

Corporate communication - Creating connected employees, one story at a time

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Brands spend a lot of their time and budget getting to know their customers, and rightly so. Unfortunately, they seldom put the same effort into the way they connect with their employees and get their buy-in through internal communication. In times of uncertainty, your employees will be the ones who keep the wheels rolling and if they already feel valued and believe in the vision of your company, they will stay in the trenches. Here, storytelling is an effective way of creating a culture where employees are true brand ambassadors.



Yaw Dwomoh

An alarming Gallup¹ study shows that 70% of US employees say they are not engaged in their jobs. Further research shows that one of the main reasons that employees engage with their job and their company is when they believe in its vision and purpose.

In the nineties, before he was known as a marketing guru, Seth Godin² joined a small software company. He was given the task of turning a struggling company around by creating computer games based on science fiction novels. He had a budget that was much too low, too few programmers and a ridiculously short timeline.

His solution? Storytelling. He created a weekly newsletter which he photocopied and delivered by hand across the company, highlighting the work of every person who worked on his projects. Before long, programmers were moving across to his team and other departments pitched in to make it work. Why? He made them care. The software sold for millions and his success speaks for itself.

Stories elicit a powerful emotional response and studies show that [your audience makes purchase decisions based on emotion rather than logic](#). Therefore, storytelling appeals to this emotion-driven type of decision-making.

Storytelling in corporate communication is the way you tell your employees' and customers' stories and any initiatives you are supporting while in team meetings, through newsletters, on social media or even in the coffee room. These stories have proven to be effective in engaging employees on an emotional level, especially the most recent generations who want to know that they add value and that their work matters.

Telling your company's story to your employees should be easy right? Yet somehow it is not. The hurdles to effectively engaging employees range from the archaic forms of communication, to using the wrong channels, to lack of sponsorship from executive teams and the effort needed to target hard-to-reach employees. Add to that the fact that it is extremely hard to measure the effectiveness of internal campaigns apart from tracking whether a document has been read, and internal communication teams are struggling. In fact, 73% of IC teams say they don't or cannot measure the effect of their internal comms.

While measurement is a topic for another day, there are three things to keep in mind when creating internal communication that inspires and creates connection:



Be human

Whether you're giving a budget presentation to executives or flipping through a PowerPoint deck with your team – remember that you are just a human telling a story. The numbers matter but they will only matter to your team when they understand the story behind them.

Why should they care? Because they get paid to? Wrong! Wouldn't it be rewarding if you could take them with you on a journey that ends in their unwavering belief in the vision of your team and or company?

When you share the WHY behind the numbers; when the CEO explains that he wants teams to increase and meet their budget so that he will still be able to pay bonuses; or you show them how their toilet paper saving (since this is a hot topic) means that you can provide a week longer maternity leave for colleagues, they **will** care.

Stories make leaders more human and vulnerable and employees trust them more as a person. Be honest with yourself and others about the good and the bad. You will be amazed at the difference in your company culture.



