# ookinalnward Issue 2 5 Reasons You Can't Ignore Dialogue Marketing® **Employee Brand Engagement**

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#### PROMOTING NEW AND FRESH **IDEAS FOR ENGAGING YOUR EMPLOYEES**



I am pleased and proud to share our second issue of Looking Inward. We launched the magazine last October to coincide with our 15th anniversary. Looking Inward is dedicated to thought leadership in internal and external branding; employee brand engagement; and companywide vision, mission and shared values. In addition, we want to promote fresh ideas for engaging your employees with relevant and important communications that ultimately improve the customer experience.

#### Gamification

In this issue we are exploring several important new topics. The feature article is on gamification and its impact on employee knowledge transfer and behavior. It was written by Whitney Faye Cook, our Account Manager in Bentonville, AR, who is a bright up-and-comer in our organization. In doing our research for this piece, we found a startling statistic.

Traditional classroom or computer-based learning has an absorption rate of 28% and a retention rate of only 4% after 6 weeks. In contrast, gamification that includes challenges and strategy has an absorption rate of 86% and a retention rate of 46%—10 times more than traditional learning methods. It begs the question why more schools and universities aren't taking advantage of this fresh and effective approach. Using distributed technology and social networks has made gamification easy and low cost. We think you will enjoy Whitney's creativity, research and innovative ideas.

#### The 3 Power Values

Next is a piece that was contributed by a close friend and affiliate partner of Inward, David Gebler, the Managing Director of Skout Group. He is the go-to authority on corporate ethics and governance. In his new book, The 3 Power Values: How Commitment, Integrity and Transparency Clear the Roadblocks to Performance, David promotes the idea that it takes the power and alignment of culture, values and transparency to successfully execute a corporate strategy. He believes that these three values should be part of the company DNA and board governance process. David provides examples of companies who are doing it right as well as those who are struggling. He has graciously agreed to provide an excerpt from his book in Looking Forward. I think you will find his ideas very stimulating.

#### **Breakthroughs in Employee Communication**

Recently during a new business exercise, we were asked to come up with a communication strategy following a difficult bankruptcy to help reestablish trust between all employee stakeholders and management. Out team came to recognize that three factors must work in unison for the strategy to be successful:

- 1. Creating core messages that are relevant and important to the employees themselves, not just to the company
- 2. Developing an honest and transparent emotional connection that establishes trust and dialogue

3. Communicating the messages using breakthrough tactics that take advantage of the emotional connection to capture employees' attention and imagination.

We were so intrigued by our findings that we decided to write an article on the topic and found several examples of companies who do it right—as well as several more who failed because they couldn't get the alignment straight. We think our idea is strong and will provide a way for companies to communicate with employees in crisis situations like deception, fraud, bad news, layoffs and bankruptcies.

#### Social Networking at Work?

Yash Chitre, Vice President and Account Director in Boston, has written a fascinating article on how companies can increase employees' engagement by giving them the freedom to tap into internal social networking sites as well as external sites like Facebook and LinkedIn. The trend is for companies to block employee access to these sites for fear that too much time is wasted socializing instead of working. Yash's premise is that social networking in the work environment creates an aura of innovation and creativity among colleagues that is stimulating and provides a sense of inclusion, fresh ideas and collaboration. He also postulates that allowing social networking is a recruitment tool that will attract more and better employees. Be sure to read his piece.

#### **Engaging Employees in Branding and Change**

We have just added a new senior member, Rick DeMarco, to our team. He is our new Managing Director for Inward on the West Coast, based out of Palo Alto. Before coming to Inward, Rick was the Director of Employee Engagement for HP. He is a renowned and much sought-after speaker in this field. Read about Rick's thoughtful ideas based on his work at HP in his article, "Employee Brand Engagement: How to Create Passionate and Inspired Employees."

Another article was written by a former client at Ericsson Data Systems, Dennis Fitzgerald, who is now the CEO of AcquistionWorks. In his piece titled "Change Initiatives Sinking? Bring Your Employees on Board," he addresses the challenge of creating change within a large organization. Often this initiative is compared to the difficulty of turning a battleship around. Yet without change, companies can grow old, outdated and obsolete. Generating employee support for—and involvement in—change is a major hurdle. Dennis discusses a proven methodology for creating change by engaging employees in the process. It's a very helpful tutorial.

#### And much more...

Toni Gemper, another bright up-and-comer in our firm, has written an article that you will enjoy on Dialogue Marketing®, our proprietary external branding methodology.

All in all, we have created a magazine that pushes the envelope on internal and external brand alignment. We welcome your thoughts and feedback. As always, if you have a topic that you would like us to consider for our next issue, please be sure to let us know!



- Social Networking On-The-Clock Productivity
- 8 Bring Your **Employees On Board**
- 10 Dialogue Marketing® **Propelling Company Performance**



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#### 5 Reasons You Can't Ignore **GAMIFICATION**



- 15 Top 10 Factors In Rolling Out a Brand **Engagement Program**
- 22 How to Create Passionate and **Inspired Employees**
- 24 The 3 Power Values

28 Employee Brand **Engagement During Crisis** 

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# CAN SOCIAL NETWORKING POSITIVELY IMPACT ON-THE-CLOCK PRODUCTIVITY?

By: Yash Chitre | Inward Strategic Consulting, Inc.

I read an article recently in *Fast Company* revealing the results of Cisco's Connected World Technology Report. According to this report: For a whole new generation of tech-savvy young professionals, having access to social media or the right smartphone in the workplace is at times more important than earning a higher salary.

#### The challenge of social media

couldn't help but think how these trends shape the internal brand of an organization and influence culture and productivity specifically. But more importantly, will these trends signal a strategic shift among employers and management for branding talent?

Let's think about this. I would imagine that, back in the late 70's and early 80's when computers became personal, no one could have predicted how we would use them to interact and become more productive professionally—and, with the advent of the Internet and email in the 90's, socially. It reminds me of the chapter in Paul Frieberger's book, Fire in the Valley, where a young Bill Gates goes to IBM in 1980 to pitch software for personal use. The Big Blue brass dismisses him, thinking "this guy is nuts." And now technology has leapfrogged management in a similar fashion—but much faster this time—onto mobile devices.

In the workplace, it has generally been frowned upon to spend time on social networks, whether on your computer or smartphone. The fear from management has been, and in many cases probably still is, that it takes time away from people getting their work done and showing results at the end of the day. Some companies even ban Facebook while allowing LinkedIn. But as the lines between these social networks become ever more blurred, it is almost a lost opportunity not to network socially and develop personally and professionally using these rich media.

Nowadays, how many businesses not only have professional LinkedIn company pages, but Facebook pages and Twitter news feeds as well? How many products are "liked" and marketed through word of mouth on Facebook walls these days? How many product launches are tweeted way before the official press release ever goes out? If you're not following, liking, sending, watching, commenting or linking, you're just not in the know anymore. For you and the employees in your organization, this could be a very bad thing for business.

