



## The Melcrum Insider's Guide Series

Practical information for internal communicators



# Eight steps to a successful change program



- ▶ Expert internal communicators provide their tips and practical advice on culture change

An exclusive report for members and trialists of *The Hub for Internal Communicators*

### **EIGHT STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL CHANGE PROGRAM:**

Navigate your way to a beneficial culture change using this eight-part model

### **ADVICE, TIPS AND CASE STUDIES:**

Four building blocks of culture

Finding practical ways to communicate culture

Communicating to transform culture

What makes your brand and organization unique?

Communicating a commitment to employee engagement

A culture of commitment responding to feedback

Connect global messages to local operations

Five tips and tactics for measuring culture

**PLUS: MELCRUM RESOURCES**



[www.melcrum.com](http://www.melcrum.com)

# From the editor



Annie Waite

*Eight steps to a successful change program* brings together a collection of exclusive articles for members and triallists of *The Hub for Internal Communicators*. Following the eight-point guide to successful culture change, you'll find a set of top tips and advice from experienced internal communication practitioners and consultants, including some of *The Hub's* dedicated team of experts.

Helen Coley-Smith, *The Hub's* change communication expert, provides her insights into culture change and some of the thoughts and ideas in this report. Helen has worked in the field of change communication and engagement for more than fifteen years and has helped employees in organizations including American Express, British Airways, BP and Ford to engage effectively with changes they've faced. She runs her own consulting practice, HCS ([www.hcsconsultancy.com](http://www.hcsconsultancy.com)).

With the award-winning *Hub for Internal Communicators* having just reached its first birthday, we're proud to announce that more than 6,000 communicators from businesses around the world are already members. Join *The Hub* now to access an enviable selection of tools, tips, templates, expert advice, peer discussion and the latest news about world of internal communication.

I hope you enjoy this short report - If you have any feedback or suggestions, I'd love to hear from you.

## Annie Waite

Editor, *Eight steps to a successful change program*  
[annie.waite@melcrum.com](mailto:annie.waite@melcrum.com)

*The Hub for Internal Communicators* is Melcrum's membership website for internal communicators around the world. Packed with practical tips and ideas to use right away in your job, register for a free trial of the site at: [www.internalcommshub.com](http://www.internalcommshub.com)

**"Critical to success is to pick the important metrics - the characteristics that together make an organization unique."**

**Angela Sinickas, Hub measurement expert, p14**

© Melcrum Publishing Limited 2006 [www.melcrum.com](http://www.melcrum.com)

**MELCRUM**  
PUBLISHING

**Contact:**  
Melcrum Publishing  
The Glassmills  
322b King Street  
London, W6 0AX  
United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)20 8600 4670  
Fax: +44 (0)20 8741 9975  
E-mail: [info@melcrum.com](mailto:info@melcrum.com)

Melcrum Publishing  
70 West Hubbard St  
Suite 403  
Chicago, IL 60610  
USA  
Tel: (toll free): 866 MELCRUM  
Tel: (312) 379 6500  
Fax: (312) 527 4917  
E-mail: [info@melcrum.com](mailto:info@melcrum.com)

# Table of contents

---

## **FOREWORD:**

Helen Coley-Smith, Change Communication expert for *The Hub* 1

## **EIGHT STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL CHANGE PROGRAM:**

An eight-step model for successful change 2

## **ARTICLES, TIPS AND ADVICE:**

Four building blocks of culture 5

Finding practical ways to communicate culture 6

Communicating to transform culture 8

What makes your brand and organization unique? 10

Communicating a commitment to employee engagement 11

A culture of commitment responding to feedback 12

Connect global messages to local operations 13

Five tips and tactics for measuring culture 14

## **MELCRUM RESOURCES:**

Further reading 16

*The Hub for Internal Communicators* 16

Subscription publications 16

Free resources 17

CD-Roms 17

Research reports 17

How-to manuals 18

Events 18

# Foreword: Hub Change expert, Helen Coley-Smith



## Helen Coley-Smith

is The Hub for Internal Communicators' expert in change communication and engagement. She runs her own consultancy practice, HCS ([www.hcsconsultancy.com](http://www.hcsconsultancy.com)), and has spent over 15 years communicating change in organizations such as American Express, Bayer, British Airways, BP, Department for Constitutional Affairs, Easyjet, HM Revenue & Customs and Sony.

In the business world, "culture" is one of those terms which is easily overused and often misunderstood. Over the years, I've worked with numerous definitions to describe organizational culture. Some have been practical, some theoretical and many somewhere in between! "How we do things around here," is a common and simple definition. "The values and beliefs which underpin how we operate," is another, more theoretical way of expressing culture. However you define it, managing and changing culture are difficult issues for many corporate communicators to come to terms with.

