

PLAN FOR A POWERFUL HR-PR CONNECTION

MY BEING HERE IS A RESULT OF AN HR –PR CONNECTION. YOU HEARD LAST MONTH FROM HR CONSULTANT BARBARA FIORI. SHE AND I COLLABORATED ON A SERIES OF ARTICLES FOR THE CHAMBER ABOUT HOW POWERFUL IT WOULD BE IF HR AND PR PROS WORKED CLOSELY TOGETHER. THAT LED TO AMANDA’S INVITATION FOR BOTH OF US TO SPEAK.

I’M GOING TO BE TALKING ABOUT COMMUNICATION—SPECIFICALLY TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION I HOPE THIS PRESENTATION WILL BE INTERACTIVE. WE CAN LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.

IT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN TODAY’S MARKET FOR PR AND HR PROFESSIONALS TO COMBINE THEIR TALENTS AND STRENGTHEN THEIR ALLIANCE.

AS A PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATOR I NEED TO KNOW A LITTLE MORE ABOUT YOU?

HOW MANY ALREADY WORK WITH YOUR PR DEPARTMENTS OR AGENCIES?

HOW MANY CONDUCT EMPLOYEE SURVEYS?

I HEAR THAT ONE OF THE TOP FINDINGS IN YOUR SURVEYS IS THE FACT THAT EMPLOYEES ALWAYS WANT BETTER COMMUNICATION?

WHY IS THAT IN THIS AGE OF INERNETS, BLOGS, RSS FEEDS, PODCASTS, PDAS, INSTANT MESSAGNG, PODCASTING..NOT TO MENTION EMAIL AND CONFERENC CALLING.

MORE TECHNOLOGY DOESN’T NECESSARILY MEAN BETTER COMMUNICATION; IN FACT, SOMETIMES IT JUST MAKES IT HARDER.

WHAT I THINK IS THIS:

- EMPLOYEES REALLY WANT AND NEED MORE DIALOG
- THAT’S TWO WAY COMMUNICATION
 - IT’S RELEVANT, GENUINE, ENGAGING AND MEANINGFUL

- BLOGS ARE PROLIFERATING BECAUSE THEY AE PERCEIVED AS REAL CONVERSATIONS. DID YOU KNOW THAT 60 NEW BLOGS ARE CREATED EVERY MINUTE? MY SOURCE IS: FACTIVA, A DOW JONES AND REUTERS COMPANY THAT MONITORS THEM.

BLOGS ARE ONLINE LOGS WHERE THE EXPECTATIONS IS THAT THERE WILL BE OPEN, HONEST CONVERSATION. WHAT IF YOUR EMPLOYEE STARTS ONE, WOULD HE OR SHE BE SHINING THE LIGHT IN DARK PLACES YOUR ORGANIZATION DOESN'T WANT ILLUMINATED?

DOES YOUR COMPANY HAVE A BLOGGING POLICY? IBM DOES...IT EMPLOYEES AT IBM ARE FREE TO HAVE THEIR OWN BLOGS, BUT IT MUST CONTAIN LANGUAGE THAT STATES THE MATERIAL DOES NOT REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THEIR EMPLOYER AND IT PROVIDES SOME PARAMETERS , SUCH AS WHAT TRADE SECRETS ARE OFF LIMITS AND WHAT QUALIFIES AS DEFAMATORY?

YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING WHY THIS IS RELEVANT TO YOU AND WHY I AM PUSHING FOR THIS HR-PR ALLIANCE. IT IS CRITICAL TO BUSINESS SUCCESS TODAY—MORE THAN EVER BEFORE. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF FACTORS ALL CONTRIBUTING TO THIS—TECHNOLOGY— DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE—AND OUR GLOBAL ECONOMY.

THIS IS AN OPPORTUNE TIME FOR BOTH PR AND HR PROFESSIONALS TO SHOW TOP MANAGEMENT THAT THEIR COLLABORATIVE WORK IS CRITICAL TO THE BOTTOM LINE.

