

# 4 steps to effectively bridge corporate cultures

Internal communications come in all shapes and sizes. Whether a corporate headquarters, multiple offices, production facilities, distribution warehouses or dozens of home offices around the country, keeping a team informed, engaged and motivated requires time, effort and discipline.

Identifying internal communications goals, challenges and opportunities must be done at the onset. Uncovering and deciphering the complexities of a corporate culture and team dynamics takes work and requires candid evaluation, diverse resources and commitment from the top down.

Below are four essential steps – and some key questions for consideration – to effectively build an internal communications strategy that transcends distinct corporate cultures.

## Understand your audience

Usually driven by the human resources and/or communications department(s), internal communications initiatives often fail to effectively engage team members beyond the corporate office. The atmosphere, views on employee relations and energy behind corporate initiatives can vary greatly between the boardroom and the rank and file within the company. To ensure employee-centric communications don't alienate the very people they are intended to engage, consider:

**Does news and information reflect (or relate to) all employees?** If you have a diverse workforce (race, ethnicity, gender, salary vs. hourly, etc.), make sure it's reflected both visually and in the variety of content featured.

**Do employees need a dictionary or translator to understand what's written?** Keep internal content between an eighth- and ninth-grade reading level. If English is not the first language for a large part of your workforce, consider translating the most essential communications.

## Identify the internal communications team

While HR and corporate communications teams typically author employee materials, it's a best practice to build an internal communications team utilizing correspondents throughout the company. Consider the following questions:

**If operating in multiple locations throughout the country/world, is each location represented?** Tapping resources from each location provides diverse perspectives and comprehensive reporting capabilities.

**If internal communications incorporate company news and initiatives, is there balanced representation across the company?** Just as the sales team wants to applaud its latest win, the team on the plant floor wants to be recognized for its production achievements.

## Use the right engagement tools

Don't "call it a day" after crafting the right messaging for the team. How communications are delivered is just as important as what's being sent. Considerations:

**Do all associates have an email address?** Oftentimes, only salaried associates are provided with corporate email addresses. If distributing a newsletter via email, think through an alternate delivery method for employees without email addresses.

**Are online communications channels mobile-friendly?** While the same subset of employees without corporate email addresses also may have limited access to a computer, studies show that more than 75 percent of Americans have smart phones.

**Can you meet them where they are?** If teams frequent a break room, lounge or locker room, consider those venues for leave-behinds or an intranet kiosk. Paycheck stuffers and snail mail, while seemingly antiquated methods, just might be effective tools.

## Measure effectiveness

As with any communications initiative, measurement can examine success and inform future strategy. With advances in technology, metrics abound. However, sophisticated tools may not apply when reaching a diverse workforce. At the end of the day, success can be found in the following question:

**Are internal communications helping to cultivate a desired culture and achieve business objectives?** While measuring internal communications can often be vague or anecdotal, consider establishing benchmarks to gauge success. Are employees responsive to calls to action in your content? Are you receiving more and diverse submissions from your correspondent team? Is employee retention improved?