I first came across the concept of culture when I did an MBA course and learned about "The Cultural Web." Since then, academic thinking on, and organizational experience of, culture change has moved on. There are now plenty of stories of culture change in business - both successes and failures - and lots of books to read on the subject. What's still missing, however, is practical insight into what works and what doesn't, as well as tools and techniques and examples of best practice.

When I work on culture projects, here are just a few of the best-practice guidelines I use to steer everyone through the challenges of cultural change:

- Define what you mean by culture and spend time with people around the business agreeing this definition.
- Work closely with your colleagues from HR, change and organizational development (if you have them), as they tend to look at culture from different - hopefully complementary - angles.
- Don't expect managing or changing culture to be easy or quick - it isn't, and it usually takes a long time to achieve meaningful change.
- Be careful when using certain words such as "culture," "values" and "behaviors," because, unless they're already accepted in the business, they can be met with cynicism amongst employees.
- Unless you get the leadership team truly on board and they're prepared to role model desired culture, you can forget about making a lasting difference.
- Test/sound out any ideas and activities you're planning on your target audiences before going ahead. This ensures your activities will be grounded in reality and more likely to make the difference you're seeking for the long-term.
- Measure along the way - to gauge whether you're making the right progress and to keep you focused on the right things.

These are just some of the guidelines I use - there will of course be more that you can add, using your own knowledge and experience.

I hope you find the compilation of thoughts, ideas and case studies in this report useful and that some of the practical insights included within it resonate with your own experiences.

---

**For more guidance on change communication best practice, contact Helen Coley-Smith on the Hub For Internal Communicators' *Ask the Expert* page: [www.internalcommshub.com/open/change/asktheexpert/index.shtml](http://www.internalcommshub.com/open/change/asktheexpert/index.shtml) or visit: [www.hcsconsultancy.com](http://www.hcsconsultancy.com)**



# An eight-step model for successful change

---

If you've been asked to help with shaping organizational culture to support business strategy - or think the time may be right for your company to consider it - here's a summary of the key points to consider:

## 1. Clarify requirements and definitions

- Be sure culture change is what's needed. Find out what's driving the requirement - you might be able to solve the problem more easily by changing something specific that doesn't need people to change their underlying values and beliefs.
- Be specific about definitions. Think about using one of the models in this report as a starting point. Make sure everyone involved means the same thing when they say "culture."
- Make sure managers know what they're letting themselves in for. Organizational culture is complex, deep-rooted, and will take considerable time and energy to change.
- Be sure there's commitment from the top.



## 2. Set realistic objectives

- Don't try and boil the ocean. Think in terms of modifying aspects of the existing culture rather than trying to change it completely.
- Allow realistic timeframes. Culture is based on years of history and woven into every aspect of the organization.
- Remember, it's impossible to control culture completely, but you can influence it.



## 3. Establish a partnership approach

- Agree how you'll work together with other functions such as HR, marketing, operations and strategy.
- Consider setting up a specific team or working group.



#### **4. Understand your existing culture**

- Use a cultural audit to understand what's driving people's behaviors.
- Make sure you're assessing culture (long term, hard to change) not climate (short term, influenced by recent events)
- Use techniques designed to get underneath what's happening "today" and understand the underlying rules guiding behavior.
- Use results to establish those aspects of the culture you want to modify or re-emphasize.



#### **5. Get leaders on board**

- Help leaders understand what needs to change and work through what this means in practical terms for themselves and their teams.
- Be clear about their responsibility for communication and make them accountable for it.
- Provide training and materials to support them with communication.
- Make sure they back up words with action.



#### **6. Help teams interpret what values mean for them**

- Culture is about behaviors. Get beyond high-level statements and help people understand how you want them to behave differently by being clear about what values mean for them in practical terms.
- Use interactive sessions and exercises to help employees work through how they will apply the values to real scenarios from day to day.
- Make sure values are consistent with your strategy and brand, so people don't get confused about what's required of them.
- Recognize and celebrate successes. Build up a body of stories to help people understand what are seen as helpful and unhelpful behaviors.





### **7. Consider the needs of sub-cultures**

- National and regional cultures may interpret values differently and use systems and infrastructures in different ways.
- Provide core messages and partner with business units to communicate them in ways that are relevant and appropriate for their teams.
- Be clear about the extent to which you want to encourage aspects of a global culture or emphasize identification with specific sub-cultures.