WE ARE WORKING AT A TIME WHEN THERE IS MORE COMPETITION THAN EVER BEFORE. AND CUSTOMERS HAVE MORE CHOICES THAN EVER BEFORE. AND WE ALL HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN REAL TIME FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES WORLDWIDE. YOUR ORGANIZATION'S BRAND CAN BE TARNISHED OVERNIGHT. WE ARE ALL SUSCEPTIBLE TO COMMUNICATIONS CRISIS. SO JUST TO SURVIVE, EVERYONE IN AN ORGANIZATION SHOULD BE ENGAGED IN SUPPORTING THE CORPORATE BRAND AND PROTECTING THE REPUTATION OF OUR EMPLOYER.

WHAT COULD BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN REPUTATION?

WHEN MY COMPANY WORKS WITH CLIENTS ON THEIR BRANDING WE LOOK AT INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS. WHAT YOUR EMPLOYEES ARE SAYING ABOUT THE COMPANY COULD BE IN COMPLETE CONTRADITION TO CAMPAIGN MESSAGES. THEN, NO MATTER HOW MUCH WAS SPENT ON ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION, THERE WILL BE A DISCONNECT. SUCH DISCONNECTS AFFECT THE BRAND, AND ULTIMATELY PUBLIC SUPPORT OR SALES.

DO YOU REMEMBER THE RECENT STORY ABOUT THE CABLE GUY WHO FELL ASLEEP ON A CUSTOMER'S COUCH ONLY TO FIND VIDEO FOOTAGE OF HIS SNOOZE ON THE INTERNET AND DOWNLOADED BY THOUSANDS ACROSS THE COUNTRY BY THAT VERY EVENING? HE WAS ON HOLD WITH HIS OWN COMPANY.

FOR YEARS AMATEUR CRITICS HAVE REVIEWED BOOKS, MUSIC AND CHAIN SAWS ON THE INTERNET. NOW, EVERYTHING IS SUBJECT TO CRITIQUE. A NEW SITE IN THE REAL ESTATE MARKET CALLED ZIP REALITY ENCOURAGES CUSTOMERS TO WRITE REVIEWS OF HOMES FOR SALE. SOON YOUR BATHROOM COULD BE REVIEWED ONLINE. RUDE REVIEWS CAN UNDERCUT THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS AND HOURS INVESTED IN MARKETNG AND PR.

IT USED TO BE THAT YOUR ADVERTISING AND MARKETING DEPARTMENT CONCERNED ITSELF WITH THE BRAND AND YOU COULD FOCUS ON EMPLOYEE NEEDS. BUT TODAY A BRAND CAN BE ATACKED FROM ANYONE ANYWHERE. THE INTERNET HAS EMPOWERED ALL OF US TO COMMUNICATE AND GATHER INFORMATION ON A GLOBAL BASIS.

IN FACT, I THINK ALL OF THE REALITY TV AND BLOGGING IS A \COLLECTIVE DESIRE TO FOR SOMETHING REAL. AT THE OUTDOOR MARKET RECENTLY I OVERHEARD A LITTLE GIRL ASKING HER MOM IF THE PEACH SHE SELECTED WAS REAL. I THINK EVERYONE WANTS TO KNOW WHAT IS REAL—WHERE IS THE TRUTH—EVEN IF IT IS BAD NEWS....WE WANT TRUTH!

A LOT OF COMPANIES TALK ABOUT GREAT CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS AND BEING PEOPLE-FRIENDLY, BUT IF THAT WERE SO, WHY DO WE HAVE A WEB SITE CALLED GET HUMAN.COM? THIS SITE PROVIDES SECRET WAYS TO BYPASS CALL CENTERS AND REACH HUMAN BEINGS.

I HAD A CLIENT THAT WAS A START-UP EQUIPMENT LEASING COMPANY IN NEW JERSEY THAT WANTED TO CONVEY IN ITS BRAND THAT IT WAS A COMPANY WITH LOTS OF HUMAN TOUCH. WE DESIGNED THEIR LOGO, WEB SITE AND KEY ADVERTISING MESSAGES TO CONVEY THE REAL PEOPLE ND REAL SERVICE BUT IN FACT, WHEN IT CAME TIME TO PUT REAL PHONE NUMBERS OUT THERE, THEY WERE UNWILLING TO DO THAT.

WHAT IS BRANDING?