#### You'll pay a price for ignoring social media

As an internal brander, I'm always thinking about ways to get employees to interact

#### **Fast Company**

"For businesses, that means adapting to this change in priorities rather than resisting it—if the Mad Men-era job force expected noon whiskeys and female secretaries, then our modernday equivalent demands Facebook and iPhones."



with their peers and grow from within their organization. It would seem, in fact, that following, liking and just plain engaging via social and professional networks on computers and mobile devices is a good use of time. Don't frown upon it—instead, encourage your employees to network and grow. And now this Fast Company article confirms the growing trend that young professionals favor access to social media on the job over salary. They are basically saying that access to social media is more important than money in their pockets! Really?

It's always a challenge for management, particularly old school, to adapt to new trends—especially those inspired by younger, tech-savvy professionals. Remember when those young engineers from Xerox Parc went to pitch the "mouse" to Xerox corporate? After a good laugh all the executives remarked, "you want Xerox to consider something called the mouse?" Never mind the mouse; it was like someone dumped a dead rat on the table.

Here's a thought: Is the current trend for social media access on the job dumping a dead rat on management's productivity

#### Encourage productive use of social media

Wow! So, instead of secretly facebooking or texting behind the copy machine, it's increasingly accepted behavior to do so openly. Is it okay for companies to encourage their employees to connect, learn and grow using social networks on mobile devices? At our firm, Inward, we think so. We even reimburse data plans and recognize high performance by awarding iPads to employees. By providing these vehicles of communication, we stay more in touch ourselves and keep our employees on the cutting edge by making them smarter, more tech savvy and always in the know.

So what do you think? Is it a good idea to encourage social networking behavior on the clock? What does your organization allow or frown upon? If they do allow it, how do they keep employees using social networks for professional, business-related reasons rather than chit-chatting with BFFs, gaming and other off-the-clock activities?

(http://www.fastcompany.com/1792349/cisco-report-half-of-young-professionals-value-social-media-access-over-salary)

#### The Cisco Report: Next-generation influence on workplace policies

#### Survey method:

• Cisco surveyed 1,400 college students aged 18 to 23 and 1,400 young professionals under the age of 30 across 14 countries.

#### **Published results:**

- "The growing use of the Internet and mobile devices in the workplace is creating a significant impact on job decisions, hiring and work-life balance."
- "The ability to use social media, mobile devices and the Internet more freely in the workplace is strong enough to influence job choice, sometimes more than salary."
- "40% of college students and 45% of young professionals would accept lowerpaying jobs if they had more access to social media, more choice in the devices they could use at work and more flexibility in working remotely."
- "More than half of the college students surveyed indicated that if an employer banned access to networks like Facebook at work, they would either not accept a job offer from them or would join and find a way to circumvent."

Source: Cisco 2011 Connected World Technology Report http://www.cisco.com/en/US/netsol/ns1120/index.html



Yash Chitre is Vice President of Consulting at Inward Strategic Consulting. Over the past ten years at Inward, Yash has advised in several consulting engagements and business development initiatives regarding branding, team alignment and social media.

# **CHANGE INITIATIVES** OUR EMPLOYEES ON BOA

By: Dennis Fitzgerald | AcquisitionWorks

Many companies face the challenge of creating change within a large organization. Often this initiative is compared to the difficulty of turning a battleship around. Yet without change, companies can become old, outdated and obsolete. Generating employee support for—and involvement in—change is a major hurdle. Here is one proven methodology for creating change by engaging employees in the process.



#### 1. Be clear about the change you want to

dentify the outcomes—the results you hope to achieve. How will you measure success? The forces requiring change are generally clear at the executive level, but poorly understood as information flows down into the organization. What are the competitive pressures, market pressures, economic or environmental pressures that require this change? Prepare a message that is clear about what and why change is necessary, but avoid the temptation to come up with specific solutions.

When company executives determine how to implement change ahead of time, it becomes their answer, their initiative. While employees may comply, they will not necessarily commit. That is hardly ideal—what you want is employee commitment to the change and engagement in the solution. Further, what works at the 30,000-foot level may not be the right answer on the ground. Often frontline employees are in a better position to develop solutions for their specific circumstances, and these solutions may differ from one country to the next or even one part of the US

to another. Your message must therefore explain the needed change and emphasize the reasons for it.

#### 2. Develop programs for middle managers and front-line employees

Once the messaging is clear, you are ready to create a program to educate employees and provide a compelling argument for change. You may be facing a number of different challenges: adapting to a new technology, improving customer service, speeding up the customer experience, reducing the cost of goods. But each program should have a specific focus and avoid trying to be too encompassing in its scope. You can, of course, develop different programs for different organizations.

The key to these programs is to engage the appropriate employees in developing solutions. Present them with the problem statement, then let them brainstorm and select the most promising alternative from the various solutions they come up with themselves. Engaging employees in this fashion is more likely to gain their full commitment to the solutions that they have developed. Employees who are committed to a solution, even when it might not be optimal, will achieve better results than employees who are compliant, but uncommitted to someone else's directive.

#### 3. Share the results among work group

Once you have implemented solutions, let work groups share their results and, especially their successes, with each other. You will inspire groups to take on new initiatives, try other approaches and expand their own thinking about the solutions.



#### 4. Measure results

Develop an objective way to measure results. Publicize the plan ahead of time and focus on those groups that achieve the greatest positive outcomes. Keep the momentum positive—avoid discussing groups that didn't change or produce poor results. Let others know what the positive results are and how the groups achieved them. Feedback is essential to refining and keeping the process on track beyond the initial attempt.

#### 5. Reward and recognize the greatest success

Often the recognition of a job well done has more impact than specific monetary rewards—but whenever possible, do both. Recognition can occur when discussing the results by involving the employees who implemented successful ideas.

Depending on the nature of the work, consider rewarding the entire work group that implemented the change instead of just the individual who initiated the idea. You will reinforce a team approach

to implementation which, in many circumstances, is when change succeeds.

#### Turn the battleship around

If this approach is new to your organization, executives may initially feel uncomfortable with not developing the solutions themselves. As executives who have often been there before, they understand the environment, the competitive pressures and the challenges better than front-line employees. But coming to employees with all the answers discourages engagement and lessens commitment. If you truly want to

engage your people, you do so with questions: How can we best accomplish our goals? How can we change this? What can you do to help?

If your middle managers are unfamiliar with this kind of approach, provide them with a specific, detailed program format and some training. That will usually suffice to educate them and obtain their buy-in.

The process of employee engagement in change is meant to be reiterative. Just like turning a battleship around, change in a larger organization takes time. Giving the participants feedback

on what is working and how their work group is doing, and asking again for their involvement and commitment, will keep the ship turning in the right direction.

This is one way to engage employees; there are others, of course. But for larger organizations this methodology provides a process that can be put into a programmable format and widely distributed to appropriate functions within the organization. It combines elements of top-down management (identifying the desired change) and bottom-up employee engagement (implementing the solution).



Dennis Fitzgerald is currently the CEO of AcquisitionWorks. He has held executive roles at Ericsson, Apollo Computer and Xyplex where he facilitated employee engagement initiatives.

