

BRINGING AN END TO BORING PRESS RELEASES

Communicators who were journalists in their former lives are well-placed to offer tips on how to get your press release the attention it deserves

by Brandon Mitchener

If there is an art to writing a press release, it may, like any other art, ultimately be in the eye of the beholder. Something that is newsworthy to one journalist may bore another to death. Something that ends in one journalist's trash can become another's banner headline. That said, having received thousands of press releases in 15 years as a journalist, and written a fair share since making the switch to public relations, I think it is safe to say that there are at least some basic principles that distinguish better-written press releases from real dogs.

1: WRITE FOR JOURNALISTS This may sound obvious, but there are a surprising number of press releases out there that seem to have been written to flatter the ego of the author's boss. I once confronted ETUC, a Brussels-based labour organisation, about the fact that they kept spamming me with press releases about all the semi-famous people that the head of the organisation kept meeting. The problem with all of them was that they said absolutely nothing about the meeting other than the fact that a meeting had taken place. Nothing on content, no colour. I eventually instructed my Outlook to declare them a Junk E-mail Sender and from then



on was spared their spam (A quick look at ETUC's press room suggests that they have since mended their ways and are now writing press releases that look nominally interesting). The moral of this story is that press releases are ultimately intended not just to get the media's attention, but ideally to generate coverage that results in some sort of action. If you are going to send one out, make sure that it is at least interesting to journalists and ideally also to their readers, listeners or viewers. The best simple test for this that I ever encountered was a question a BBC reporter in Brussels once asked me as I struggled through an (admittedly hopeless) pitch: "What impact will this have on my editor's mother?" If you can answer that question, you're home free. If you can't, find the answer before you start writing or calling anyone!

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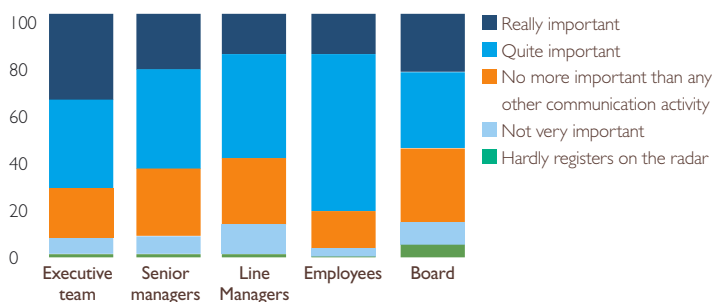
FACTS & FIGURES

Employee engagement as a driving force behind reputation management is the subject of *Communication for Engagement*, a new report conducted by the PR Academy – a provider of internal communications qualifications – and über communications, a consultancy specialising in employee engagement. In compiling the survey, the authors took as their starting point four major enablers identified in an earlier report (*Engaging for Success*), namely empowering leadership, engaging managers, employee voice and organisational integrity. According to *Communication for Engagement*, “internal communications practitioners say that resources are split between operational communication, keeping people informed, and the more impactful engagement drivers; strategic communication, employee feedback and research, and line manager and team communication”. In other words, only half of internal communication is directly linked to the four major

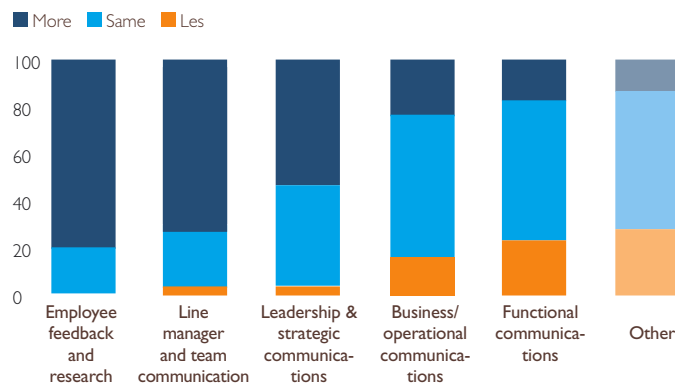
engagement enablers. The new report quotes one survey respondent as saying “senior leaders have a very cavalier attitude to employees, they don’t trust them”. This message is reinforced by the report’s findings on how key groups in organisations view internal communications (below). Only a quarter of respondents (24 per cent) believe their board thinks internal communications is really important. The figure for senior managers was similar at 23 per cent. 34 per cent believe the executive team values internal communications as really important, and just 17 per cent believe line managers think of it as really important. This detailed report – the first phase of a two-part project – provides a wealth of information on why everyone should take employee engagement more seriously. *Taken from PR Academy with über engagement, Communication for Engagement*

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How important do you think internal communications in your organisation is to the following groups?



In an ideal world, how would you change the amount of time spent on these priorities?



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PERSONNEL



Martin Hehemann
(Head, Group Communications & Brand Management)

Institution: Uniqqa
Start: January 1, 2012



AT: Hehemann appointed to senior role at Uniqqa

At the very beginning of next year, MARTIN HEHEMANN will become head of group communication and brand management at Uniqqa, one of Austria's largest insurance companies. Based in Vienna, he will be responsible for internal and external communications and brand management, and will report to chief executive officer Andreas Brandstetter.



Simonetta Consiglio
(Director, Marketing & Communications)

Institution: Sisal
Start: November 14



IT: Consiglio joins Sisal from Telecom

SIMONETTA CONSIGLIO is the new director of marketing and communications at gaming group Sisal, where she reports to the CEO Emilio Petrone. Prior to this, Consiglio developed her career within the Telecom Group, where she held various positions to become executive vice president of marketing and mobile voice services in Telecom Italia Sparkle.



Florian Martius
(Head, Office of Communications & PR)

Institution: ABDA
Start: January 1, 2012



DE: New year, new role for Florian Martius

As of 1 January 2012, FLORIAN MARTIUS will be head of the Office of Communications and Public Relations of the Federal Union of German Associations of Pharmacists (ABDA). He succeeds Thomas Bellartz, who left ABDA at the end of August. Martius is currently director of communications and public relations at Sanofi Pasteur MSD.

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EVENTS



08.12.2011 The Fast Track to Employee Engagement

Two case studies will show how companies take on the challenge of engaging employees quickly, whether through choice or in a crisis. Tips will be given on how to fast forward engagement when time is of the essence.

► ASPIC, The Soho Hotel, London

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12 – 13.12.2011 Embracing the Future of Communication

Under the banner 'Putting Social Media to use in Public Administration', this seminar is aimed at public officials and others who wish to increase their social media skills for internal and external communication.

► EIPA, European Institute of Public Administration, Maastricht

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18 - 19.01.2012 Qualitative Online 360°

This event will bring together senior level corporate insights executives, market researchers and academics to discuss cutting-edge qualitative research techniques and how they can be used effectively to deliver actionable insights for brands.

► Merliem Institute, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan

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25.01.2012 Beyond Enterprise 2.0

Past Communication Director contributor Valerie Perruchot Garcia (left), director internal communications at ACXA Group, will be among the speakers at this summit that will look at key issues for maximising internal communications through social media.

► KGS, Dorint Hotel, Amsterdam Airport

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