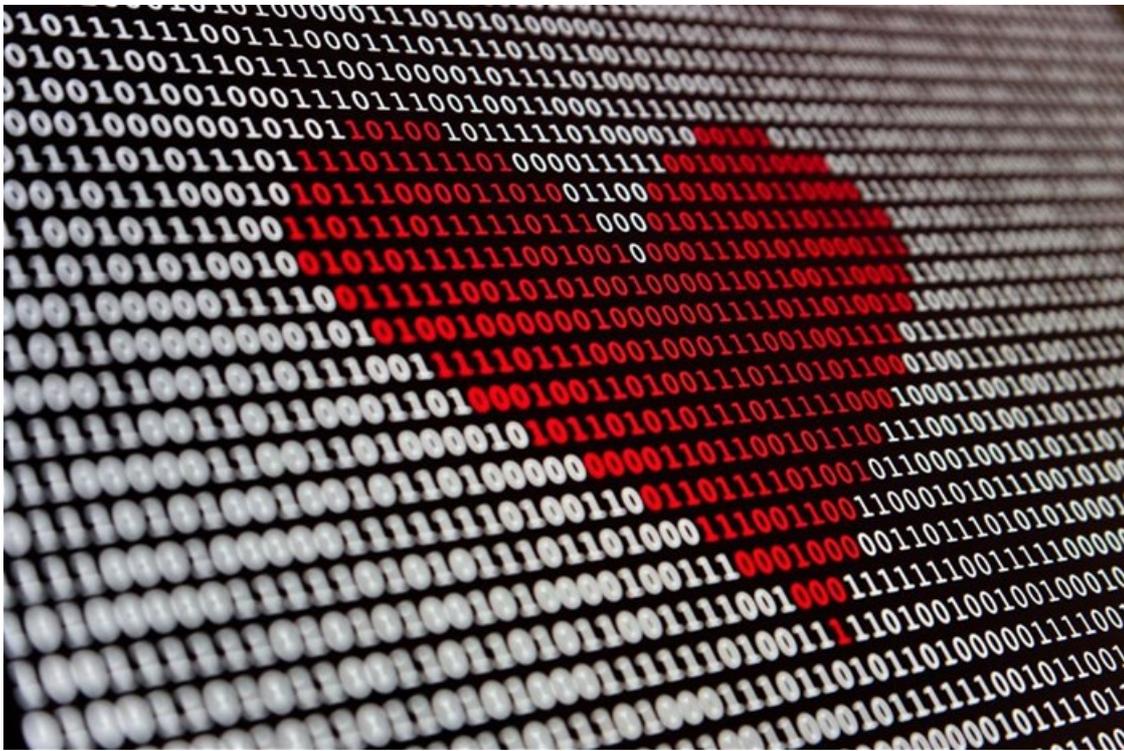
What's in it for me?

You've done all the work figuring out what your client needs. Have you done the same for your employees? In 1960 Theodore Levitt said, "Customers don't want a quarter-inch drill; they want a quarter-inch hole." Finding out what your customer really needs, is one of the starting points of marketing. Are you selling them a drill, when you should be selling them a hole?

Find out what your employees really need. They may care less about the ping-pong table in the break room and more about leaving early to fetch their child on a Friday.

If you need help, get a specialist who collects this data for you through independent surveys, polls and discussion groups. The very fact that you are listening will already bring a shift in employee attitudes. And when you need to communicate big changes? You use storytelling to show them what is in it for them. It may seem selfish, but it is not a moral issue – it's a human trait.

It doesn't need to be said that apart from not making promises you can't keep; you also need to take any criticism as a positive and keep communication open and consistent as you work through these with the managers involved.



Show me

Be creative and visual in your approach. If posters at the lifts don't work, find new and exciting ways to say the same things. Companies who are still stuck on sending emails and hoping they will be read, are among those who will feel the worst pinch of negativity and staff turnover.

Yaw Dwomoh, CEO for Idea Hive specialist brand storytellers says, "Recently, the South African CEO of one of our global clients, wanted to highlight the good they were doing in the community. It's often hard for people in other countries to know the reality we face in African. My team helped them tell their story, and the story of one of their beneficiaries through a short video. This was then streamed during an online update by global executives to all employees. Because of this, local employees were motivated by how their work impacts others, while the SA businesses received an award in recognition from head office."

We live in tough times for businesses. Find the 'wins' and tell those stories. Happy employees will become your biggest ambassadors, one story at a time.

1. <https://www.inc.com/marcel-schwantes/research-why-70-percent-of-employees-arent-working-to-their-full-potential-comes-down-to-1-simple-reason.html>

2. <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2014/08/strong-brand-storytelling-inside-out/>

About Idea Hive

At Idea Hive we create and execute pioneering Brand Storytelling Solutions to illuminate your brand's power. We apply a strategic framework which extracts and aligns all the key components of your brand's story.

Our team of curious, creative, driven and critical thinkers mould all the elements into a cohesive Brand Storytelling Solution that will change how the market sees and experiences your brand.

We craft and execute heartfelt and character-driven Brand Storytelling campaigns that position your brand/and or organisation to achieve its full market potential.

We offer an array of tailor-made solutions around our services which includes branding, design, influencer marketing, visual

content and communications. All solutions are anchored in ensuring that each Brand Story is told exceptionally, uniquely and to the right audience.

Imagine a world where brands defeat normal and ideas inspire change.

When we change, we change the world around us.

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