### **8. Go the distance**

- Culture change is systemic and takes time - you'll need patience and perseverance!
- Use periodic focus groups, interviews or surveys to review progress and understand where you need to do things differently.

# 1

## Four building blocks of culture

---

Paul Sanchez, global director of organization research and effectiveness at Mercer Human Resource Consulting, describes how crucial it is to define the different elements of what comprises a company culture.

According to Sanchez, corporate culture can be defined as the sum total of how an organization accomplishes all that it has to do to fulfill its purpose or mission. This definition covers an organization's operational procedures as well as the standards, behavioral norms and deep-rooted values that underpin them.

Sanchez identifies four basic elements that form the building blocks of an organization's culture. Leaders, managers, supervisors and employees must formulate, shape, integrate and manage these four elements in order to create a living, successful culture:

1. **Strategy** sets out how resources will be focused and applied to accomplish the organization's mission.
2. **Structure** determines how the organization will arrange itself to carry out this strategy to ensure the mission is achieved.
3. **People** are deployed within the structure to carry out the required work.
4. **Process** entails procedures and practices: how the organization actually functions and carries out its work.

Through the interplay of these elements, the culture is formed and reinforced. "When all four are in balance the organization's culture is considered positive and supportive of its mission," says Sanchez. "However, imbalance can lead to sub-optimal results."

### Distinguishing culture from climate

Sanchez underlines the importance of drawing a clear distinction between culture and climate. He believes that while culture is long term and hard to change, it's highly susceptible to the internal and external forces that influence the business environment and organizational dynamics. "An organization that grants all employees a 10 percent pay increase will experience a positive spike in the internal climate," explains Sanchez. "Conversely, a necessary redundancy exercise can cause a negative climate in a matter of hours."

Sanchez highlights the dangers of using climate interchangeably with culture. He believes that time is the key differentiating factor. "Too often when a short look at climate is developed through some form of surveying, the naïve observer is tempted to hypothesize from the results a general statement about culture," he warns.

Therefore, he advocates using extreme care in forming conclusions about an organization's culture based on just one study and stresses that studying the culture of an organization is a complex process that requires data gathering from a range of sources and in a variety of different ways.

---

# 2

## Finding practical ways to communicate culture

Bill Quirke, managing director, Synopsis Communication Consulting and The Hub for Internal Communicators' strategy expert, provides his advice about using practical methods to communicate culture, such as asking employees to illustrate how corporate values apply to their jobs and the importance of acknowledging communication's influence on culture.

There are several effective ways to communicate messages to employees. In addition to conventional channels and media, Quirke advocates an internal communication strategy based on practical and innovative ways to help employees define corporate values and understand what they stand for and how they apply to their day-to-day work. These are based around four interactive communication tools:

- Discussions
- Games
- Painting pictures
- Telling stories

### **1. Discussions**

Quirke uses focus groups and team discussions to get people talking about dilemmas and values. "If you ask people whether they work with integrity, nobody's going to say that they don't, but if you ask them what they would do if they found UK£5 on the street, there are a lot of possible options and people end up having a debate about what they would do and how they define particular values in terms of behaviors," he explains.

Team discussions are particularly useful as they help teams establish a shared definition of the specific behaviors and practices associated with organizational values and work out ways of building them into the workplace.

Quirke underlines the significance of organizing cross-functional focus groups as these discussions highlight actual and potential conflicts relating to corporate values. "For example, service engineers might define integrity as telling customers exactly what they're getting, while salespeople don't necessarily do that because they focus on achieving their targets," says Quirke. This approach identifies clashes between different values and how people in various parts of an organization interpret the same values in different ways, leading to clashes between departments.

### **2. Games**

Another particularly effective tactic is to organize a game where members of departments, teams or cross-functional groups ask each other how they would apply corporate values to various workplace scenarios. Quirke advocates something similar to the moral dilemmas game, *Scruples*, where players have to second-guess each others' responses. As well as encouraging a positive atmosphere as people laugh and chat about organizational values, this approach encourages people to connect their own and their colleagues' personal values with the principles espoused by the organization.

Similar online games can also be created so that individuals can have fun while learning about organizational values. As Quirke explains, "The purpose of fostering values is to influence behavior, and this is a way of getting people to discuss what behaviors they apply to various situations. The next step is to decide which behaviors need to be

promoted in order to sustain the organization's stated culture and values and encourage everyone to apply them."