## DIALOGUE MARKETING® A PROCESS THAT PROPELS COMPANY PERFORMANCE

By: Toni Gemper | Inward Strategic Consulting



Dialogue Marketing<sup>®</sup>. It should be a concept that everyone knows. Well, at least everyone who works in a field focusing on branding, marketing or advertising. At first, it can seem complicated, but if you peel back the layers one at a time, you will get to the core of the concept.

knew the term "dialogue" meant a two-way conversation between two or more audiences and "marketing" is the process by which companies promote their brand in order to sell a product or service to their customers. After I put it all together, I decided that Dialogue Marketing® was simply a conversation that would help a company sell its products. One of the key components to remember is that every audience seeks out information about products they desire in a sequential order. People generally don't see something they like and just buy it. They do research, look at alternatives, compare prices and ask others for their opinions before making a decision to buy or not to buy.

So Dialogue Marketing® is more than a simple conversation. It's a single unified process with two distinct parts: establishment of a brand followed by marketing and sales development. This integrated approach helps companies recognize how and when their branding and marketing strategies should work together.

Here are the layers of the Dialogue Marketing® process. It starts with the audience's awareness of a product's existence. The next stage is knowing enough about the product to seriously consider buying it; then actually deciding to buy the product under certain terms and conditions. Once the product has been purchased, the target audience receives special treatment to ensure that new customers will remain loyal to the brand.

I'll walk you through the process, show you examples of our frameworks and explain more about the process so you can determine if Dialogue Marketing® is right for your organization. Sounds simple, right?

#### Dialogue Marketing® — The Process

#### Part 1: Establishing the Brand

- 1. First we conduct an in-depth exploration of the key target audience, their needs and desires, their demographics and psychographics.
- **2.** Next, we explore the relative strengths, weakness and opportunities (SWOT analysis) of competitors in order to maximize their flaws for competitive advantage.

#### **Positioning Your Brand For Success**



- **3.** Third, we look at the personality traits of the company. A desired and distinctive company personality is especially important in the absence of a unique audience or competitive differentiation.
- **4.** Then we examine the key features and leverage points of the company. In other words, what can the company's products and services provide that the competition cannot duplicate?

For Ford, the key feature is the toughness of their trucks. It's the signature white ear buds for Apple and the classic taste of Coca-Cola. Identification and association with such personal traits is the best way to set a company apart from its competition.

Finally, we are ready to craft a brand architecture statement that will ultimately allow us to come up with an image/brand value proposition that defines the wants and needs of the target audience or consumer.

#### Part 2: Marketing and Sales Development

The three key words that you need to remember are *repeatable*, *trainable* and coachable. A successful marketing and sales development process, like any process within an organization, should always be repeatable, trainable and coachable. This means you have to think before you act. The strategic approach you come up with must include planning templates and

documents. It must also determine how the goals and objectives of the process will be measured through research data. On top of that, it's essential that all marketing activities have momentum. In order to move through the hierarchy of effects, also known as a purchase funnel, there must be some force that's driving the process.

The hierarchy of effects, listed below, includes a series of four steps, beginning with customers developing a general understanding of your company's capabilities. Next,

customers begin to understand the specific benefits you offer and choose to purchase your product or service. In the last step, the customer decides to remain a client and becomes an advocate for your company by referring friends and family.

#### The Hieratchy of Effects

- 1. Awareness: The use of mass communications, such as advertising and public relations, to establish recognition among a targeted customer base.
- 2. Consideration: The deployment of dialogue communications: direct response brochures, sales materials and market research data to communicate with customers one-on-one. This allows customers to learn about the product or service on their own terms.
- 3. Preference: This is the shopping phase for customers. During the preference phase, companies tend to shift their communications to promotions and incentives to entice customers to buy. Examples include coupons, in-store displays, sweepstakes, certain % discount and BOGO free.
- 4. Sale/ After Sales: The last phase includes the purchase and post-purchase period. During this stage of the relationship, the company aims to solidify a sale, establish customer loyalty and develop a long-term friendly relationship which will generate future sales and referrals.



#### Above is the message architecture for the Dialogue Marketing® process Inward Strategic Consulting uses in developing a strategy for our clients.

A successful Dialogue Marketing® program sets specific communication objectives at each level of the relationship. It also includes processes for identifying the best opportunities for further communication at progressive stages of client relationship management. See the chart on the top of this page for a visual representation of the Inward Dialogue Marketing® Framework.

Success comes when you synchronize your branding and marketing into one integrated process and deploy each step in the right order, to the right people, with the right message at the right time. There—we just defined the Dialogue Marketing® process.

#### Benefits of Dialogue Marketing®

Dialogue Marketing® works because it's based on a simple principle of human nature: people tend to interact with those whom they already know and trust. Dialogue Marketing® helps companies get the most out of their marketing dollars by attaining higher levels of performance and customer loyalty.

Every day we read about companies who are rebranding themselves or launching new marketing campaigns. Surely, you say, they must understand the importance of using a Dialogue Marketing® process. But you would be surprised. After learning more about it and seeing the process in action, I feel bad for all the organizations that haven't taken advantage of our framework.

Now that you have been introduced to Inward's Dialogue Marketing® Framework, you have a better understanding of how a company can benefit from the process. It's time to figure out if this framework fits with your business needs.

#### How the Internet has Affected Dialogue Marketing®

A final observation: the Internet has removed marketing communication barriers by allowing all companies to compete on a level playing field. It doesn't matter if a company is big or small, if it makes billions every year or less than \$1,000. They all have easy accessibility to their customers and potential customers through the World Wide Web.

All it takes is a LinkedIn or Facebook page or Twitter account to engage with consumers. And the best part? All of these resources are free to use! These channels have encouraged open dialogue between firms and their customers with the ability of posting on each other's walls, using tags to recognize each other and allowing tweets to integrate onto Facebook and LinkedIn.

That's social media at their finest—and they have become an integral part of the Dialogue Marketing® process.

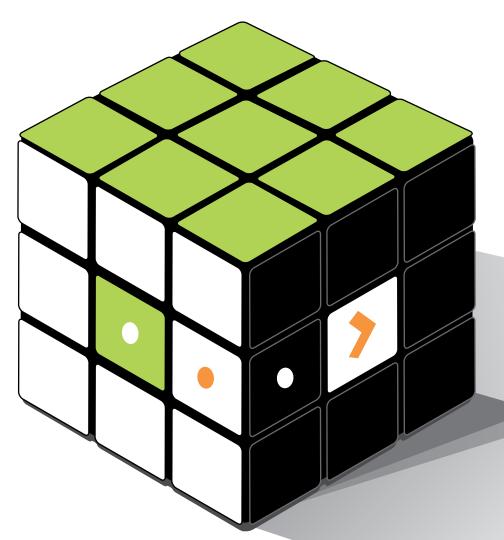
### Top 10 things to remember

- 1. Brand Architecture. It's the starting point, followed by your marketing and sales development plan.
- 2. Image Statement. It should align with the wants and needs of your customer.
- 3. SWOT Analysis. Capitalize on your competitors' flaws and use them to your competitive advantage.
- 4. Personality Traits. They should be distinctive and desirable to the marketplace.
- 5. Leverage Points. These set you apart from your competition.
- 6. Repeatable. Coachable. Trainable. These concepts are the cornerstones of your sales and marketing processes.
- 7. Awareness. Introduce your company to your target consumer.
- 8. Consideration. Use dialogue communications that help customers get to know you.
- 9. Preference. Incentivize your customers with promotions that entice them to buy.
- 10. Sale/After Sales. Win the customer and develop a long-term relationship based on trust and loyalty.



