

mindshare 2008

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Engaged Employees. Business Results.

Insidedge's Mindshare 2008 conference focused on innovative ways to engage employees

Calls and email conversations in the middle of the night. Multiple languages and cultures. Different attitudes toward work and life. In an increasingly global marketplace, communicators face new challenges and exciting opportunities as they work to engage employees in support of company goals and objectives.

The teams we manage and the employees we need to reach now reside in Bangalore, Sydney or Mumbai as well as in the cube next door or the office across the country. How do we recognize and respect regional differences while also finding common ground and shared values? How do we find the best talent and build integrated global teams?

This was a primary focus of Insidedge's third invitation-only Mindshare Conference, conducted May 7-8 in Dallas.

Editor's Note: This newsletter details key points of discussion raised at Insidedge's "Mindshare 2008" conference, conducted May 7-8 in Dallas.

"This is a great time to be working in employee engagement if you are curious about the world," said Keith Burton, president of Insidedge.

"At MindShare, we heard about how leading global companies are engaging their employees and the role of new media in facilitating collaboration and teamwork."

During the two-day event, more than 25 employee communicators from The Dow Chemical Company, Celanese, Dell, EDS, Dean Foods, Kimberly-Clark, Liberty Mutual and others shared best practices, discussed employee communications strategies and looked to the future of employee communications in an ever-increasing global environment.

A primary focus of the two-day discussion was technology: the importance of intranets, social networking sites, blogs and wikis. As teams become more global, and employees more savvy, it's the companies that stay ahead of the technology curve that will attract and retain a talented workforce, as well as keep them connected across cultural and geographical divides.



Mindshare 2008 Reid Walker (left), vice president of global communications at Lenovo, and Keith Burton, president, Insidedge.

Worldsourcing at Lenovo

With a 24-hour business day and no fixed headquarters, Lenovo truly is a borderless technology company, and is perfecting the strategy of worldsourcing.

"Things are changing so rapidly," said Reid Walker, vice president of global communications at Lenovo and Mindshare's dinner guest speaker on May 7th. "In order to stay competitive, we have to be thoughtful recruiters of talent, build global staffs and find ways to bring the very best ideas together." They do this through worldsourcing, which focuses on people and ideas, not locations and geographies.

Walker discussed Lenovo's approach to worldsourcing at this year's Mindshare dinner, emphasizing the role of communications and the importance of building trust within a global community of employees.

At Lenovo in particular, trust is built through regular communication tactics that embrace cultural and social differences. In addition to a standing matrix of status conference calls (at all hours of the day and night), teams employ practices that leverage new technology and "straight talk." Through wikis, chat rooms, cross-border mentoring programs and cultural training, employees become part of one effective business community working toward common goals regardless of language, customs or time zones.

Worldsourcing

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"You have to be aligned so that everyone knows what everyone else is doing," said Walker. "Real-time transparent communications, without old-world global barriers is critical to success in light of virtual work teams and shifting economies and social environments."

Managing a global team

With a team spread out across North America, Europe and Asia, Gretchen Rosswurm, director of global communications for Celanese Corporation, is no stranger to the challenges a global communication team faces. Her success in managing such a diverse group of employees across numerous continents is attributed to structure, process and flexibility.

"It's challenging," Rosswurm said. "But good process builds quality and can assure flawless execution despite differing time zones, cultures and norms."

Rosswurm shared what she calls the Celanese Communication Cadence, a process that kicks off with the company's annual Investor Day in December. Investor Day sets the momentum for communicating corporate key messages, and defines communication deliverables as the upcoming year progresses.

Flowing from that key event are the senior leadership meeting, quarterly financial and business updates, town hall meetings, external message platforms and intranet content.

In addition to developing processes, it's imperative that global leaders make the time to "strategically travel."

"As a global leader, you need to go out and see your team where they live," said Rosswurm. "People appreciate it if you come and you are informed about their culture."