### **3. Painting a rich picture**

Another way of making corporate values memorable is to interpret them visually. "Get focus groups together and talk about scenarios. Then produce visual representations illustrating each of the corporate values," says Quirke. "A key value for one company was taking prudent risks, so we presented employees with a picture of a naked man cutting a hedge. People would laugh - and we'd say that this means you have to be pretty good here, but you also have to take care! The illustration depicting ingenuity as a value showed an AA (Automobile Association) patrolman fixing a fan belt with a pair of tights. These visuals bring the values to life as they literally show people what behaviors they're designed to encourage - or discourage."

A variation on this approach is to get people to produce their own pictures of how corporate values apply to their jobs, by asking them questions like, "What does determination look like?" As Quirke explains, this will differ according to people's roles and functions. For example, a salesman will see determination as getting the sale no matter what.

Quirke recommends getting people together in teams and either having a cartoonist draw the values as they see them or simply providing pens and paper and asking them to draw what they mean by values. "It's very revealing," he says, citing an example:

"In a company where one of the values was "adventurous," everyone was drawing boats and one group drew a twin-hulled catamaran. When I asked why they'd drawn a twin-hulled boat they said that it was to illustrate that the business was breaking in two." This illustrates how pictures enable people to share their perspectives on their organization's culture and values and where they feel these values underpin behaviors and processes and where they fall short.

### **4. Turning values into stories**

Quirke believes that publishing stories that show where values have been applied effectively and contributed to the organization's success gives all employees a chance to assess how they're doing. "Corporate culture is a journey," he says. "On a good day we're doing brilliantly, but on a bad day we may fall behind. It's important to reflect and consider how we're doing and look at what holds us back and what moves us on."

Internal communicators need to constantly assess how clearly they're defining the organization's culture and values and the extent to which people understand what behaviors the leadership wants to encourage. "Stories help people assess where they're doing these things and where they're not and give people a chance to work out how they could apply the values better to their actual jobs," says Quirke.

### **Using culture as a substitute rule book**

Quirke believes that if organizational values are defined and communicated clearly and consistently, and aligned to people's everyday roles and functions, corporate culture becomes a flexible substitute for a rule book. "Leaders want people to make the right decisions, but they know they cannot be there to resolve every issue that might arise. A strong corporate culture with clearly stated values that everyone understands gives employees a sense of how they are expected to behave and what's appropriate in any workplace situation."

# 3

## Communicating to transform culture

---

Fiona Rogers, managing consultant, Strategic Consultancy, COI, describes how communicating values through workshop participation and involving additional functions will help a change program gel together.

This is where communicators can really add value and that means an ongoing program of activity that goes far beyond the initial culture change program announcements or launching new sets of values.

### **1. Using workshops to apply organizational values to real-life issues**

Rogers is convinced that people need to internalize exactly what the new values will mean to them. "It's not good enough to have the values on the wall," she says. As part of large cultural change initiatives, Rogers and her team organize functional and cross-functional workshops for groups of managers and employees at every level in an organization. "Leaders, managers and teams apply the values to a typical working day and find out what practices and behaviors need to change so that they're aligned with the corporate values. They also apply them to live business issues that they actually have to tackle."

### **2. Making core values resonate with top management**

Rogers also works with leadership to ensure that their actions embody the values that they have helped to develop. She sits in at board meetings and other senior management discussions. "It's a very cathartic exercise," she says. "They need to ask themselves, in what way do the decisions they make, and the ways in which they implement them, truly reflect the values that the organization is now upholding? Leaders have to set an example so that the workforce can be absolutely confident that the whole organization is changing. Their actions need to drive the change."

### **3. Values champions to lead the way**

To ensure that culture change affects every part of an organization - and in the public sector this may need to extend through to key parts of the delivery chain - Rogers recruits and trains value champions. These are a cross-section of employees who, in addition to their functional duties, work with their peer groups by facilitating values workshops, coaching and supporting people in putting the values into action.

"Establishing a network of values champions across the employee population helps stimulate support more quickly and speed up the adoption of the right behavior down through the organization. They are also an invaluable local listening post with a direct line back to the centre," explains Rogers.

However, she emphasizes that the values networks are not designed to be permanent: "They exist to do a particular job. They don't replace the role of management or the internal communication teams. Their purpose is to help instill new corporate values into every role and function so that they become a positive virus that permeates every part of the organization," she says.

### **4. Utilize the corporate memory to address cynicism**

Cynicism among managers and employees is a key challenge in communicating any initiative involving culture. "Employees in organizations that are going through difficult times and may have undergone previous unsuccessful culture change attempts won't be convinced by grand pronouncements about values," says Rogers. She overcomes this by tapping into the corporate memory to find previous examples

of the behaviors and practices that the new values seek to introduce or reinstate.

