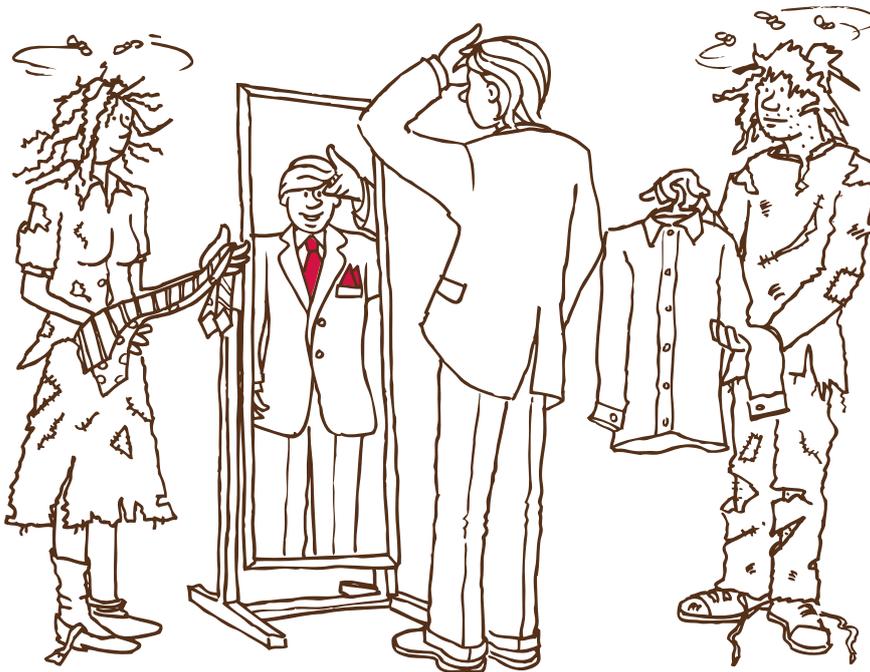


“They might as well have written ‘you’re special’ in macaroni and glitter”¹



Why treat employees like paupers, when you treat customers like princes?



There's often a gulf between the effort companies put in to communicating with their customers versus their employees. In many companies the brand is the exclusive preserve of the marketing department with their focus on the consumer while HR looks after the employees. Never the twain shall meet.

But why?

As Peter Simpson said when he was commercial director at online bank First Direct: “Why would you want to be one kind of brand to your customers and a different one to your employees?”²

It’s a proven fact that effective internal communications (i.e. clear communication with brand at its heart) helps create a happier, more loyal workforce who in turn create happy customers who keep coming back – a passionate and remarkable customer experience begins with truly passionate and remarkable employees and a working culture...and that takes effort **and** the brand.

The aim of consumer advertising is to make people feel something about a brand, to engage on an emotional level. When creating consumer communications clients and agencies alike strive to inspire consumers. We go out of our way to break new ground, coming up with new ideas, searching for ways to excite, delight or shock (sometimes all three at the same time), to make them like the brand, think about the brand and want what is being sold.

Internal communications on the other hand can sometimes feel a bit patronising, a bit of an afterthought.

Reward and recognition schemes can be a good example of this, with gimmicky ideas unconnected to the brand that rankle rather than delight.

“I understand that the company wants to show they appreciate us, but a £20 voucher for some rubbish chain store isn’t going to get those results”³.



When developing consumer communication, we devote time to crafting the advertising. Every word and meaning is pored over and examined, as we constantly seek new and clever ways to make messages cut through and resonate. Loved and nurtured, the consumer brand sparkles with pride.

Why then are employees so often communicated to in a dry, cold, purely informative tone with little consistency?

Now we’re not saying you need a creative brief and 2 weeks to send out a memo about the car park, but what we are saying is that great internal communicators try to think about their employees like customers.

Great internal communicators put brand at the heart of how they communicate with their employees.

² Mycustomer.com

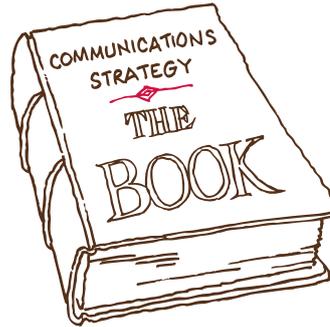
³ Officebitching.com

Here are a few ways to treat employees more like customers.