Rosswurm also looks for people who have lived and worked outside the U.S. when she hires. They have to at least have traveled outside the states. "If you come to an interview with



Mindshare 2008 Celanese's Gretchen Rosswurm, director of global communications, discusses the importance of process in managing a global team of communicators.

me, and you don't have a passport, you aren't going to get very far," she explained.

Well defined individual objectives that are tied to functional goals and corporate strategy take the guess-work out of what the team should be focused on. Monthly reviews are key in keeping the team on task. "I haven't to this day had anyone on the team challenge their incentive at the end of the year or what it's tied to," said Rosswurm. "We're reviewing performance and objectives every month; it's ongoing and routine."

Harnessing the power of 2.0

What company doesn't have a robust intranet as a surefire way to share knowledge and information? You'd be surprised. According to Julian Mills, vice president of client development at Prescient Digital Media, there are many companies that don't have engaged champions for their intranets, a governance model, or objectives and goals in place for this powerful communication channel.

"A great intranet is the sign of great leadership," said Mills. "It shows that leaders in the company grasp the significance of collaboration and knowledge-sharing."

More than a tool, the intranet is a microcosm of the broader organization. Static, stale content with inconsistent messaging often points to similar challenges a company has yet to address in leadership, communications or human resources. Inability to collaborate in a virtual world via new technologies can perpetuate silos rather than break them down.

Attaining intranet leadership is tied to three key areas: usability and design, governance and measurement. "Content and usability are king on intranets," said Mills. "Bottom line, it has to be there or employees won't come back and you've lost credibility." One of the best ways to improve usability is to get user input – qualitative and quantitative. Show employees other sites, ask what they like, what they don't and what they need.

Governance models and showing ROI are integral to the longevity and sustainability of intranets. An executive champion who can see intranet returns tied to business results has "skin in the game" and is more likely to endorse, provide resources, and even remove roadblocks (surprisingly seen most often from the IT groups themselves).

"A good governance model is the single best investment you can make in your intranet. It is an investment of time primarily and is a low cost/high benefit activity," said Mills.

Employees move without you. No, not to the new corner office or to a new country; they're moving on to consumer-grade software, new technology and innovative ways of sharing information – approved or not. Social networking, wikis and videos top the list of new ways employees are looking to break down geographical barriers, retain records and share ideas.

"Blogs and vlogs are great ways to engage employees," said Mills. "Employee blogs, as seen at Sun Microsystems, show trust in the people and can really inspire problem solving, diversity of thought and new ideas."

Telling your company's story: building a content engine

After more than 30 years of growth and prosperity, EDS found itself in 2002 experiencing a great deal of change and pain. With a depressed stock price, an SEC investigation, an investment downgrade to “junk” and the departure of Chairman and CEO Dick Brown, the company needed a turnaround strategy to “stabilize, fix and grow” the business.



Mindshare 2008 Springfield Lewis, director of communications for EDS, shares the birth of the company's storytelling culture.

By the end of 2004, EDS was making this turn. They had stabilized the business, began executing against plan and investing in the future. The balance sheet reflected an investment-grade company again. The challenges that still remained were centered on intangibles that foster sustainability and longevity: how to inspire and motivate employees again; how to re-energize the business in the eyes of clients and consumers; and how to improve position among competitors. The answer: *storytelling*.

Re-igniting a culture of storytelling began with an interactive engagement process for executives in 2005, complete with exciting town hall meetings, theatrical flair, and of course, storytelling. Springfield Lewis, director of communications for EDS' Americas Region, remembers gaining executive level buy in. "If we had attempted to sell storytelling to our company's leadership on a PowerPoint presentation, we wouldn't have gotten anywhere," he said. "That's why we launched the way we did--with a big stage and lights and Tom Mattia (then vice president of global communications at EDS) telling stories."

After the company's leadership was on board, it was time to engage the employee population to get traction in a “culture-shift” and to gather feedback and input. Through a process of “engaging, building, evaluating, learning and re-building,” where employee input was incorporated, the seven chapters of the EDS Story were born. The second phase of the initiative rolled out the story and captured new ideas and learnings

through front-line launches, town hall briefings, campfire sessions and story walls.