"It's important that culture change connects with past success," she explains. "Asking people who are sceptical about going through yet another culture change to remember what worked well the previous time and incorporating these ideas into the current change program shows them that culture change may not be as radical as they had previously thought."

---

# 4

## What makes your brand and organization unique?

In this extract from his book, *The Employer Brand - Bringing the best of brand management to people at work* (co-authored with Simon Barrow), Richard Mosley outlines techniques to reveal an organization's true culture.

Mapping the broad cultural characteristics of the organization will only take you so far. This exercise may help you to determine the "type" of organization you have, but not what makes it unique. If you think of it in terms of understanding each employee, the knowledge that some are extrovert, intuitive, thinkers and judgers (following the Myers-Briggs dimensions) could be very helpful in working out how best to manage them, but it won't be enough to define any one as a unique individual.

From an employer brand perspective it's useful to understand both the type of culture you have (for the purpose of general positioning) and the specific elements of history and "personality" that differentiate your organization from every other.

### **What makes your organization unique?**

So where do you look to find what makes your organization unique? To begin with, conduct some desk research. Brand managers tend to start their stewardship with an induction into the history of the brand. This helps you to understand the brand's roots, the story of its origin and the key milestones in its history.

This kind of exercise is equally valuable for employer brands. What's the organization's story? Where and how did it start? What significant events have shaped the organization over the course of its history? For some long-standing organizations there are published histories. Weighing up the differences between the official, authorized versions and unauthorized "inside story" accounts can be particularly revealing. For most others you will have to do some digging.

If there's no official archive, the best place to start is talking to the "elders" within the organization, long-serving employees who "remember the early days." It's surprising how often you can find an unofficial archivist if you can't locate an official store of historical memorabilia. While we wouldn't suggest you need to write a full history of the organization, establishing some of the key dates, personalities and "moments of truth" for the organization can provide valuable depth to your understanding of the current employer brand.

---

# 5

## Communicating a commitment to employee engagement

---

Rob Hallam, vice president of employee communications at Pitney Bowes, a manufacturing company, explains how during a major culture-change program, it's important to maintain and promote leadership buy-in to an employee engagement drive.

The appointment of the new COO and the launch of the One Forum roadshows coincided with Pitney Bowes' first employee engagement survey that was conducted in late 2004. "We see engagement as very much tied to our ability to execute a One Company strategy and change our culture," explains Hallam. He sets out four ways in which employee engagement is instilled at all levels in the organization.

### **1. Visible leadership commitment to employee engagement**

The CEO underlines his commitment by sending regular messages to employees via a variety of media, including voicemail and print and online publications. Also, the CEO uses engagement scores to determine a unit's overall performance rating and bonus pool.

### **2. Celebrating top performers**

Pitney Bowes celebrates its top engagement performers by running cover stories in its global print and online publication, PB Today. "This program was called 'The Faces of Pitney Bowes,' says Hallam. "We did ten of these last year, so they ran twice in five editions. We have also produced large mural-sized photos of those managers and their teams," says Hallam. "We celebrate success and publish it everywhere. Our CEO loves it and we're actually selling part of our contemporary art collection which decorates the building to make room for an expansion of additional One Company and Engagement photography, all of which will focus on our employees."

### **3. Incentivizing managers via the reward system**

Employee engagement is recognized and reinforced in the company's formal processes, including its reward system. "We use a tool called the Strategic Architecture, which is our balanced scorecard," explains Hallam. "It's a Six Sigma tool which measures employee value, shareholder value and customer value. Managers' engagement scores also factor into their annual reviews, so engagement has a direct impact on their remuneration."

### **4. Rewarding engagement**

A further program called Rapid Rewards awards cash bonuses to managers and employees for outstanding behavior, including that related to employee engagement.

---

# 6

## A culture of commitment responding to feedback

Anna Van Exel, director of employee and customer excellence at Ted, a US-based low-cost airline, explains how providing opportunities for feedback and constructive dialogue will help cement a culture of engagement and appropriate behavior.

