Importance of External Communication in Business:

Achieving Goals	Exchange of Information	Enhancement of Employee Skills
Strategy Formulation	Making sense of it all	Facilitating Protocols
Motivating Employees	Engaging with Audience	Connection with Stakeholders
Feedback Loop	Monitoring	Internal Control Mechanisms
Risk Management	Lesson-Learned	Integrity & Trust

Internal and external communication should align
 Corporations are no longer in control of the message
 The smartest organizations are those who tailor content

How Technology has Changed Workplace Communication

- Mobile Work-from-Home
- Closer Collaboration
- Unified Communications
- Bring-Your-Own-Device

The Factors Influencing Workplace Communication

- Method of Communication
- Content
- Frequency
- Digital Skills



Components in Communication

- The Individual Sending the Message
- The Context for the Message
- The Person Receiving the Message
- The Delivery Method Chosen
- The Content of the Message

3 Levels of Problems for Communication

- The technical problem: how accurately can the message be transmitted?
- The semantic problem: how precisely is the meaning conveyed?
- The effectiveness problem: how effectively does the received meaning affect behaviour?

Keep the Message Simple, but Deep in Meaning

Source: information used in the Matrix was adapted and recombined from various sources: Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication; InterNations: Cross-Cultural Communication; and The Times 100 Business Case Studies – Communication

Additional resources Further Reading

Step 1 Please refer back to Our Code of Conduct.

Step 2 If you would like to know more about Human Rights & Business, the following external links have been selected for your reference:

CIPD: Social Media and Employee Voice

This report argues that our conceptualisation of employee voice should not be static, but rather should evolve in line with technological and social developments. In recent years, as a result of the relentless advance of social media, employee voice is evolving rapidly. The greatest difference is the shifting patterns of communication, from being one-way or two-way to being multi-directional.

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/work/technology/employee-voice-report>

International Association of Business Communicators

IABC provides a professional network to 14,000 members in over 70 countries. It serves as a vibrant resource in the fields of: corporate communications; public affairs; PR and media relations; government / community relations; and marketing.

<http://www.iabc.com/>

European Commission – External Communications Network (ECN)

The main mission of the ECN is to exchange best practices on preparation and implementation of communication plans and other communication practices.

http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/basics/management/committees/ecn/index_en.htm

Hootsuite Employee Advocacy on Social Media: How to Make it Work for Your Business

Third-party endorsements bring more customers and brand recognition. Sponsored posts reach people in your target demographic. Company-sourced social media updates help spread the word about products, services and brands. But there's another way to reach and influence people. It's an often-untapped resource that's right under our nose: employee advocacy.

<https://blog.hootsuite.com/a-6-step-guide-for-creating-an-employee-advocacy-program-for-your-business/>

Public Relations Society of America

The world's largest and foremost organization of public relations professionals. PRSA provides professional development, sets standards of excellence and acts as one of the industry's leading voices on the important business and professional issues of our time.

<http://www.prsa.org/>

Step 3 Do your own research on the Internet
