

## CORPORATE TRANSFORMATION

*Communicating major changes such as mergers, acquisitions and sell-offs is never easy, and requires constant communications with all stakeholders – both internal and external.* By John McLaren

I have always been fascinated by language. New words and sayings not only enter our language at regular intervals, but they seem to sum up an era. No PowerPoint presentation in the 1990s seemed complete without reference to the ‘paradigm shift’ that we were – supposedly – going through. That single phrase was what every company on the planet had to plan for. Similarly, a whole new industry opened up – called change management. Suddenly, we were told, the only constant is change. Trying to explain this change was the job of us, the communicators. That challenge has defined my five years at Akzo Nobel – or AkzoNobel as we now officially call ourselves. The eradication of one blank space sums up an incredible amount of hard work, strategic thought and intense focus on change. As they say, it’s the little things that matter.

**TOTAL TRANSFORMATIONS** Just when we thought we were ready to face the future and go back to what I call peacetime communications, we instead encountered another rollercoaster ride, as the worst economic crisis for several generations (and words like sub-prime entering our lexicon) has forced us, like virtually every other corporation, to reevaluate our business strategy in response. Managing change communication has always been a core competency of the corporate communication function but never before has the ability to communicate change internally and

externally been tested so thoroughly. It’s one thing to build reputation in a growth market; quite another to communicate a reorganisation in a downturn while helping to ensure that everyone remains focused on delighting customers, maintaining shareholder confidence, improving operational efficiency and motivating employees. On top of this, corporate communication teams, like all corporate functions, are being asked to do more for less and focus on delivering now while also shaping the future. We are facing new and more complex business and communications challenges in an unpredictable environment. It’s a situation that is leading to many corporations to look at their change communication capability and how to address the communication challenges ahead. Having been through a near-total transformation over the last four years, I believe AkzoNobel is well set to communicate these latest changes effectively, internally and externally. So what lessons did we learn, and how will they help us into the future?

**AKZO NOBEL TO AKZONOBEL** When I joined the company late in 2004, a process was just starting. Relatively new CEO Hans Wijers hired me and a new Senior Vice President of Human Resources because he had a vision of transformation that was, as they say, total: he did not just want to look at what Akzo Nobel did, but how it did it too. First came structure....

[READ MORE ↗](#)

MScom  
Executive Master  
of Science in  
Communications  
Management

### Take your communications career to the next level

A PART-TIME PROGRAM FOR EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONALS  
AT USI UNIVERSITÀ DELLA SVIZZERA ITALIANA



#### Information meetings

Zurich June 16 | September 9 | October 6 | Amsterdam May 28-30 | Vancouver June 5-6 |  
Brussels July 2-3 | New York July 15-17 | Los Angeles July 20-21 | Berlin September 10-11 |

Learn more  
and register at  
[www.mscom.unisi.ch](http://www.mscom.unisi.ch)

“ Any edge you can have in the current economic environment is valuable. MScom, in addition to providing students with strategic communication skills, allows them to create networks with professional peers they might otherwise never meet. ”

Paul A. Argenti, MScom Faculty  
Professor of Corporate Communication  
Tuck School of Business, Dartmouth College, USA