Anna Van Exel's responsibility for employee and customer excellence means that she is well placed to ensure that Ted's culture includes the characteristic of encouraging feedback and always responding. She achieves this in three key ways:

1. **Via e-mail.** Van Exel has set up mailboxes for employees and customers to contact her with feedback and queries. Despite the fact that she and her team do a lot of traveling, she makes sure that every e-mail is read and receives a response.
  2. **In person.** When van Exel and her team visit Ted bases, they ask for feedback from employees. "This is documented and the responses are sent back to each base so that people can see that their feedback was listened to," she explains. As part of a parallel customer feedback campaign, she regularly sets up information tables in airports so that customers can give feedback on Ted's service. "This has helped us get the pulse of what's happening," she says. Van Exel also hands out her business card so that she can be contacted directly. "Although people sometimes raise issues that we can't do anything about because they're not under our control, they always receive a response," she says. "This creates a huge amount of credibility for Ted as people know we have tried and we have communicated this to them."
  3. **By function.** In the event of specific problems concerning Ted, van Exel negotiates separately with each operational function. "I try to resolve flight attendant issues by working with the flight attendant organizations. If there are airport issues to overcome, I approach the airport organizations," she explains. "With such a small team, it would be impossible to mirror the structure of the organization and take an overall approach."
-

# 7

## Connect global messages to local operations

---

Fons Trompenaars, management guru at TNT Consulting, explains the importance of making sure messages aren't "lost in translation" when communicating to different cultures.

Trompenaars believes that communication and culture are interlinked. He defines communication as "the exchange of information" and culture as "a system of shared meaning." He underlines that communicating effectively across global organizations means respecting regional interpretations of basic concepts such as truth, integrity and loyalty.

It also means recognizing that different nationalities communicate in different ways. Trompenaars explains: "Americans tend to have a universalistic culture, so their corporate communication is designed to drive home the message. It often includes a lot of detail, such as video clips of the CEO's speech. The other extreme is a particularistic culture which tends to adopt a multi-local communication strategy. This risks providing insufficient consistency across the organization." Therefore global organizations are faced with a communication dilemma.

Trompenaars' dilemma reconciliation process leads to a clear solution: use communication to connect global messages to local operations. "It's important for organizations to define what they want to say and leave the way they say it to local operations. The key is to universalize the core message and particularize the way it's communicated."

### **The global/local communication "pendulum"**

Trompenaars has a metaphor to illustrate this: "It's like a pendulum," he says. "There's diversity of meaning at the bottom, where the pendulum swings, but it needs a nail at the top - the core message - to hold it steady. The rope that connects the core message to its intended audience can be defined as the effective communicator."

---

# 8

## Five tips and tactics for measuring culture

Angela Sinickas, president, Sinickas Communications, Inc, and The Hub for Internal Communicators' measurement expert, highlights the need to regularly measure your company culture in order to gauge the success of communications efforts.

### **1. Use a customized survey**

A standardized survey may miss the characteristics that are unique about the organization and underpin its culture. These are the key factors that a customized cultural audit seeks to uncover and measure in relation to business performance.

A standardized survey may identify patterns and correlations that are irrelevant or impossible to act on. Sinickas illustrates this with an example from the Gallup Q12 questionnaire, which found 12 factors that correlate very highly to employee engagement in many companies all over the world. One of those factors is having a best friend at work. "Although this finding makes perfect sense, there is little that an organization can do to encourage friendship among its employees," she explains. She believes in taking a more practical approach.

Sinickas' philosophy is to achieve business results through focused diagnostics and practical solutions. "Look at the numbers and develop ways of improving the positive scores and addressing the negative ones," she advises. "The critical success factor is to pick the important metrics - the characteristics that together make an organization unique."

### **2. Use open-ended questions to identify key metrics**

It's important to identify factors that relate to implicit culture as well as obvious practices and behaviors. Sinickas recommends using open-ended questions in interviews and focus groups to draw out how people really see their organization. Examples include, "How would you describe this as a place to work?" or "What's it like working here?" She asks focus groups, "What's management like here?" to draw out issues that are top of mind.

Survey questions are then based around the responses. These take the form of a statement followed by a range of agree/disagree options or a frequency measure - a question beginning "How often," followed by several options on a frequency scale ranging from "almost always" to "almost never" with three points in between. "This uncovers whether there is a problem around a particular behavior, how often it occurs and how strongly people feel about it," explains Sinickas. "The frequency scale puts numbers to otherwise intangible cultural characteristics."

### **3. Use stories and scenarios to uncover value-added behaviors**

Sinickas uses focus groups to draw out employees' personal experience and insights about what actions or behaviors might be considered a concrete demonstration of characteristics that add value to the organization. Employees are asked to relate practical examples of situations that brought extra money into the company or cost it money through lost productivity, duplication of effort or miscommunications. They then try to identify the actions and behaviors that result in successes and the ones that make things go badly. That leads to questions about the running of the company. Perhaps there's too much bureaucracy. Perhaps the management manages only vertically and never crosses over horizontally. Or perhaps information isn't being passed from shift to shift and work is being duplicated.

