

PR News

Building the bridge between PR and the bottom line.

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Contents

Change Management

Employee Comms

'What's In It for Me?' a Positive in Change Comms Initiatives

Managing change is something that we as individuals do all of our lives. Whether we manage it well or terribly, however, is a question for our families, friends and maybe our psychiatrists.

When it comes to change within organizations, change management is a mixed bag.

(DID YOU KNOW?)

Seven Things You Will Learn in This Week's Issue of PR News

1. More than three-quarters of survey respondents say they are more cautious in providing their e-mail addresses. (p. 1)
2. *Consumer Reports* does not allow its reviews to be used in any advertisements or for other commercial purposes. (p. 2)
3. Setting PR objectives on the basis of what competitors are doing is a common, yet flawed, practice. (p. 3)
4. Due to an aging workforce and a global demand for talent, Lockheed Martin may face a worker shortage at the end of the decade. (p. 4)
5. One common change management mistake: concentrating too much on the communications. (p. 6)
6. PR pros often forget that e-mail can be a potent weapon during a crisis. (p. 7)
7. In today's changing world, PR must think more strategically and for the long term. (p. 8)

The types of events that trigger more formal change management practices vary, but they can run from big—a company merger, a new CEO—to relatively small—a new piece of software introduced to the accounting division, for example.

Whether big or small changes, PR pros can add value to the change management process, says Dan Pecchia, president of Youngstown,

Ohio-based **Pecchia Communications**. "A good PR person can cut through the complex language that often accompanies internal change—particularly if it's around technology," he says. But even changes in HR often are expressed with difficult language, Pecchia adds.

Tyler Durham, managing director of **Ketchum Pleon Change**, the change management division of Ketchum

PR, agrees that PR can play a key change management role. "We're having to think about creative ways to cut through the noise within organizations," says Durham.

PEOPLE COUNT

Durham has seen a key trend emerge as the economy begins what appears to be a revival: "Companies are now reinvesting in their people," he

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Digital PR

Social Media

Measurement

Subject: E-Mail Is Alive and Thrives Despite—and Because of—Social Media

E-mail is the grande dame of digital communications. Long the platform of choice for online outreach to customers and prospects, e-mail no longer garners *most* of the attention from communicators, many of whom are looking to integrate social media platforms like **Facebook** and **Twitter** into the mix.

Yet, says Jeff Rohrs, principle and head of marketing research and education at **ExactTarget**, e-mail is "the original social media." And as an outreach platform it still carries a lot of weight for most communicators and consumers. ExactTarget's new study, "The Social Breakup," reports that 95% of U.S. online consumers use e-mail, and 93% of them

are subscribers to at least one permission-based e-mail per day.

The ExactTarget report strives to determine why consumers "break up"—or unsubscribe—with e-mail (as well as Facebook and Twitter). The main reasons, says Rohrs, are threefold:

- **Frequency:** The customer receives e-mails too often, or not enough.
- **Irrelevance:** A brand doesn't provide e-mail content that's relevant enough.
- **Boredom:** Lack of compelling content.

The study also finds that consumers are becoming more aware of the control they wield

in the acceptance of e-mails: 77% say they are more cautious about providing an e-mail address.

These findings lead to some basic questions: In 2011, how effective is e-mail as a communications platform, and how are e-mail campaigns evolving given the rise of social media? To answer those questions, *PR News* reached out to the nonprofit world, where, traditionally, e-mail campaigns are plentiful, to get some answers to those questions.

CHOOSE YOUR TARGETS

Tom Jelen, director of online communications at the **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)**,

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Communicating Change

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says. And they're doing it in a couple of ways: by harnessing ideas and innovation in new or more efficient ways—via social media, for example; and by enhancing internal employee culture to deal with the new economic realities.

Pecchia says that organizations are realizing the value in investing in sound change programs, ones that follow the concept that change is easier to implement if employees are fully engaged in making the change happen. "It's getting employees to buy into the benefits of the change, and that can be hard to achieve," says Pecchia.