Toni Gemper is a Project Manager at Inward Strategic Consulting in Bentonville, AR. Her experience includes international business and supply chain management, and she is currently working onsite with the world's largest retailer focusing on internal branding and employee engagement.

## Some puzzles are easier to solve than others.



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# Same Approach? Same Actions? Same Results?



#### Maybe it's time to think outside your fish bowl.

Why keep swimming in less than productive circles when it just takes you right back to where you started? If you're ready to get schooled in redefining internal branding for your company, Inward is ready to dive in to help you create a new strategy.

Contact us today to see how our proven proprietary approaches can help you and your employees get hooked on building and strengthening your internal brand.





# Ten Factors in Rolling Out a Brand Engagement Program

- Senior-level endorsement and sponsorship
- Objectives, deliverables and timetable
- Research that provides insights and prescriptions for meaningful messaging and creative tactics that are fun and experiential
- A codified process and framework that is proven functional
- A dedicated, cross-functional internal brand project-management team that has clear mandates, budgets and deliverables

- Alignment among HR, communications, marketing, brand/advertising and corporate communications
- A comprehensive adult learning training program
  - CBLs, gamification, classroom, etc.
- Importance of brand ambassadors or brand champions who promote the brand internally
- Internal social media for employees to exchange ideas for living the brand behavior; enhancing communications through internal social networking and websites
- Reinforcing behavior through organized, transparent recognition and reward programs globally





### FIVE REASONS YOU **CAN'T IGNORE MIFICATION**

By: Whitney Faye Cook | Inward Strategic Consulting, Inc.

Gamification. You may not have heard a lot about this topic yet, but you will. At a recent National Retail Federation conference, gamification was touted as the next form of social media where people and employees interact and socialize around a common bond of knowledge, competitive strategy and fun. Right now, you are probably hearing whispers of gamification in your workplace. But in the near future, you will hear it shouted out in the hallways loud and clear.

amification is more than newfangled training. It is engaging mewiangied training employees with new knowledge that encourages competition among peers and bestows public rewards and recognition on those who excel. It can cover just about any topic: improving operations, cutting logistics costs, challenging employees to understand how their role contributes to enterprise success.

Yes, in the future we will start seeing people playing games at work. Gen Y professionals have been nurtured and brought up on gaming. Gamers are everywhere: at work,

at home and even in the airplane seat next to you. The last statistic I saw said that the average gamer is 37 years old. Let it be known: video games are not just for kids.

To understand why game mechanics are emerging as essential elements in all facets of business, it is imperative to grasp the dynamics of today's business environment. In the not-too-distant past, our workforce demographic consisted largely of baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964). As boomers near the glorious age of retirement, two other generations will make up the majority of the American workforce: Generation X (born between 1965-1978 and Generation Y (1979-2000).

As you might imagine, Generations X and Y view the workplace in a completely different light from their baby-boomer predecessors. Gen Y, also known as "millennials," is of particular interest with respect to gaming. They have grown up with technology and video games as a normal part of their everyday lives. Game mechanics have played a prevalent role in the way they solve problems.

In his book *Grown Up Digital*, Don Tapscott explains that:

"Growing up digital has had a profound impact on the way this generation thinks, even changing the way their brains are wired. And although this digital immersion presents significant challenges for young people—such as dealing with a vast amount of incoming information or ensuring balance between the digital and physical worlds—their immersion has not hurt them overall. It has been positive. The generation is more tolerant of racial diversity and is smarter and quicker than their predecessors. These young people are remaking every institution of modern life, from the workplace to the marketplace, from politics to education, and down to the basic structure of the family. ... To them, technology is like the air."

Growing up digital changes the way that millennials engage with others in their day-to-day work lives. They come to work expecting the same engagement they found in the digital world. So, how do we reach them?

At the beginning of 2012, The Oxford Dictionary added "gamification" to their official short word list.

Ga.mi.fi.ca.tion (n.): the application of concepts and techniques from games to other areas of activity.

Industry leaders and respected innovators in the field define it a thousand other ways, but any way you slice it, gamification is trending upwards at an undeniable rate. CEOs, HR directors, operations and innovations teams across various industries are learning that integrating gaming into their companies drives performance, highlights achievement and skyrockets engagement within their organization. The experts at Gartner predict that by 2014, 70% of global organizations will have at least one gamified application; by 2015, 50% of organizations that manage innovation processes will gamify them. Many of the world's largest brands are deploying gamification. Coke, AOL, Nissan, Nike and Viacom are all jumping on the bandwagon and, as more and more studies become available, the advantages to gaming in the workplace are becoming ever more apparent.

Now that we have a better understanding of

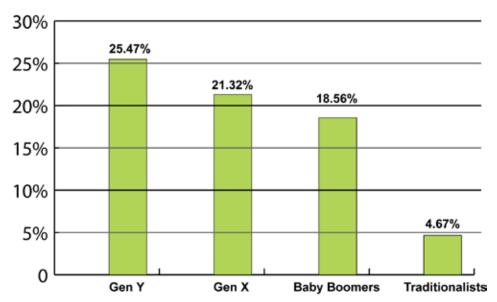


Figure 1. World population percentages by generation Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, International Data Base

what gamification is, let's take a look at what some companies are doing.

#### Microsoft Ribbon Hero: Onboarding and mastery application



Learning complex software can be an overwhelming task for almost anybody. Office is a multi-billion-dollar business for Microsoft, so it is in the company's best interest for its users to understand the breadth and depth of functionality available in the software suite. Otherwise, those same users might turn to cheaper, "good enough" alternatives. So what is the challenge? How do you get people to learn Microsoft Office without leaving them feeling like they are sitting through a five-hour PowerPoint training session?

The gaming solution: Microsoft created Ribbon Hero 2, an application built directly into Microsoft Office that uses gamification to motivate users to go through training without that classroom atmosphere. Users are playing a "game" and doing something productive at the same time, so it's a win-win situation. Ribbon Hero 2 takes users out of their normal work mode and

puts them in "explorer mode," where it is actually fun to discover new things about work and safe to fail. Users feel a sense of accomplishment for completing something difficult. Ribbon Hero 2 encompasses the entire Office Suite, so in order to play, people must learn to use all the products, which reinforces the value of the entire suite as opposed to a single application. (Source: Enterprise Gamification.)

#### SAP Gamification Cup: Earning points to make a difference



It's safe to say that most employees don't like being stuck behind a computer all day entering data. While accounts payable is one of the most important departments in a successful business, the reality is daunting: thousands of AP clerks manually enter invoice after invoice for hours on end. In 2011, the winner of the SAP Gamification Cup had the idea of gamifying SAP's vendor invoice transaction. For each invoice and line item, users and their teams can earn points, raise their status and participate in daily or monthly challenges for their team. The reward at the end of the month is a dollar amount that is donated to charity. (Source: Enterprise Gamification.)