The next step is to ask executives and focus group participants what they think the company's success stories - and negative experiences - have in common. "This methodology helps to uncover the underlying themes that are ingrained in the organization's culture and identify whether it's a blaming culture, a collegial culture or a culture where people feel that they can't afford to make a mistake, so it's better to do nothing than to do the wrong thing," explains Sinickas. "That is how you extract the characteristics and attitudes that people wouldn't otherwise put into words and that have a significant impact on the company's business performance and results."

#### **4. Pre-test survey questions for misinterpretation**

Sinickas advises thoroughly pre-testing surveys for anomalies and possible misinterpretations. It's also important to check for ambivalent terminology that might skew the results. Surveys administered in multiple countries need to be worded particularly carefully to account for national differences leading to different interpretations of questions. She gives an example where the same expression was interpreted very differently by employees in two different countries.

A company that's headquartered in Europe, although their biggest single operation is in the United States, included in its survey the statement, "I feel proud to work here." Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed. "In the United States, that's a straightforward question requiring a simple response. People say that they're proud to let people know where they work," explains Sinickas. "But in France people associated pride with arrogance, so if a branch or office had marked a high score on that question, it might have been seen as a bad thing."

#### **5. Use reverse translation to uncover global differences in interpretation**

Words that seem simple in one culture may have very different interpretations elsewhere so it's important to use neutral vocabulary and language in order to obtain consistency of response. "Otherwise the results will be skewed and you might not know that because you're interpreting the answers in the way that you designed the questions, not necessarily in the way they were answered," says Sinickas.

This is an important consideration when having surveys translated into other languages. Sinickas recommends having the survey translated into the other languages, and then retranslating it back into the first language by a different translator. "This shows which terminology could be interpreted differently - sometimes in very funny ways," she says.

---

# Melcrum resources:

Through our publications, research, training materials and seminars, we gather best practices from businesses around the world to help practitioners make better business decisions. Melcrum has clients in more than 80 countries and has an international reputation, not only for editorial and research products of the highest standards, but also for tracking important trends in organizational communication, corporate communication, knowledge management and human resource management.

## **FURTHER READING**

For more resources on corporate culture including case studies from businesses including Gap, Dell, IBM and ANZ and others, Melcrum's report *Driving a high-performance corporate culture* provides a wealth of insights from leading communications practitioners, along with tools and templates to use at your organization. You'll find out how to communicate culture effectively with a special focus on how culture is affected by an organization's history, size and level of diversity. Plus, how to prove the value of your initiatives to senior managers, with practical and transparent measurement techniques.

### **Corporate culture in the new economy: How communicators can contribute to adaptive organizational DNA**

Like the role DNA plays in a human body, culture defines "how things get done" in an organization - the behaviors, the communication style and the corporation's core values. Here, Lynne Waldera identifies success factors for innovative cultures and defines what the communicator's contribution should be. Includes a case study from Cisco Systems and research results graphs showing the top influences on "iCultures" and the frequency of dialogue between the executive team and employees.

*This article is from Strategic Communication Management October-November 2000, Volume 4, Issue 6*

### **Driving culture change by consensus at IBM**

IBM made a major investment in its intranet in the late 1990s, a step that has paid off by enabling 330,000 global employees to participate in a discussion about corporate culture and company values. Here, David Yaun explains how the intranet became a platform for discussion and consensus, allowing all employees a say in rewriting IBM's corporate values for the 21st century.

*This article is from Strategic Communication Management April-May 2006, Volume 10, Issue 3*

### **Four essential ingredients for transforming culture**

When it comes to culture change, the communicator's dilemma is a thorny one. Organizational communication is first and foremost a reflection of culture. But without communication, there's no hope of culture change. To get the process in motion, Roger D'Aprix and Cheryl Fields Tyler suggest communicators start by teaching their organizations to communicate more effectively. Here, they share four crucial areas for practitioners to focus on.

*This article is from Strategic Communication Management April-May 2006, Volume 10, Issue 3*

*To order all the above articles, visit: [www.melcrum.com/store](http://www.melcrum.com/store)*

## **THE HUB FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATORS**

The Hub provides everything you need for success in internal communication. You'll find practical advice on everyday tasks like improving survey effectiveness, communicating strategy, beginning an employee engagement initiative, setting a strategic communication plan, calculating communication ROI, helping employees adapt to change, running focus groups and gaining buy-in for your intranet.

**[www.internalcommshub.com](http://www.internalcommshub.com)**

## **SUBSCRIPTION PUBLICATIONS**

### **Strategic Communication Management**

Six issues per year with best practices, case studies and research for communicators.

### **The Business Communicator**

What's working in corporate communication  
Ten issues per year with tried and tested ideas ready to be used in your daily work.

