



# **DRIVING COMMUNICATION, INTERNALLY & EXTERNALLY**

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The goal of effective communication is to convince somebody else to change their course of action. Think of yourself as the Chief Relational Officer. You have to get people to relate to your strategy and to do so, they have to relate to you.

*"Each of us has a chance to build a legacy for ourselves. That requires bringing people along."*

- Jack Stahl

## PERSONAL EXERCISE

Identify the broadcast towers in your organization; the people who have weight and influence over others.

Spend a disproportionate amount of time with them. If their message is positive, amplify it. If they are skeptical, use logic and heart to neutralize their resistance.

## PERSONAL EXERCISE

Evaluate your communication through internal 'market testing'. Use Zoom to do cross cuts of your organization. Get into the room with 10-15 people at a time. One-by-one, ask people about their concerns and reactions to the company's strategy and what they see as being most challenging in their role. It allows for personal communication at scale.

## 01 Communicating growth and change

A useful analogy is to imagine that you and your partner are hanging from a trapeze rope that is frayed. Getting your partner to move to another rope before the one you're on snaps requires painting a clear picture of the difference between the rope you are on and the one you want to reach. To do this:

### Make the destination compelling

Create a powerful vision of what the destination looks like. Study your geographies, product categories, or customer segments and rank them from best to worst. Use this data to paint a picture of opportunity.

Tell a compelling story of what change is needed, where, when, by whom, and what the company looks like once the change is made, i.e. the destination.

*"Think about your own stories of your personal growth, of learning, your own tough situations that you've been in and use those stories to reinforce the direction that you're moving your organization."*

- Jack Stahl

## CASE STUDY

### A compelling, familiar, and realistic destination.

During Jack's tenure at The Coca-Cola Company, the company had been losing ground to Pepsi for many years. The rope was frayed. Communication formed a key part of their turnaround.

They created a compelling 360-degree Coca-Cola landscape that told the story of how associates were doing the right thing in communities, with opportunities to advance their careers, or build a legacy while at the same time achieving the business objectives.

Coca-Cola's strategy was distilled into only 3 words that associates could easily relate to: availability, affordability, and acceptability. It was easy to understand, could connect everyone's personal goals, and quick to repeat.

While Coca-Cola's overall market share was 40%, it was as high as 80% in some markets and as low as 8% in others. It was clear that growing the low performing and average markets was achievable and therefore building overall market share was possible.

### Make the destination familiar

Make the destination familiar to something relating to their own experience. Connect it to the destination you wish to achieve. It may be shared company values, a common purpose, or your own experiences and stories that they can relate to.

*"There has to be something that somebody can latch onto that says, 'I recognize this.'"*

- Jack Stahl

### Keep the destination close enough to be credible

Set realistic goals. People need to believe that the goal is achievable. They won't jump to a new rope that they feel they can't reach.

### Make the need to move clear

It is not enough that you understand the need for change. Your partners have to feel for themselves that the situation they're in is in decline and that they need to move. Be very clear about what it might mean for the organization to not move.

## 02 Communicating strategic challenges

Communicating challenges is not altogether different than communicating opportunities. In both, you are trying to change the destination and the route.

### Build personal credibility

Develop a sense of personal credibility with all your stakeholders over your career. Be conscious of how you treat people and how you act in the workplace. People need to believe in you and your message under the stress of challenges.

*"Your own credibility has to be established long before you start to work on your communications."*

- Gene McQuade

## CASE STUDY

### Quick and consistent.

Jill Brannon, EVP & Chief Sales Officer at FedEx, uses daily huddles for frontline associates. They equip managers with key information on what needs to be delivered against and celebrate results and achievements. The consistency of the framework ensures reaffirmation of important messaging.

The approach is partly replicated via digital channels where they will post one or two stories per day that reinforce the desired behavior. It takes no more than a few minutes to view before the start of each work day.

## PERSONAL EXERCISE

Create a communication package for employees that clarifies the strategy, the timeline, key decisions and how you involve employees in those decisions.

Save your associates from trying to figure out what the strategy means for them. Help them understand their role and then go back and reaffirm the context of what you want them to do.

## Leave no surprises

People need to understand the context of where you need to take the organization before you communicate your strategic challenge. If you can't be explicit, at least set the stage. Be transparent about the boundaries of what you can and cannot share.

Give people a good sense of what your organization is trying to do, where it is trying to grow, and how you plan to reposition. If people are clear about the context, your communication will be more credible when it is time to act.

## Position your message to the individual

What you think is strategic, the audience hears as tactical and personal. While you might communicate the strategic path for the company, their first thought will be, "What does it mean for me?" They think about their job first and the company second.

*"They take your strategic verbiage home. They have to talk to their spouse or their partner."*

- Gene McQuade

## Keep it simple

Reduce interpretations as much as possible. People are reluctant to digest complex messaging.

*"Keep it simple, (stupid). The KISS principle is to tell people what you're going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them."*

- Gene McQuade

## CASE STUDY

### Communicating at scale.

Paul Smith, EVP & COO at State Farm, holds a digital townhall every six weeks with 4000 to 5000 associates. He invites somebody leading a component of the company's transformation to assist him in providing more detail where necessary.

He uses Slido to take questions in the order they were written. While this results in repeated questions, it provides a signal of what people are concerned about and an opportunity to repeat the most crucial messages. The highly inclusive approach builds credibility.

Paul focuses on communicating the logic and method used in making conscious decisions.

## PERSONAL EXERCISE

Aim to have 100, 1-on-1 communications per week. These may be simple hallway interactions or casual conversations while waiting for a Zoom call to start. Lead with two questions:

1. What do you do?
2. What is your biggest challenge?

## Be aware of external perception

Regardless of what you are saying or your credibility, people have a tendency to believe what they read from external sources.

Spend a lot of time positioning your strategic decisions in the media because, even to your associates, the media will hold greater weight than your internal communications.

Craft your informal communication. How you react to challenging situations, both verbally and through body language, will signal where your priorities lie.

People will interpret who is on your calendar, who is going into your office, which meetings are fast tracked and which are delayed. Be conscious of how you are seen from the outside.

*"You need to turn to town halls, group meetings or individual meetings. It gives employees a chance to ask you questions, assess your answers and most importantly, interpret your body language."*

- Gene McQuade

## Be relentless about communication

You cannot communicate enough. Do not underestimate the time it takes for a message to be sent, processed, and translated into action.

It is not enough to just communicate at a high level. Directly communicate three levels down at least.

*"It takes three to five times as much energy and time as you think it does. You're communicating to a moving river. People have short memories. It requires intensity."*

- Jack Stahl



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