#### INNOV8: IBM's simulation game to improve business processes

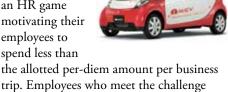


In 2007, IBM created a Business Process Management (BPM) simulation game called Innov8. It was originally designed as a game to help develop college students and young IT professionals; but over the past 5 years, it has evolved into a program that gives both IT and business players a better understanding of the impact of successful BPM on an entire business ecosystem. INNOV8 provides a carefully instrumented, personally interconnected and intelligent world for its users while supporting process improvements. At its core, Innov8 helps people work smarter so they can help build a smarter planet. Players quickly see how practical process improvements can lead to increased profitability, customer satisfaction and environmental goals while solving real problems faced by municipalities and businesses. And when they're done playing, players can compare their scores with others on global scoreboards.

#### Google: Reducing business trip costs; promoting environmentally friendly commuting



Google created an HR game motivating their employees to spend less than



trip. Employees who meet the challenge may allocate the saved funds toward a future trip (to book a nicer hotel, for instance), charitable donation or cash back at the end of the year.

The teams at Google Australia are using gamification in an environmental effort. Employees who use environmentally

friendly methods to get to work accumulate points that they can trade in exchange for the weekend loan of a Mitsubishi innovative Electric Vehicle (i-MiEV).

We're all motivated by different things. What's emerging is that employee satisfaction, and therefore employee retention, can no longer be achieved simply through financial compensation. Ultimately the big-stick approach doesn't always work and, these days, is not the only method available to motivate and encourage your teams. In order to stay on top of the game, managers must be forward thinking. Our CEOs of the future must employ creative techniques to engage their employees.

Ready to learn more? Here are the five undisputable reasons why you can't ignore gamification and its potential to empower your business.

#### 1. Gamification allows your employees to actively gauge their performance

Those dreaded yearly evaluations. Everyone has to do them, but wouldn't it be nice to give your employees access to real-time feedback whenever they need it? The great opportunity with gaming is that there is immediate

cause and effect. If you make a wrong move in a game, you are corrected on the spot. If you make a strategically smart move, you receive immediate positive reinforcement.

Gamification gives the power of feedback to the employee and accelerates knowledge. This is good for the company because it creates a more efficient and engaging way to monitor employee progress. In addition, it fosters transparency about how performance is measured and where the employee actually stands. Imagine if businesses used gamification to help streamline that information so that their employees could actually grow instead of constantly wondering, "How am really I doing?" "Is my work performance being ranked fairly?" and "How am I supposed to set goals if I have no idea what I am trying to achieve?"

#### 2. Gamification improves knowledge

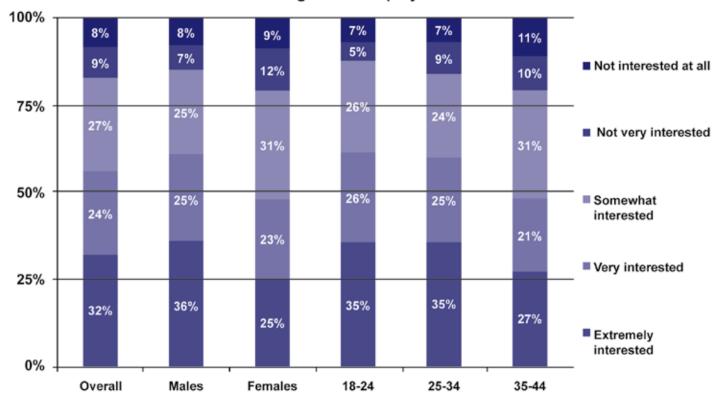
It's no secret that most of us started playing games at a young age. Indeed, our brains are built for game play. Doesn't it make sense for us to use the same types of techniques today in our training environment? As we all know, knowledge retention is a big part of any employee's daily life. Training and promotion isn't just important for the employee, it's essential to the growth of the company. Industry expert and author of Corporate Universities, Jeanne Meister, asserts that interactive learning games can explode long-term retention rates by up to 10 times. That's a pretty powerful statistic when you start talking about knowledge retention. Take a look at the diagram below. Can you imagine how powerful your employee handbook would be if you turned it into an interactive journey rather than a cumbersome document stuffed into a binder?



#### 3. Gamification enhances achievement across the board

Every year, companies spend thousands of dollars sending employees to seminars, classes, training sessions—the list is endless. You might know from personal experience that one of the pros of learning is displaying our achievements through certificates on our desks, letters behind our name, and highlights on our LinkedIn page. We love to compete, to win, to receive validation. In the workplace, people are automatically judged on their knowledge, achievements and overall reputation. Translate that into a game, and virtual badges, trophies and level mastery become the new bragging rights of Gen Y workers. Allowing your employees to become masters of their business and creating a community that openly recognizes their accomplishments will not only grow your people, it will also grow your bottom line.

#### Among Those Employeed



#### 4. Gamification creates unparalleled levels of engagement

Employees crave social interaction in the workplace. We love our lunch buddies and kickball teams and might even go to the team-building event at the local golf course. People like to feel that they belong, that they matter and that they are more than a cog in the big corporate machine. Gabe Zichermann, an author and the founder of the Gamification Summit, stated at a recent gaming conference in New York that "Gamification can run a loyalty program that has all the bells and whistles of something like [United's] MileagePlus, but cheaply. Traditional loyalty programs fail because they don't typically generate new or additional revenue streams and can cost a company more in the end."

Zichermann adds, "What drives loyalty is not giving away free stuff, but status and recognition. People are very into status once they achieve it, and they don't want to lose it." Gaming creates a virtual world where you can be productive and still have fun. This is good for your business because it fosters innovation, productivity and fun, which inevitably enhance the work

environment. Studies have shown that happier people equal higher revenue.

2011 Field Study Conducted by Saatchi & Saatchi S

In a 2011 field study conducted by Saatchi & Saatchi S, 55% of respondents who were employed said that they would be interested in working for a company that offered games as a way to increase productivity. Additionally, out of five different gaming options available, respondents said they preferred a probability or guessing scenario where you could play against opponents to win points.

#### 5. Gamification reinforces learning and development

It's not surprising that many companies are embracing gamification to encourage innovation among their employees. In his blog, Gabe Zichermann describes the crowd-sourcing game Foldit, developed by the University of Washington. In 2011, 46,000 people worked for just 10 days to solve the secret of a key protein that scientists believe may lead to a cure for HIV. Researchers had been working on the problem for 15 years. This is a big deal! You may not be searching for a cure to a deadly disease, but creating and fostering

innovation within your company is essential in today's marketplace. Reinforcing learning and development within your team will not only foster a productive work environment, it will also create opportunities for expansion and job security for employees down the road.

Still unsure where to go from here? Our team of experts at Inward Strategic Consulting can advise you on the best way to introduce gamification into your business. We have established partnerships with some of the most respected names in the gaming industry that focus on brand loyalty, employee engagement and innovation. Please contact me at whitney@inwardconsulting.com or visit our website at www.inwardconsulting.com.



