
AUSTRALIAN TRENDS IN EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

Maine Street Marketing's Bob Crawshaw recently joined 130 corporate communicators and HR execs to learn about trends in employee communications in Australia and benchmark with some of the country's leading brands. The occasion was Melcrom Publishing's first Strategic Communications Management Summit in the Asia Pacific.

Delegates agreed that people issues are fast becoming boardroom issues. Companies increasingly realize that as well as providing direction, they need to provide emotional connection if workers are to contribute to corporate success.

Staff are one group often overlooked during an organisational shake-up or when marketing strategies change. The warning siren should sound when senior executives become more concerned about business processes rather than the people who will implement them. Unless the workforce is informed, engaged and valued, workplace culture will fail to deliver on future vision.

Irrespective of how beneficial or necessary changes are, never assume that people automatically *get it*. An effective employee communications strategy must be in place whenever you significantly change the way people do their jobs.

Over two days several themes emerged that have implications for in-house communicators:

- Always take *the long view* in employee communications. It takes time to transform a workplace culture and several speakers suggested for large organisations it could take up to two years before you see real results.
- One-way communications don't work in the 2004 Australian workplace. Rather employee communications are about finding and then closing the gaps in staff knowledge and behaviour.
- People want to see the boss so that means you must place then keep your CEO and her senior team *centre stage* in any communications strategy.
- Consistently use research to measure staff awareness, behaviours and satisfaction levels.
- Train up and support executives and front-line managers to carry the corporate message onto the shop floor. Don't assume they already have the skills.
- Carefully staged, themed events are useful ways to grab workers' attention and provide a clear start point for your strategy.
- Blend word of mouth and multimedia strategies into a continuous conversation with staff.
- The workforce has a lot of collective wisdom so be prepared to adjust your approach when people raise valid concerns about the way ahead.

Maine Street Marketing helps organizations with tight budgets get better marketing results. For more information visit www.mainestreet.com.au or email info@mainestreet.com.au