BRANDING IS IN FACT MORE THAN DEVELOPING A LOGO, A LOOK AND FEEL SLOGANS, IMAGES OR MESSAGES...IT IS ABOUT CREATING A CONSISTENT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AT EVERY TOUCH POINT. WHY THEN NOT ENSURE THAT YOUR EMPLOYEES TOO GET CONSISTENT TOUCHES AND ARE EMPOWERED TO GIVE THEM OUT?

I WANT TO KNOW IF WHAT I AM SAYING RESONATES WITH YOU AND YOUR EXPERIENCE AT WORK? DO YOU FEEL THAT AT LEAST 75 PERCENT OF THE TIME ACTION AND WORDS MATCH UP? HOW MANY FOR 50 PERCENT?

I BELIEVE THAT BECAUSE WE ARE OPERATING IN THIS GLOBAL ECONOMY WITH TECHNOLOGY ENABLING FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION, WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE ITS IMPACT AND MAKE SOME MAJOR ADJUSTMENTS IN THE WAY WE COMMUNICATE INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY AND PLAN TO MAKE THOSE BRANDING TOUCHPOINTS REAL.

LET'S BEGIN BY GETTING SOME REAL FEEDBACK FIRST FROM EMPLOYEES.

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- (1) HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN YOUR LEADERS AND WHY
- (2) HOW COMFORTABLE WOULD YOU FEEL EXPRESSING YOUR OPINION WITHIN THE COMPANY IF YOU DISAGREE WITH A COMPANY DECISION AND WHY?
- (3) WHAT IS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM YOU EXPERIENCE WITH THE SHARED VALUES AND PRINCIPLES AND WHY?
- (4) HOW MUCH INFORMATION DO YOU BELIEVE PEOPLE RECEIVE REGARDING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COMPANY?
- (5) HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH ACTIONS AND RESPONSE TO THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED IN LAST YEAR'S SURVEY?

FOR COMMUNICATION TO BE EFFECTIVE WE NEED TO LISTEN. I KNOW THIS IS SOMETHING THAT HR PROS ARE TRAINED TO DO AND USUALLY DO IT WELL. IN FACT MORE THAN HALF OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS IS LISTENING. LET'S REMIND OUR LEADERS AND LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM TO HEAR FROM THEIR CONSTITUENTS BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY.

HOW TO TIGHTEN THE ALLIANCE

I AM PROPOSING THAT WE LOOK AT WHERE YOUR HR AND PR GOALS INTERSECT.

- (1) WE BOTH WANT TO BOTH WANT TO ENSURE THAT EMPLOYEES UNDERSTAND THE MISSION AND PURPOSE OF THE ORGANIZATION.
- (2) PR BENEFITS FROM KNOWING PARTICULAR EMPLOYEES BETTER— SOME THAT ARE INFLUENCERS IN THE ORGANIZATION OR WHO HAVE INTERESTING STORIES BECAUSE OF THEIR INSIDE OR OUTSIDE EXPERIENCES OR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY. THOSE STORIES ABOUT EMPLOYEES ARE GREAT FODDER FOR EXTERNAL STORY PLACEMENT—A MAJOR PR GOAL.
- (3) IN TURN, THE PR DEPARTMENT CAN HELP HR BY CREATING A MEANINGFUL INTRANET, NEWSLETTER OR BLOG THAT ASSISTS IN KEEPING EMPLOYEES INFORMED AND GIVES THEM A VOICE.

(4) BOTH DEPARTMENTS CAN COLLABORATE ON CREATING EVENTS THAT RESPOND TO THE INTERESTS OF BOTH MANAGEMENT AND NON-MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVES. BOTH PROFESSIONALS CAN BRING CREATIVE IDEAS TO THE TABLE WHILE HR WILL KNOW WHAT WILL RESONATE WITH VARIOUS GROUPS WITHIN THE EMPLOYEE BODY.

(5) HR CAN ASSIST PR IN TAILORING MESSAGES TO THE EMPLOYEES WITH THEIR SENSITIVITY TO DIFFERENCES IN CULTURAL BACKGROUND, AGE GROUPS, ETHNICITY OR WORK STYLES.

