

Engaging multi-generational employees with internal communication

Different communication strategies are vital to integrate the multigenerational workforce successfully, which is important for organisations' reputation, as low morale can affect stakeholders' attitudes.



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Engaging employees may be more challenging than ever before, as at least three generations are all working together - baby boomers, Generation X and Generation Y (also known as millennials), all of whom require engagement in different ways.

Navigating through the different characteristics, values and attitudes toward work, based on each generation's life experiences can become a bit like walking through a minefield. Getting it right and aligning your key messages internally is intrinsic to building a solid reputation.

Employees play a vital role in the reputation of an organisation, as this is where the reputation of an organisation starts, when their daily perceptions and interactions become reality for external stakeholders. If the behaviour of employees does not live up to the expectations created through the organisation's external communication campaigns, the organisation's overall reputation will be damaged.

“What we have found is that if your employees’ morale is low, then this generally has a negative impact on how the organisation is seen. It is inevitable that not all your employees will be exuberant 100% of the time, however, when a whole team becomes negative external stakeholders are more likely to believe what the employees say, than your fancy marketing and public relations campaigns,” says Regine le Roux, MD of Reputation Matters.

Apart from taking an inside-out approach to aligning internal beliefs and behaviours to external perceptions, organisations need to understand that the way in which one communicates and gets the most out of a baby boomer is quite different to that of a millennial. It is important to note that there is no right or wrong way of communicating, it is about being able to adapt to what is most effective.

The key is to effectively address and take advantage of the differences in values and expectations of each generation. With that said, it is important not to follow blanket stereotypes, however, it does help to have a broad overview of each generation to help with understanding and being tolerant of each other.

“When it comes to improving your internal communication, keep in mind that the workforce currently consists of different generations with whom you need to communicate. Align your communication to the overall business values and objectives, using the most appropriate channels of communication per generation. Facilitate mentoring between different aged employees to encourage more understanding and multigenerational engagement. Employees like to have a voice and to be heard; facilitate feedback opportunities through different forums,” concludes le Roux.

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