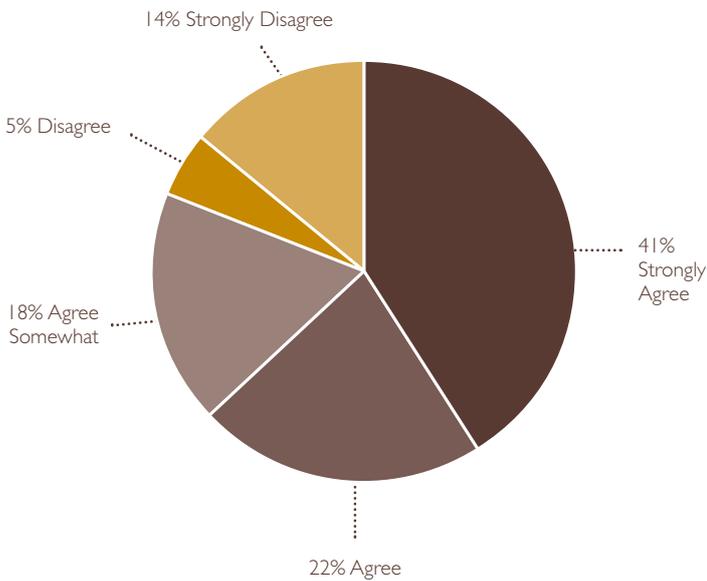


## FACTS & FIGURES

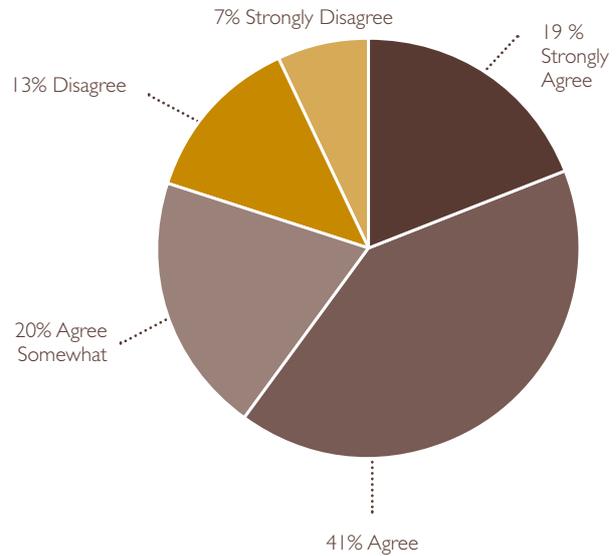
Earlier this year, Jennifer Leggio, who writes about the “social business” side of social media for ZD.Net, presented her survey into the relationship between in-house communications and outside agencies. She asked “Is your agency getting you more than just air cover?”; in other words, having explained which type of stories will get the company the right

brand recognition or gain the right tools to support the sales team did the respondents feel that they got value for money from their agencies? While 60 per cent of respondents seem to be satisfied with the quality of coverage they receive, the other 40 per cent are either on the fence or dissatisfied. *Taken from zdnet.com/Jennifer Leggio*

### Agency communications are informative and timely



### Opportunities received are more than just air cover – they are on-message and support corporate objectives



[READ MORE ↗](#)

## COMMENTARY

### Phone hacking hacks away at press credibility



As Director of Communication and Planning for the UK’s Conservative Party, Andy Coulson occupies a position of influence and power – most political observers would bet on the Conservatives being in power after the next election. Yet on July 9, the Guardian newspaper led with a highly embarrassing story on how, under Coulson’s editorship, the News of the World tabloid used to hire private investigators to hack illegally into the mobile phone messages of many public figures, such as politicians and sports figures. The paper claims Rupert Murdoch’s News Group Newspapers has paid over £1m to settle legal cases that might have revealed his journalists’ repeated use of criminal methods to get stories. Probable next Prime Minister David Cameron has defended Coulson from calls for his resignation; the complicit silence of other newspapers over the story helps safeguard Coulson’s position, as well as once again highlighting the unaccountability of the modern press media.

#### Imprint

Editor in Chief  
Marc-Oliver Voigt

Newsletter Editors  
Richard Morgan,  
Dafydd Phillips

Publishers  
Rudolf Hetzel,  
Torben Werner

Send your Personnel News updates to  
[personnel@communication-director.eu](mailto:personnel@communication-director.eu)

twitter

Follow Communication  
Director: Now On Twitter!

## PERSONNEL



Jon Bunn

(Corporate Affairs & Communications Director)

Institution: Aviva

Start: June 01

### UK: Bunn heads Corporate Affairs and Comms

Aviva plc, the international savings, investment and insurance group, has appointed JON BUNN as Corporate Affairs and Communications Director for Aviva in Europe. Reporting to Andy Moffat, Aviva's Director of Human Resources in Europe, Bunn is responsible for internal and external communications across the region. Previously, Bunn was Group Media and Public Relations Director at Prudential plc.



Markus Kaufmann

(Head, Communications & Marketing)

Institution: Abraxas Informatik

Start: June 01

### Germany: Kaufman heads comms at Abraxa

MARKUS KAUFMANN has been appointed as Head of all internal and external communication and marketing at financial software providers Abraxas Informatik AG and its subsidiaries. After stints in the travel, publishing and sports trades, Kaufmann was Head of Corporate Communications at the Zurich-based software company Netcetera from 1998-2005. Afterwards, he became a partner of the PR agency CR Communication.



Manuel Staub

(Head, Corporate Communications)

Institution: Basler Zeitung Medien

Start: June 01

### Switzerland: New role for Manuel Staub

MANUEL STAUB has taken over the division of corporate communication at Swiss Media group Basler Zeitung Medien. He succeeds Walter Schäfer, who has taken early retirement. Staub has several years' experience in different areas of the group's communications department. He was previously Director of the communication department. In the spring of 2010 he will complete his masters degree in Communication.

[READ MORE ↗](#)

## EVENTS



18.06.2009 - 19.06.2009

### Corporate Social Responsibility in Times of Crisis

This conference, held in Sofia, Bulgaria, will aim to find the answers to the questions whether and to what extent the successful CSR policies contribute to the sustainability of the business in the time of world economic crisis. The expected result of the conference will be better understanding by the audience of the benefits of and approaches to CSR.

► European Commission for Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities, Sheraton Hotel, Sofia

[READ MORE ↗](#)



16.07.2009 - 18.07.2009

### World Summit on the Global Economic Crisis

This conference examines the global economic crisis through the eyes of international experts. It provides a platform to exchange ideas and to come up with a long-term strategic approach to address the economic crisis.

► BPP Business School, London

[READ MORE ↗](#)



09.09.2009 - 10.09.2009

### Strategic Communication and Corporate Reputation Summit

Chicago is the venue for this Ragan Communications conference exploring Public Relations and reputation management in the context of an economic downturn.

► Aon Centre, Chicago

[READ MORE ↗](#)