### **Strategic HR Review**

Six issues per year with the latest trends, techniques and ideas in human resource strategy.

### **Knowledge Management Review**

Six issues per year with best practices, case studies and research for KM practitioners.

## **FREE RESOURCES**

### **Free monthly e-newsletters**

Get practical ideas and useful resources to help you work smarter. Every month, we'll research a hot topic and deliver our findings to your inbox. You'll get great ideas, tips, stats, industry findings, resources and freebies every month. Sign up today at [www.melcrum.com](http://www.melcrum.com) for:

**The Source for Communicators**

**The Source for HR Professionals**

**The Source for KM Professionals**

**The Source for CR Professionals**

### **The Communicators' Network**

Where communicators meet online

The mission of this online discussion group is to act as a forum for sharing good practice, ideas and opinions about corporate communication.

Other Networks:

KM Network

HR Network

CR Network

### **Download free podcasts**

Listen to key findings from Melcrum's research on senior leadership communication, intranets, culture, corporate responsibility and much more.

[www.melcrum.com/link/podcasts](http://www.melcrum.com/link/podcasts)

## **CD:ROM**

### **CD:Rom: The Internal Communicator's Guide to Blogging**

Find out how internal communicators are using corporate blogs to maintain an open conversation with employees and stakeholders, where blogs fit into your communication strategy, and how can you get started.

## **RESEARCH REPORTS**

### **Transforming Your Intranet**

This report will help you turn your organization's intranet into the time-saving, value-creating tool it was always meant to be. You'll find out how to take your intranet to the next level by integrating the latest strategies, technologies and metrics, ensuring people can get to the right information when they want it and, ultimately, delivering business value. Also learn how to prove value to senior managers, with measurement techniques that go beyond simply counting page hits.

### **Top 10 New Technologies**

Top 10 New Technologies for Internal Communicators is the most authoritative report available on how to communicate using new technologies like RSS feeds, blogs and wikis. You'll find out how these new technologies work, how you can use them in your communications and what the implications are for your business.

### **Employee Engagement**

Employee Engagement gives you an exclusive "behind-the-scenes" look at what's working and what's not in engagement within leading organizations and shows you how to apply effective employee engagement strategies

### **Making Managers Better Communicators**

Making Managers Better Communicators features implementation ideas from 44 qualitative interviews, over 50 comprehensive case studies and quantitative data from over 700 HR and communication professionals. It also contains a collation of the findings from eight different research projects conducted by leading organizations over the last decade, proving the impact managers have on engagement and productivity.

### **Internal Communication Measurement**

Tools, techniques and best-practice case studies for proving the value of internal communication. This independent report contains data from a wide range of research including 32 in-depth interviews with practitioners, 65 detailed corporate case studies and a global survey of over 900 communication professionals.

### **How To Structure Internal Communication**

How to Structure Internal Communication provides best-practice tools and techniques for organizing your department to achieve maximum results. It looks at how organizations worldwide structure their teams; how they manage their communicators' skills, competencies and development; and how they fit internal communication into their organizations.

### **Key Benchmark Data for Communicators**

This unique survey gathers the latest information about communication practice in organizations worldwide. The findings have proved to be invaluable for communicators wanting to compare budget, salary and channel investment information around the world.

## **HOW TO MANUALS**

### **Best Practice Management Strategies**

Designed to save you planning time and development costs, Best Practice Measurement Strategies is the unique guide to performance measurement for communication and HR that will help you measure your success and prove your worth. To help you improve your skills and demonstrate the business value of your activities, each section tackles a different topic and includes corporate case studies, expert practitioner insight and proven models that work.

### **Measuring Internal Communication**

This 210-page manual is packed full of practical ideas to help you demonstrate the impact of your communication programs. Contains tried and tested techniques, templates, statistics and facts that will be ideal for improving your presentations.

## **EVENTS**

Melcrum run a wide range of events, including conferences, workshops and audio conferences. For the latest information, please visit our website [www.melcrum.com/link/events](http://www.melcrum.com/link/events)



#### **Contact:**

Melcrum Publishing  
The Glassmills  
322b King Street  
London, W6 0AX  
United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)20 8600 4670  
Fax: +44 (0)20 8741 9975  
E-mail: [info@melcrum.com](mailto:info@melcrum.com)

Melcrum Publishing  
70 West Hubbard St  
Suite 403  
Chicago, IL 60610  
USA  
Tel: (toll free): 866 MELCRUM  
Tel: (312) 527 4791  
Fax: (312) 527 4917  
E-mail: [info@melcrum.com](mailto:info@melcrum.com)