Lewis and his team developed a story repurposing matrix to ensure that powerful stories were used across a range of channels from the company intranet to press releases and repurposed as appropriate to address different issues or topics. The matrix brings organization and process to the storytelling effort and extends the shelf-life of particularly important stories.

Why storytelling? “The idea of storytelling is more prevalent than ever in our culture and society now,” said Lewis. “It's the right time to use this medium to convey new ideas, company vision and mission and to connect employees to the company in simple but compelling ways.”

Research and measurement can drive successful communications

Engage, Understand, Measure. Research in the workplace and tying specific communication activity to business results can be as tricky as pulling a rabbit out of a hat. But it doesn't have to be as difficult as we think. According to Jen Sosin, president of KRC Research, with well-defined objectives and the right processes and tools in place, research becomes the foundation and ongoing driver of successful communication planning.

Measuring the impact of communications starts with defining research objectives upfront. Clarity at the onset about what constitutes success will guide the development of research content, influence use of appropriate tools, and inform or make changes to a program.

KRC RESEARCH

“You can measure awareness, perceptions and behaviors,” Sosin said. If behaviors are misaligned and productivity is decreasing, the research will reveal what can be done to fix it. It shows how to build the bridge to the desired goal.

Other best practices include understanding the biases of the tools being used, maintaining consistent measurement over time (e.g. monthly, quarterly), and sharing results with employees. Going back to the audiences you tapped for measurement and explaining what action will be taken as a result of their input is an important part of the process. It builds trust and credibility for the research program, and lets employees know that their voice matters in driving decisions and change.

Sosin said employee research provides information that drives persuasion and changes behavior. By using research as a tool to listen to employees – and acting upon what you hear – employee communications can have a positive impact on the business.

Bringing the Human Element to life at Dow

In 2006, the Dow Chemical Company launched an integrated advertising and public relations effort to enhance its reputation. The campaign was based on the company's aggressive sustainability goals, including a commitment to achieve breakthroughs in the areas of sustainable water supplies, adequate food supplies, decent housing and personal health and safety. It is centered on the concept that when you apply the Human Element to chemistry, you can solve some of the world's most pressing problems.

The company understood that the credibility and success of the Human Element campaign would depend in part on active engagement from its employees around the world. Dow's employee communications team partnered with Insidedge to design an internal communications program to align employees with the new brand positioning, build employee pride and commitment to Dow and motivate employees to live the promise behind the Human Element.

"To align internal and external branding, we worked with Dow's advertising agency, Drafftcb, to develop a template for 'internal ads' featuring employees, consistent with the look and feel of the external print campaign," said Linda Kingman, executive vice president of Insidedge. "We implemented a peer-driven storytelling campaign. Employees nominate colleagues to be featured in the series, called 'I am the Human Element,' who embody the spirit of the Human Element in helping Dow achieve its sustainability goals."



Employees are nominated via an online form on Dow's intranet. A global steering team follows a 57-step process in reviewing and selecting employees to be featured. An Intranet article and poster, signed by Dow Chairman and CEO Andrew Liveris, are developed for each employee that is selected.

Numerous Dow sites, functions and businesses around the world have implemented local 'I am the Human Element' series to complement the global program.

"Local programs give us an opportunity to recognize employees who have made significant contributions, but whose accomplishments may not quite make it to the level of the global program," commented Stacey Black, employee communications manager at Dow. "We're also expanding the global program to include team as well as individual nominations and adding personal photo and video components."

The response to the program has been very positive, with 90 percent of employees agreeing that Dow's efforts to build its reputation are beneficial to achieving company goals. 79 percent of Dow employees are aware of the 'I am the Human Element' program and 69 percent feel informed or very informed about it. The program won *PRWeek's* 2008 Employee Communications Campaign of the Year and the 2008 Gold Sabre Award for Employee Communications.

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