

FIND THE RIGHT WORDS

Mergers can be a tense and nerve-racking period for employees. It is the responsibility of top and middle managers to smoothly communicate the change process.

by Anne-Marie Soderberg

Mergers are extraordinarily complex organisational change processes. A significant number of researchers have studied processes of post-merger integration during the past 15 to 20 years in order to identify circumstances that can explain why only a few mergers turn out to be a success whereas more of them fail or at least meet serious challenges in areas where the top managers and decision makers were not prepared for them. Among the many circumstances that are influential in the success of a merger, this article will emphasise two: firstly, the extent and quality of the internal and external communications processes, and secondly, the managers' ability and willingness to take on the role of change agents and strategic communicators giving sense to the change processes. When post-merger integration is less successful, some researchers explain it as a result of little and insufficient communications, on the one hand between the merging parties and on the other hand between managers and employees. For this reason, some researchers and consultants often recommend communication to be as plentiful, as open and as ex-



PLICIT as possible in all phases from the planning of the merger and until the various phases and tasks of the merging processes have been carried out .

Managers must initiate dialogue Even the unpleasant consequences of a merger must be communicated. Management ensuring that no changes will occur after a merger will rarely be taken seriously by employees. Communication that, as its primary goal, aims to calm, may on the contrary result in increased creation of rumours and myths about the imminent future. Thus, managers are recommended to initiate ongoing dialogue with their employees. For one thing, in order to lessen their insecurity and anxiety, so that they do not become incapable of action

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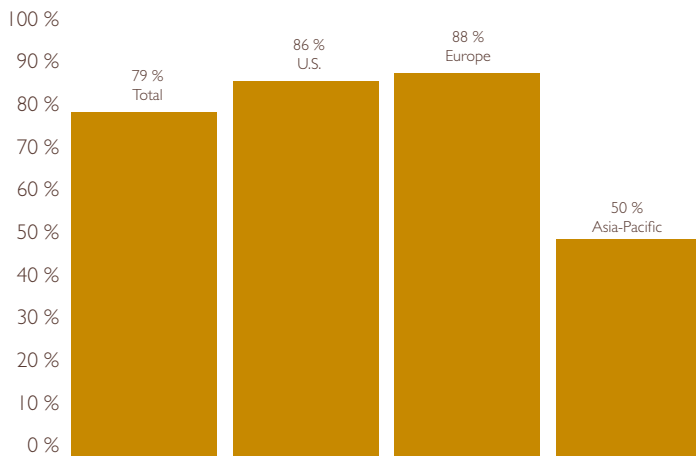
FACTS & FIGURES

The global research team at Burson-Marsteller spent the period between November 2009 and January 2010 polling Fortune 100 companies in the U.S., Europe, Asia-Pacific and Latin America for their take on social media as a corporate tool. With all the opinion pieces and grandiose predictions made on behalf of these new communication channels, this survey is a useful corrective to the array of conflicting opinions and theories around Web 2.0 in the corporate sphere. For example, the report finds that more than one half (79 per cent) of the top 100 companies in the Global 500

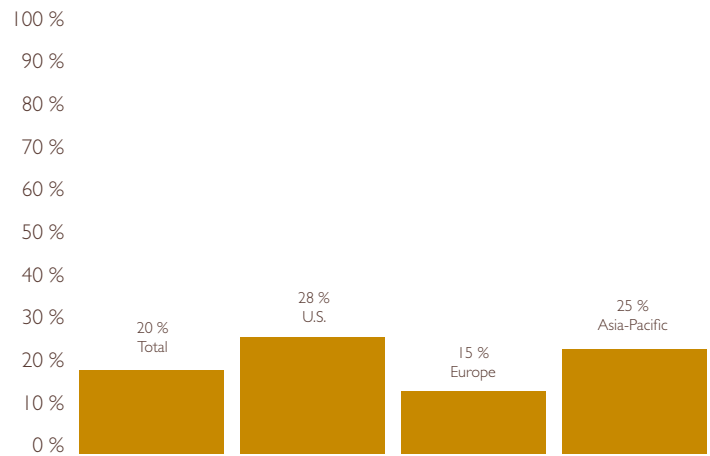
are using at least one of the major four platforms explored in detail by the study: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or corporate blogs (below left). Only 20 per cent of the major international companies are utilising all four platforms in an attempt to engage with stakeholders (below right) – some tools are better suited to particular businesses than others, but the lack of an integrated approach perhaps speaks of a residual hesitancy towards a full embracement of the social media arsenal. *Taken from Burson-Marsteller Fortune Global 100 Social Media Study*