Whitney Faye Cook is an Account Manager at Inward Strategic Consulting. Stationed in Bentonville, Arkansas, Whitney has over 6 years of agency experience managing some of the world's largest brands and is currently focused on gamification design and internal brand.

# Things Not Aligning up Quite Right? We know how to get your brand around that.



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# **EMPLOYEE BRAND ENGAGEMENT**

By: Rick DeMarco | Inward Strategic Consulting

Much has been written about leadership and about the ability of leaders to create a productive and passionate workforce. The outdated concept of leadership relied on a strong autocratic style: the leader very clearly articulated his demands and others either delivered or suffered the consequences.



The obvious problem with this approach is that you can order someone to do something, but you cannot order them to be passionate about it. And in order for employees to deliver on a brand promise and brand strategy, they must believe in the vision and understand how they contribute to and participate in their organization's success. Only then will employees transfer their passion and excitement to your customers in both business and social settings.

#### How do you motivate a workforce?

As you read about efforts to engage employees and create brand ambassadors, you often hear leaders talking about "motivating" the workforce. I don't believe that anyone can actually motivate anyone else. Motivation comes from within. The most successful way to get what you need from your employees is to give them what they need. A leader's job is to determine what motivates her people—and then provide it for them. To do this, she must truly know the people she leads. And I'm not just talking about what she does on the job. I'm talking about knowing about her employees' passions, their families, their shared values and the things that keep them up at night. The only way to provide an environment in which employees are motivated is to fully understand what it is that motivates them and ensure that their needs are met.

I recently talked with a friend who had been disenchanted with the leadership style of his manager for some time. Finally, when no attempt was made to address his needs, my friend decided to leave the company. When he told his manager about his plans, the manager put on a full-court press to convince him to stay. My friend had to make it clear that, by this point, it was just too late. He had already made his decision based on his leader's insensitivity to his needs and inability to provide what he required to be passionate about his role in the company. This is hardly a unique example—I've seen it over and over again. An employee decides to leave, and the immediate response is to offer more money when, in fact, money has very little to do with the motivation to leave.

So how can you, as a leader, fully understand what motivates the people you lead? The obvious answer, of course,

is to ask them. In their effort to drive employee engagement and create a better working environment, many companies fail to obtain the necessary input. They spend significant amounts of money on initiatives that don't mean all that much to the workforce. It's not that all efforts focused on employees are unappreciated or ineffective. But we are always dealing with limits on resources, which require leaders to prioritize initiatives based on the breadth and depth of impact. As a positive example, I have seen companies focus on health and wellness initiatives, at fairly small investment levels, that produce a great positive impact by making employees feel valued. On the other hand, some companies spend money on new furniture and the physical environment—in a situation where employees have not received pay increases for three or four years.

Managers should have regular conversations with the people they lead to understand not only their performance results, but also their needs and their current attitudes toward the company and their work.

#### Commit to the process

Understanding what employees value is not an event but rather a commitment to an ongoing process. Doing an annual survey to routinely gather employee feedback is simply not enough. It's certainly a great foundation—but unless there is a commitment to actually do something with the results of the survey, all of the time, energy and resources spent on it can be for naught. In fact, employee engagement may actually decrease if employees feel that the survey is only a vehicle to patronize them, rather than serve as input for improving the working environment.

So annual surveys and quarterly pulse surveys can be powerful tools to assess the overall needs of a workforce, but only if managers use the input to demonstrate, by their responses and actions, that they are truly listening. However, every individual who manages others needs to take this a step further. Although there are general issues regarding motivation and inspiration that arise from mass employee surveys, the individual leader must implement the results on the personal level. He must take the time to understand the needs and

passions of each of the people he leads. And make no mistake—employees can sense insincerity if a leader is simply complying with human resources' directives to apply the results of the company's annual survey to his own group.

Annual performance reviews often carry with them two major flaws. First of all, the time is spent reviewing employee performance over the past year only, rather than on the employee's potential and the things that matter personally. This is a perfect opportunity for a manager to learn about her employee's passions, needs and

Secondly, an annual review is not enough. Managers should have regular conversations with the people they lead to understand not only their performance results, but also their needs and their current attitudes toward the company and their work. I have always believed that if either a manager or an employee walks out of an annual review surprised by anything, something is seriously wrong with both the process of creating an engaged and passionate employee and the effectiveness of communications.

#### **Creating true brand ambassadors**

The comprehensive approach to creating true brand ambassadors is to move them through a cycle of education, inspiration, empowerment and reinforcement. Of course, you need very strong initiatives to ensure that all employees know and understand the strategy and brand promise. But that's just the first step. If you truly want your employees to deliver on your brand promise and business strategy, take the time to understand what motivates them and then provide an environment in which their needs are met. You will create true brand ambassadors who are passionate and inspired about your vision and objectives—and will relay that passion to your customers.



Rick DeMarco is Inward's new Managing Director for the west coast. He is a strategic executive leader with experience in marketing, human resources and general management with industry-leading companies like HP, Carrier and Whirlpool.

### THE 3 POWER VALUES

### HOW COMMITMENT, INTEGRITY, AND TRANSPARENCY CLEAR THE ROADBLOCKS TO PERFORMANCE

By: David Gebler | Skout Group, LLC

Is your corporate culture working for or against you? Most leaders already know that, to achieve superior results, they must foster a healthy corporate culture grounded in strong values. This should be easy—most employees already share the values their company endorses. So why is it so hard? Why is it that in most organizations, corporate culture works against high performance and top results?

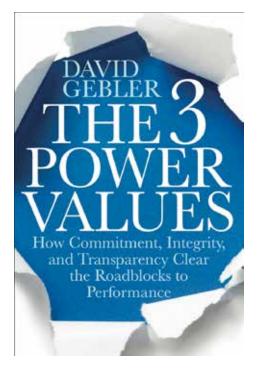
'n The 3 Power Values: How Commitment, Integrity, and Transparency Clear the **L** Roadblocks to Performance, David Gebler, an expert in culture, values, and performance, presents a new model of how organizations get to the heart of why and how their corporate culture blocks performance. Following is an excerpt from his book.

#### Assess, Plan, Act: The 3 Power Values

There are numerous success stories of companies such as Timberland that have used the capabilities and resources supported by their cultures—bolstered by the power values—to meet tough business objectives. Other companies, such as Boeing, have reinvigorated their values to build a culture that lets them come back from a disaster or reclaim a leadership position. And some, such as Johnson & Johnson, have forgotten the importance of connecting their values to their brand—with sorry results.

Many companies with less cataclysmic issues evaluate their culture to determine whether they have competitive opportunities that they have not fully developed. As I outlined in Chapter One, issues lurking just below the surface could be at the heart of why your organization's strategy implementation and execution have been frustrating, why employees don't report questionable business practices, or why a new team or organization formed through a reorganization or acquisition is still struggling to get its footing.

Sometimes leaders have a gnawing sense of problems they can't put their finger on. Nothing is definitely wrong, but something doesn't feel right. To see whether culture misalignment is at the heart of the challenges you may be facing, you need a model and approach with which you can make your organization's culture an advantage and not an albatross. If we accept the principle that you cannot manage what you cannot measure, we need to break down the culture alignment process into measurable components so leaders can focus on the dimensions of culture that lend themselves to specific behaviors.