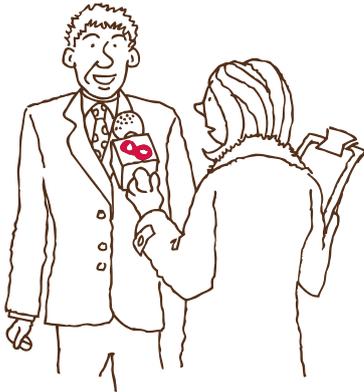


1

Have a proper internal communications strategy, not just loads of initiatives run by lots of different people across various departments. This often subjects the employee to 'initiative overload' leading to cynicism and apathy.



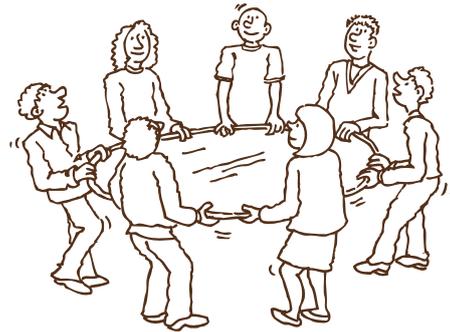
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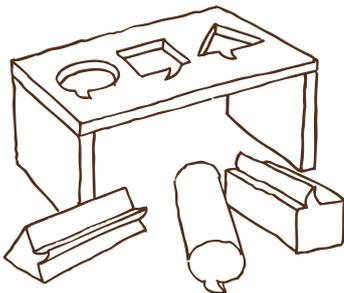
Find out what your employees think. In the same way as companies invest in consumer research to get under the skin of the people they want to talk to, forward thinking internal communicators employ a wide variety of traditional consumer tools such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups to determine the state of their employee satisfaction.

3

Communicate to employees clearly, efficiently and with respect. Create an open dialogue by engaging in informal information sharing sessions, shoot the breeze on workplace issues, celebrate the successes and heroes of the day, come together to discuss challenges and generate ideas.



4



Fit the message to your internal audience. In the same way as when talking to a consumer audience, think clearly about the target audience and then fit the message and media accordingly.

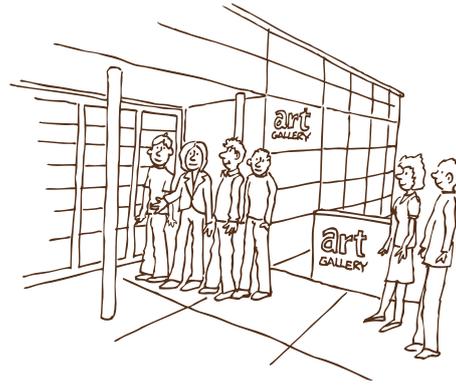
5

Create ideas and initiatives which enrich lives and make work a nice place to be. For example, give staff the day off or a lie-in on their birthday.



6

Seek to recognise and reward with freshness and relevance. Link incentive schemes directly to the brand. At Woodreed we anchor our clients' brand values to tangible measurable business actions which are then recognised and rewarded.



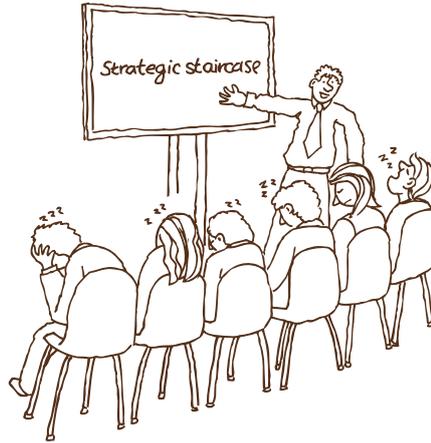
7



Communicate creatively to avoid internal communications becoming wallpaper. Put messages in unusual or surprising places.

8

Try to avoid jargon, management speak, endless acronyms and clichéd catch phrases.



9



For amazing business results allow staff to communicate and make connections with each other outside the more formal hierarchial lines through the use of social media. A large retailer launched an online community that lets employees share knowledge, best practices, frustrations, aspirations, and jokes. Companywide, turnover runs around 60 percent. Turnover among this online community? Only 8.5 percent!⁴. Woodreed has just launched a similar initiative for employees of the National Trust.

10



Reward loyalty.
Say thank you for a job well done.

⁴ Hewitt Associates

Great brands are created inside, out, with the brand experience joined up from consumer to employee, from marketing department to HR. Getting the inside right is as important as getting the outside right.

We'd be delighted to have a chat with you about ways we could help treat your staff like princes (and princesses!). Call us on 01732 424340 or email jo@woodreed.com.

We'd be really flattered if you want to use any of the material in this thought piece. The only thing we ask is that you credit us. If you decide you want to use it externally, then we'd be really grateful if you could have a little chat with us about it first.

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