MY SOURCES FOR THIS TALK ALSO BRING UP THE TIMELY NEED IN THE WORKPLACE FOR FUN. HERE AGAIN, HR AND PR CAN COLLABORATE TO DRAW OUT THE HUMAN SIDE OF PEOPLE AT WORK TO BUILD COMRADARIE AND A TEAM SPIRIT. WHAT IS REWARDING TOO IS WHEN PEOPLE FEEL THEY ARE GIVING BACK TO THEIR COMMUNITY. THIS YEAR WHEN UNITED WAY APPROACHES FOR DONATIONS SEE IF YOU CAN MAKE THE CAMPAIGN FUN.

I KNOW A PROFESSIONAL WHO STARTED A WHOLE BUSINESS AROUND HELPING OTHER BUSINESSES HAVE FUN. HER COMPANY NAME AND TITLE IS FUNCILIATOR. SHE GOES INTO LARGE ORGANIZATIONS AND MAKES EVENTS EXCITING AND FUN. SHE'S ALWAYS IN DEMAND. YOU CAN GOOGLE HER.

ONE OF THE BOOKS I HAVE READ RECENTLY

JOY AT WORK BY DENNIS W. BAKKE, POINTS OUT THAT WHEN ADULTS ARE IN JOY-FILLED WORKPLACES THEY WILL DO WHAT IS NECESSARY TO TO HELP THEIR EMPLOYERS SUCCEED.

IT HAS A VERY USEFUL APPENDIX THAT COMPARES THE CONVENTIONAL APPROACH TO TREATING EMPLOYEES VERSUS A JOY AT WORK APPROACH:

HERE ARE A FEW

- THERE ARE NO OFFICIAL ORGANIZATION CHARTS
- EVERY PRSON IS CONSIDERED UNIQUE AND THE JOB IS BUILT AROUND HIS PASSION AND UNIQUE SKILLS
- THERE ARE A MINIMUM NUMBER OF SUPERVISORY LAYERS
- LEADERS WERE THEIR ROLES AS SERVING OTHER EMPLOYEES
- MORE EMPLOYEES CAN MAKE DECISIONS AND BEING ABLE TO MAKE DECISIONS IS FUN.

DESTINATION PROFIT BY SCOTT CAWOOD AND RITA V BAILEY IS ANOTHER BOOK I'D RECOMMEND TO YOU. ANOTHER BOOK THAT TALKS

ABOUT ENGAGING PEOPLE, HAVING FUN AND THUS AFFECTING THE BOTTOM LINE

AT JET BLUE, WHEN A NEW AIRPLANE ROLLS OUT EMPLOYEES (NOT CALLED THAT) ARE INVITED TO NAME THE PLANE... THE PERSON WITH THE WINNING NAME MAY INVITE HIS OR HER FAMILY AND FRIENDS ON AN INNAGURAL FLIGHT.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS STORIES ABOUT JET BLUE, SOUTHWEST AIRWAYS, SALLY MAE AND SAS. THEY POINT TO THE FACT THAT REALLY CARING FOR EMPLOYEES RESULTS IN GREATER PROFITS.

FOR EXAMPLE, AT SAS INSTITUTE, A PRIVATE SOFTWARE COMPANY WITH 9,000 EMPLOYEES, THERE IS AN AD HOC GROUP THAT MEETS TO DISCUSS NEW BENEFITS AND PROGRAMS. THEY EVALUATE PROPOSALS BASED ON THREE POINTS.

- WILL IT BENEFIT THE SAS CULTURE
- WILL IT SERVE A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
- WILL IT BE COST-EFFECIVE

MULTIPLE GENERATIONS AND MULTI-ETHNIC POPULATIONS

IN THE SERIES OF ARTICLES THAT I WROTE COLLABORATIVELY WITH BARB, WE POINTED OUT THAT THERE ARE 3 OR 4 GENERATIONS OF PEOPLE ALL WORKING TOGETHER WITH DIFFERING AGENDAS. FOR SOME THE WHOLE BALANCE OF WORK AND FAMILY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN FOR OTHERS. FOR THE YOUNGER SET ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE A PRIORITY. MEANWHILE, YOUR BABYBOOMERS LIKE ME, HAVE NO PATIENCE FOR THE GENERATION XRS WHO THINK THEY ALREADY KNOW EVERYTHING. WE NEED TO GIVE THEM SOME LEEWAY SO THEY CAN DEMONSTRATE WHAT THEY DO NEED. AND OF COURSE THE MATURES AND BABYBOOMERS CAN RELY ON THEM TO PROGRAM OUR CELL PHONES. HR'S ADVICE ON COMMUNICATING WITH DIFFERENT GENERATIONS AND CULTURES IS VALUABLE TO THE PR WRITER.

IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT WAS GOING ON IN A COMPANY WAS RESERVED FOR A HALF A DOZEN WHITE GUYS WHO MET IN SECRET. XERS WANT TO FEEL PART OF SOMETHING AND BE HEARD. AND WE NEED TO CREATE A CULTURE IN WHICH EVERYONE IS HEARD AND EVERYONE IN TURN CARES ABOUT THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE.

CONSIDER HAVING SOME EVENTS THAT ALLOW THE EMPLOYEES TO SHARE THEIR CULTURAL VALUES.

ONE OF OUR CLIENTS, A MARRIOTT SENIOR LIVING COMPANY INVITES ITS EMPLOYEES TO HOST A FASHION SHOW IN WHICH THEY SHOW OFF THE FASHIONS OF THEIR NATIVE COUNTRIES. AT THE SAME TIME THEY BRING IN THEIR FAMILY'S FAVORITE DISHES TO SHARE. THIS IS POPULAR WITH THE RESIDENTS AND THE EMPLOYEES.

TECHNOLOGY'S IMPACT ON WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION CANNOT BE OVEREMPHASIZED.

WHAT I THINK IS HOT NOW IS VIDEO ON THE WEB...THE BANDWIDTH IS THERE AND WHAT BETTER WAY TO CONVEY PASSION, EMOTION AND TRUTH? I AM ALSO IMPRESSED BY THE POWER OF BLOGS ...SOME COMPANIES USE THEM LIKE ANTENNAS TO LEARN WHAT THE PUBLIC WANTS, HATES, NEEDS AND FEELS. CONSIDER MONITORING BLOGS IN YOUR SECTOR IF YOU ARE NOT ALREADY DOING SO.

IN MY COMPANY THE INTERNET IS THE LIFEblood, BUT WE STILL MEET PERSONALLY AND SOME DAYS I JUST TURN OFF THE PC AND SPEND THE DAY ON THE PHONE WITH PEOPLE. THAT'S BECAUSE I KNOW I'M WARMER ON THE PHONE. TOGETHER PR AND HR CAN ASSESS WHAT MEANS ARE BEST FOR THE LEADERS WHEN COMMUNICATING WITH EMPLOYEES. I KNOW ONE THING—AN OVER-RELIANCE ON INTRANETS AND EMAIL – WILL NOT WORK.

WHEN YOU BEGIN WORKING CLOSELY WITH YOUR PR DEPARTMENT. SIT DOWN WITH THEM AND ASK SOME PRETTY BASIC QUESTIONS, SUCH AS:

- HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION IN 10 WORDS
- PEOPLE WHO WORK HERE TEND TO BE...FILL IN THE BLANK
- CUSTOMERS LOVE THE FACT THAT WE..
- WE THINK OF OURSELVES AS
- LEADERS ARE USUALLY
- THE MOST COMPELLING REASON TO WORK HERE IS..

AT THE END OF THE DAY BOTH YOUR PR AND HR PROFESSIONAL WANT TO HEAR THE EMPLOYEES SAY THIS IS A GREAT PLACE TO WORK. AND AT THE END OF MY SPEECH, I JUST WANT TO SAY... YOU HAVE BEEN A GREAT AUDIENCE. THANK YOU FOR LISTENING AND CONTRIBUTING!

SOURCES FOR SUSAN CAROL'S PRESENTATION:

- VARIOUS ARTICLES FROM *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*
- PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF AMERICA MAGAZINE, *TACTICS*

- SHRM WEB SITE
- *JOY AT WORK*, BOOK BY DENNIS W. BAKKE
- *PODCASTING*, AN O'REILLY POCKET GUIDE
- *DESTINATION PROFIT* BY SCOTT CAWOOD AND RITA V BAILEY
- *DIGITAL VIDEO FOR DUMMIES* BY KEITH UNDERDAHL
- SERIES OF THREE ARTICLES BY BARB FIORI AND SUSAN CAROL FOR THE FREDERICKSBURG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
- FACTIVA, DOW JONES