#### **Looking for Alignment**

High-performing cultures have the lowest amount of friction among their core elements: principles, goals and standards. How do they do it? The only means by which an organization can achieve such alignment is through its employees. As I often tell my clients, "It's all about your people. Not because that's nice, but because they're what matters for the success you want." You know now that employees generally want to feel commitment and engagement toward their work and their company, so the more your company can clear the way for its people to work to their

full abilities, the more efficient and effective their work will be and the fewer performance and ethical risks they are likely to take. Examining the interaction and coordination of your organization's principles, goals and standards is the means by which you can discover the potential weak spots or hot spots that require intervention.

That is why it is important to understand the interactions among commitment, integrity and transparency—the values that keep these core elements in sync (aligned) with each other. We have seen over and over what can happen when these cultural elements are at odds with each other.

Commitment links principles to goals by addressing how your people can bring their own principles to work. When those principles are aligned with your organization's goals, they feel a connection to the organization, which drives commitment...Your organization can accelerate this process—making it easier for your people to bring their values to work—by creating opportunities for them to work autonomously and take ownership of their work.

Integrity links goals—what your organization strives to do—with its standards of behavior—how things are done. The organization can align its goals with its standards by insisting that its people do their jobs in a manner



consistent with those goals. In parallel, the organization can ensure that both leaders and employees are walking the talk by insisting that people be accountable for their actions and making sure there are consequences for failing to live up to one's commitments. We saw this at Boeing in Chapter Three, when Jim McNerney revised the compensation system to make managers more accountable for behaviors he wanted to instill.



Transparency reveals how well your organization's standards align with its principles. Are you and your people acting according to your principles? In other words, are you being true to yourselves? If the standards are consistent with the principles, there is clarity in how the organization operates.

#### The root causes of why organizations fail to achieve their potential are not dramatic or shocking.

And if employees are free to speak the truth, the organization can more easily discover where principles are in conflict and whether its own principles are really what you and other leaders proclaim them to be.

#### So How do You Achieve Alignment?

[Business consultant and author] Jim Collins found that alignment is not something that successful leaders deal with explicitly. Perhaps intuitively, they create the conditions in which engagement, alignment and the ability to deal with change arise naturally. In these positive corporate cultures, employees can feel good about themselves and their work (commitment), they can raise issues and freely ask questions (transparency) and they do not feel challenged by unfair or inconsistent work processes because people take personal responsibility for their actions and live up to their commitments (integrity).

But when some of the elements of

culture are out of alignment, frustrations certainly occur. When the principles are not in alignment with the goals, employees disengage and feel less vested interest in their work (lack of commitment). When goals move out of sync with standards, unfairness arises as managers and employees "do what they have to do" rather than what they have said they would do (lack of integrity). And when standards are out of alignment with values, employees see that the organization's actions are not consistent with its principles and it becomes very difficult to ask uncomfortable but important questions and ensure that the truth is heard (lack of transparency).

Most organizations have problems with one, two or all three of the alignment points that the power values affect. Many become quite adept at compensating for their weak spots. We saw at Western Financial, for example, that trust based on a charismatic leader's transparency his willingness to admit when he was flying by the seat of his pants—had masked challenges to integrity brought on by inconsistent policies and processes, inconsistencies that might have been the root causes of the fraud the sales representatives engaged in. Similarly, as we will see later in this chapter, I found strong commitment on the part of Northern Defense employees, but it was also masking a dangerous lack of transparency because employees would not raise questions and problems.

An organization seeking to develop an action plan to remove roadblocks must become aware of the root causes of its lack of alignment. We will now look at a three-step process—assessing, planning and acting—that you can use to get at the root cause of a culture problem and then develop an action plan to nudge your organization's principles, goals and standards into alignment:

- **1. Assess.** As a leader, you must learn about your people and your culture in the context of their values and the performance roadblocks they face.
- 2. Plan. With all of the data in hand. the relationships among the elements of culture and the power values that align them can tell you what issues are at the root cause of your performance roadblocks and what behaviors will be at the heart of the solution.
- 3. Act. Design an action plan that allows behavior changes to progress logically and can be adapted for the specific needs of the subcultures inside your organization.

#### **Creating a Successful Corporate Culture**

The root causes of why organizations fail to achieve their potential are not dramatic or shocking. In fact, they can seem so ordinary that many leaders discount their importance. For example, failing at "open-door policy" is hardly a crime, and not addressing inconsistencies in a large organization is not usually grounds for sanctions. And yet, leaders should be able to develop a roadmap and understand the causal links of behavior-based roadblocks at the core of strategic problems. Those are the leaders who create a culture that propels their companies to outperform the competition.



David Gebler is the President of Skout Group. LLC and author of The 3 Power Values: How Commitment, Integrity, and Transparency Clear the Roadblocks to Performance (2012 Wiley). www.skoutgroup.com

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### **EMPLOYEE BRAND ENGAGEMENT** ING CRISES

By: Allan Steinmetz | Inward Strategic Consulting



Does your organization communicate clearly and frequently? Send invasive messages that are also fun and entertaining? Articulate messages that are personal? Use specifics to describe what needs to be done? Do you talk the talk and walk the walk promised by company values? And finally, does your organization deliver when it comes to being a place you and your people really want to work?

**7**ou may be able to answer "yes" to some of these questions, but not many people can respond in the affirmative to all of them. Whatever your situation, I can assure you that you are not alone.

In an ideal world, organizations would communicate with their employees using highly relevant messages to make solid emotional connections. But in reality, more often than not, organizations fall short of engaging their employees. From the everyday demands of business as usual to more extreme crisis situations such as bankruptcy, even the best organizations find that maintaining employee brand engagement is a challenging task.

Admittedly, creating alignment between employees and their organization's brand values, culture and mission can be a

daunting task, particularly when times are trying. You may know what you want the end result of internal alignment to be. But do you know where to start when it comes to engaging your employees to get to that result? Whether you have 10 or 10,000+ employees, it can be done. Hear me out.

#### Reaching your employees with the right message

In order for your organization's messages to resonate and make an emotional connection with your intended audiences, you must deliver relevant ideas with regular frequency. Using a tone and manner that shows you are a good corporate citizen who understands the pulse of your employees – how they feel, what drives them - is essential. Furthermore, it gives your corporation a human face that helps create an even deeper connection with internal stakeholders.

You should address the "we" as opposed to the "me" by focusing on the feelings and emotions of the individuals involved instead of directing all your energies towards doing what is right for the company and its shareholders. Messages should reinforce and strengthen a sense of security as they speak to the future. They should be warm, compassionate, empathetic and, above all, delivered honestly and transparently. Cold and standoffish CEOs who avoid communicating or telling the truth, especially in crisis situations, further alienate their internal constituencies.

