

Internal communication & its role in building company culture



In this article, **Nikhil Bharadwaj, Head – Corporate Communications, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance**, shares various tools which are the key to keeping the entire organisation connected and aligned to the company’s vision.

The role of internal communication in brand building and shaping an

organisation’s DNA and its culture is very underrated. Think of it this way, if it was not communicated, it did not happen, especially for a large organisation.

Many organisations believe that internal communication is the responsibility of Human Resources, who are the torchbearers for the employees. I strongly believe you need an independent team of professionals to tell the organisation’s story. While these professionals could have a fully skilled and equipped team internally or could take assistance from agencies from the outside, I firmly believe that brands which can tell their story in their own voice and tone are the brands that end up building authentic, inclusive and robust culture.

How is this culture built? And how is the organisation’s story told? The answer lies in the collective intention of the organisation, its departments and their keen interest in making each other aware of what’s happening in the organisation, how it is impacting everybody, what change it is bringing about and how it affects (if it does), how the organisation operates whilst keeping its strategic intent aligned to its vision. A few efficient ways of doing this are:

Newsletters & Intranet portals:

These are favourite tools in the hands of communicators. Most of these newsletters have now shifted to an exclusively digital format. Typically, most organisations have at least one newsletter for their employees, where they contextualise what’s happening in various departments and in various locations. They also try and capture the best practices around, organisational news and what’s new that’s happening around and of course, message from the CEO of the organisation. They, of course, have a fun element of employee interviews and do a great job many a times of “humanising leaders” and thereby, breaking down hierarchy to an extent. There are department specific newsletters as well for capturing best practices across the locations and to offer a platform for peer recognition for top performers. A lot of distribution-led businesses also use these to engage with their distributors and keep them abreast on various updates of the organisation and recognise the best, get the leadership message to them, thus acting like an effective strategic messenger. The drawback here is whether it’s a soft copy or a physical one, impressions are not guaranteed. Engagement

metrics are very hard to track, even if certain tools like Quiz and Trivia are used. Other interfaces like QR Code scans, etc., to see traction do help as well.

I feel Intranets do a similar job with a much more “real time” update sort of scenario. Engagement can be better tracked with intranets, and communication can be put up for consumption as and when required. The only drawback is recency, that is, what’s recent is remembered, what’s not is forgotten! Almost like a hangover of how we consume content on the Internet or social media. I feel the best way is to use Newsletters and Intranets together and have a lot of useful stuff on the Intranet, which people can use daily, only then will your co-workers go back to it.

Emailers:

Typically, the most popular way of sending one-way communication, and often the most effective, if done in moderation. People consume visuals and narratives better, thus ensuring your emails are not too text heavy and have more visual elements like infographics or videos is the key. I feel these are the best ways to communicate changes impacting all in the organisation and getting leadership message spread throughout the organisation. Drawback of these is that most organisations oftentimes overdo these and departments tend to look at these as forms of internal brand building/ advertising, thus employees end up ignoring them over a period of time.

Blogs:

Leadership blogs are a great way to build culture and collective thinking/ mindset. I firmly believe this is the way thought process of leaders gets communicated to the wider organisation and the world at large. Blogs on products and services, too, greatly demystify concepts internally. These, when shared on social media, the brand of the organisation is further strengthened when employees, like, share and comment on them.

Townhalls and forums:

These are my favourite kind of interactions, where collectives gather together and thrash it out, so to speak. Typically, the leader of an office, geography, or vertical comes out and has a face-to-face interaction with their co-workers. These forums are often used for organisational updates, competition updates, and discussing employee issues, which are pressing in nature and need addressing. I firmly believe that such activities bind an organisation together and reinforce the spirit of family. Getting recognised at these forums is something that each member of the collective strives for and works towards.

An organisation’s stories, its collective belief and what its people stand for, adds towards building organisation culture. Some of the aforementioned tools add towards this narrative. Culture is often referred to as the invisible elephant in the room, I think corporate communications along with other departments plays a crucial role in this build up, and sustainability over time and in a sense, making the elephant visible and shine!