Yet it's not just the rank and file that need the buy-in. For Tami Brandt, change management manager at

Whirlpool Corp., the challenge is coaching upwards. "It's crucial to have effective communications with leaders of the change, and relay to them how a good change plan will lead to success," she says.

At Whirlpool, Brandt handles change communications as part of a trifecta of responsibilities: training and development, communications and sponsorship (helping sponsors be successful in their roles).

Brandt's first key communications step within a change initiative is to do an organizational assessment of all audiences that will be impacted. How will buy-in for the change be achieved with those different audiences? Through simple memos from leadership, face-to-face meetings, information

posted on an intranet?

Durham says this step is critical. To him, a well-designed change initiative hits the right stakeholders at the right time with the right messages. "It doesn't have to be process heavy, but there needs to be strong leadership and communication, and a disciplined approach."

PROCESS MATTERS

Being a change management pro, Brandt does care about process, developing a complete plan with four pillars: awareness, preparation, execution and follow-up. It's a process that she tries to simplify for key stakeholders.

"I relate change management to the analogy of moving," she says. "If you're going to take a new job in a new city, and you're going to move your family across the country, there must be a seamless transition." All during the move, you're selling it to your family and preparing for it by performing sub-tasks, continues Brandt.

Whatever analogy that you as a communicator might impart to your stakeholders, Durham recommends looking at the big picture. "Companies sometimes over-rely on the communications itself," he says. "They should be much more dependent on leadership's alignment with the change and their ability to motivate their staffs."

According to Durham, other positive conditions for change include:

1. Sustained visible support and alignment from leaders.
2. A clear and inspiring picture of the desired future state.

3. Employees are involved in shaping elements of that future state and know what they have to do on a daily basis to support the change.
4. Adequate resources are dedicated to the change to enable both employees and the organization to be successful.
5. The change and performance challenges are based in the language and processes of day-to-day work.

Pecchia says that while change management concepts remain mysterious among some organizations, most of his clients have bought into the process. However, a common dangerous practice, he says, is communicating the message, "We're going to change because the boss says so." That's a message that won't resonate internally. "There has to be a 'what's in it for me' component," says Pecchia.

And that's achieved by getting employee input, getting them involved early in the process and clearly outlining what the benefits of the change are, says Pecchia.

Bottom line: The world is rapidly changing, which requires new thinking on the part of PR pros (see Mike Herman's Tip Sheet on page 8). Yet with some process and leadership, change—large or small—doesn't have to be painful. **PRN**

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IMPERATIVES FOR SUCCESSFUL CHANGE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Time for change? Here are some must-do's from Dan Pecchia, president of **Pecchia Communications**, for communicating successfully about major organizational changes.

- **Tell the Truth:** Be clear and forthright about exactly what's happening. Blurriness and hedging can undermine trust and dilute the support needed to embed change. Come clean with the facts and the rationale for the change.
- **Make the Case:** There's a reason you're making these changes. Don't be shy about conveying it. Employees and other key audiences need to know our rationale—even if they do not agree with it. A good case will maximize support and limit resistance.
- **Be Consistent:** Get a foundational FAQ and key facts and messages in place early and make sure key managers understand them. Don't suffer any wildcat messages, even if they're accurate. Consistency in look is important, too.
- **Use Plain English:** Gobbledygook, bureaucrat-ese and other forms of poor language come off as fudging or hiding. Communicate benefits clearly and sharply, even if employees are not used to it, in order to nurture understanding and acceptance.
- **Measure and Monitor:** Do surveys to measure awareness and understanding. Knowing where the needle rests is important to moving it. Allow for comments. Employees and others appreciate the chance to add input.

Editor's Note: Can't make next month's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony? Here's an alternative: Attend the **PR News PR Measurement Conference**, set for March 1 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., and watch our own rock stars, the first crop of Measurement Hall of Fame honorees, be inducted. Go to prnewsonline.com to register.