There is a definitely a method to making this type of messaging work. I've seen the most success in organizations whose carefully formulated communication strategies to their employees are:

- Authentic and sincere: avoiding platitudes and posturing while remaining personal and human
- · Honest and factual: truthful without any added sugar coating

- Simple and frequent: clear, concise and delivered with expected regularity
- Real and believable: something people can relate to and experience firsthand
- Clear and forward in focus: use a combination of shared interests to envision moving together toward the future
- Empathetic and reflect concern: connecting with feelings of pain and insecurity
- Showing leadership and confidence: demonstrating the organization knows what it's doing
- Acknowledging the past: learning from previous mistakes to move toward a better future
- Delivered as cascading communications: using well-known and respected people from all organizational levels to reach your audience

The last point may require a more detailed explanation. Any of the communications that you release as part of your engagement strategy must be designed to cascade through your organization. Good messaging is an essential first step, but simply assuming that your messages will trickle all the way down to the lower levels will not get you where you want to go with brand engagement. Instead, you may alienate a critical constituency in your audience and waste the whole effort.

Relevant messaging helps build emotional connections and vice versa. It is imperative that your messages be delivered at all levels of the organization by the most well-known and respected individuals among the intended audience. For example, a skeptical employee may hear the message from the CEO, but he probably won't give any call to action a chance unless it comes from a team or site manager with an established personal connection.

Just as I've asked you to look at your communications strategy in a new way, I'd like to ask you to do the same with your tactical strategy. You'll need tactics with impact. The right delivery vehicle for a relevant message perfectly aimed at your intended audience will make your employees sit up and notice the core values and messages you want to share. These are not the old, familiar standby tactics you've come to rely on over the years – those will result in messages that consistently go unnoticed. The tactics to employ require you to open yourself up to new methods and help you create an emotional connection. Internal social networking sites, gamification, mobile apps and communications: the options are endless and can be custom built to help your organization address any challenge.

#### Which message is your organization currently sending?

As I mentioned earlier, few organizations exist in a utopian state of employee brand engagement. However, the unique characteristics that all organizations exhibit allow us to categorize them and prescribe solutions that will ultimately lead them on the path to success. Based on the descriptions and case study examples below, can you identify where you're currently tracking with employee brand engagement?

#### LOW relevant messaging/ LOW emotional connection

#### Characteristics:

- Distant and detached from reality
- Low market performance
- Inability to retain talent
- Inability to recruit new talent
- Inefficient and ineffective
- Lack of alignment
- Dysfunctional
- Slow
- No connection to messaging
- Nonexistent emotional connection between employees

#### Case Study: Precision Manufacturing, Inc.

A victim of the industry's tech downturn, Precision Manufacturing faced bankruptcy proceedings and a change in senior leadership in 2004. In order to maintain stability, the new CEO worked with other company leaders to establish a long-term strategic plan, something they had never done before. The company also shifted its focus to the basics: mission, vision and values. Communications from senior management were crafted to address what

was happening, what the leadership was doing and what it needed employees to do. In addition, employees at all levels engaged in one-on-one, face-to-face dialogue. As a result, employees understood and were able to implement the required actions for company success (Lui 2011).

#### HIGH relevant messaging/ LOW emotional connection

#### Characteristics:

- Frequent messages resonate with the audience but lack a value or culture connection
- Sole point of connection is corporate values/culture

#### **Case Study: General Motors**

A well-established company, GM has seen its share of difficulties throughout the years. As a global organization, it faces unique challenges in connecting with its internal constituencies. Efforts to break through these cross-cultural differences and achieve employee engagement are constant. GM's current approach – messaging that emphasizes support for its workers along with acknowledgement that employees are the most important leaders in driving the company's culture – is designed to improve low levels of emotional connectivity.

Another example from GM comes as a response to the company's most recent financial downfall. Instead of focusing on employees, GM focused instead on regaining customer confidence. It can be argued that "this failure to acknowledge and implement internal cultural changes as a component of resolution could be a barrier preventing increased employee engagement" (Goussak, Ser and Webber, 2012).

#### LOW relevant messaging/ HIGH emotional connection

Characteristics: Good culture and strong values exist, but they aren't leveraged to connect with internal audiences

#### Case Study: Domino's Pizza

Taking customer comments to heart forced Domino's to take its "cardboard" pizza products from "wet and flavourless" to preferred by three out of five consumers. While the honest, no-frills approach used with customers was refreshing for them,

it was less welcomed by the "Dominoids," employees who are fully invested in their workplace and brand. The challenge was getting them to quit dismissing the commentary of Domino's toughest critics so that employees themselves could take the necessary actions to start winning customers over. After all, in the Dominoids' minds, there was no reason for anyone to be dissatisfied with their products.

By carefully reframing internal messaging,

Dominos' gave its employees a better understanding of what change would mean for them and for their company. And squelching the in-one-ear-out-the-other mentality allowed employees to work together delivering on the Domino's brand promise for which they had such strong feelings – while creating further alignment with the external message (Githens, 2010).

#### HIGH emotional connection/ HIGH relevant messaging

#### Characteristics:

- Integrity is in alignment with corporate mission, values and culture
- Expectations of fairness, accountability and consequences are understood and enforced
- Using new, attention-grabbing methods for reach: internal social networking sites, email blasts, gamification, mobile applications (texts and announcements), Twitter
- Humanizing the executive ranks
- Investing in cascading techniques: news and info from people whom employees know and respect

#### Case Study: Starbucks

From location overload of rapid growth to identifying waste-reduction efficiencies and competing with lower-cost competitors, Starbucks had a variety of challenges brewing in early 2008. With high levels of employee brand engagement on its side, the company implemented a strategy geared toward improving the quality of its service. To make sure that everyone was able to deliver on this company commitment, Starbucks actually closed all store locations

for a day to teach staff how to make better espresso.

Another example of Starbuck's success is its continuous efforts to maintain internal morale. The company understands and acknowledges what matters most to its employees. For instance, Starbucks consistently steers clear of temptations to cut health-care benefits and has embraced a commitment to its communities through volunteer service. In fact, 10,000 store

Relevant Messages

Relevant Messages

LOW Emotional Connections HIGH

managers gathered in New Orleans for a giant pep rally, highlighted by combined participant contributions of 50,000 community-service hours and a concert by U2's Bono (Business,view, 2009).

#### Relevant messaging through emotional connection

Do any of these four scenarios hit close to home for your organization? For employee brand engagement to work, "yes" needs to be your answer to all three of the following questions: Are you engaging your employees effectively, maximizing your messaging and making emotional connections? Is your messaging right for them? Is it even reaching them?

Another question I hear quite a bit is, "How do you know if a company has hit the sweet spot when it comes to engaging its employees?" Simply put, you just know. There's no magic formula involved. You just know.

I also know for sure that each organization that comes to Inward looking for ways to improve employee brand engagement has its own unique set of challenges. Luckily, we are always able to prescribe a solution based on the relationship that exists between relevant messaging and emotional connections. Using our established framework, messaging is well crafted and strategically deployed through cascading communications designed to maximize reach as well as effectiveness.

Frequent contact? Fun, entertaining, invasive messaging? Specific direction? Personal, clear communications? Consistency in supporting company values? If that sounds like the company for you, that's because it's exactly the kind of company your employees want to keep.

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Allan Steinmetz is the CEO and founder of Inward Strategic Consulting, an internal/external branding, change management communications, team alignment and market research consulting firm.



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