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Global Companies Using at Least One Social Media Platform



Global Companies Using All Four Platforms



COMMENTARY

Communications and the rise of the Right

Hungary's recent elections saw the marginal Jobbik party ("Movement for a better Hungary") win 16.7 per cent of the votes. The party's leader, Gabor Vona, sees this as a popular mandate and has promised "very distinct and very spectacular politics"; he has also promised to attend the opening of parliament (pictured) dressed in the traditional (and banned) uniform of the Magyar Garda (Hungarian Guard). Echoing a familiar European trend, the party won support with its appeals to what it describes as marginalised and underrepresented "ordinary" Hungarians, and is now faced with the dilemma of maintaining its status as a political outsider (and, by association, untainted by corruption) while participating in mainstream politics. Another familiar story: the party bristles at foreign media coverage, which has focused on the party's alleged antisemitism, promises to end what it calls "Gypsy Crime" and its black-clad guards. Jobbik has a sophisticated approach to communications, with coordinated social networking and crowd sourcing. Yet a dig under the surface soon links the curious visitor to extremist websites, white supremacists



and antisemites. Joerg Forbrig, of the German Marshall Fund, has said that Jobbik's success is built on fears over the economic crisis, globalisation and social injustice on the one hand, and concerns over cultural diversity, migration and minorities on the other. He also points out that the rise of perceived extremists can scare off potential investors: hostile references to "multinationals", "foreign capital" and a "sellout of Hungarian land" are not designed to attract outside investment, which Hungary – struggling especially hard with the effects of the economic crisis – needs. Viktor Orban, the leader of the centre-right Fidesz and next Prime Minister, must make clear the official stance on Jobbik.

Image: flickr

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PERSONNEL



Pierre Goad
(Global Head, Corporate
Communications)
Institution: Zurich Start: May 01



Switzerland: Pierre Goad moves to Zurich Financial Services

Zurich Financial Services Group has announced the appointment of Pierre Goad as its global head of corporate communications. Reporting to Martin Senn, the group CEO, Goad will be responsible for the communications function at Zurich's Corporate Centre and across the group. He succeeds Francis Boucharde, who is formally assuming a new role as general insurance head of proposition development.



Jannik Lindbæk
(VP, Media Relations)
Institution: Statoil
Start: April 01



Norway: New head of media relations at Statoil

JANNIK LINDBÆK has been appointed vice president media relations, head of corporate press office and corporate spokesperson at Statoil, where he will take over from Ola Morten Aanestad, who has been appointed vice president of media relations for Statoil in North America and will transfer to Houston during the summer. Lindbæk joins from Aker Solutions, where he was senior vice president corporate communication.



Régine Coqueran-Gelin
(Head, Corporate Communications
& CSR)
Institution: Alcatel-Lucent
Start: March 19



France: Alcatel-Lucent appoints Coqueran-Gelin

Alcatel-Lucent has appointed RÉGINE COQUERAN-GELIN as head of corporate communications and corporate social responsibility, replacing Caroline Guillaumin. Based at the company's headquarters in Paris, she reports to Stephen A. Carter, the newly appointed chief marketing, strategy and communications officer. Coqueran-Gelin had previously managed the corporate media relations for Alcatel-Lucent.

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EVENTS



22.04.2010 – 23.04.2010 Internal Communication Conference

New and experienced speechwriters will meet and exchange tips, experiences, ideas and contact details at this annual event that attracts attendees from executive, freelance, corporate and governmental backgrounds.

► Quadriga University, The Westin Grand, Berlin

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29.04.2010 Engaging Internal Communications Conference

Join top internal communicators to discover how during turbulent economic times, internal communications are more important than ever, ensuring you are using the right mix of channels and proving the ROI of your efforts.

► Haymarket Events, Grange Hotel London

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05.05.2010 – 07.05.2010 Corporate Communicators Conference

Come to Motor City, where this conference will give you an exclusive, in-depth look at how GM uses social media to revolutionise its culture, launch new products and deal with crisis communications.

► Ragan/General Motors, Detroit

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06.05.2010 Lac Lemán Communications Forum

This forum will provide an up-to-the-minute review of the Web 2.0 landscape. Forum participants will gain insights into how to deploy proven strategies for using new and emerging digital platforms.

► University of Lugano/Harbour Club, Olympic Museum, Lausanne

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