

What's in a name? – Melcrum Summit 2012, EMEA

A summit is a funny thing – it exists as both a symposium of shared experiences and networking, as well as an arena where ideas and real life examples are put forward to either the thumbs up or thumbs down of the gathered delegates. Of course, not every person will agree with every idea put forward – where would the fun be in that? – but that's the point, to instigate informed, potentially passionate, debate. The Melcrum Summit 2012 EMEA, held at the London Marriot Hotel, Grosvenor Square, London, UK, featured a number of different ideas around Internal Communication and the theme "[Re-engineering IC for agility, productivity and impact](#)", so I've handpicked a few of my "thumbs up" moments.

I must admit, prior to the Summit, I am privy to some of the content and even get a peek at a presentation slide or two, so I was intrigued whilst taking a quick look through Benedikt Benenati's, which was focused on establishing IC as a disruptive force behind cultural change at Kingfisher, where he works as Group Internal Communications Director. One particular slide caught my eye as it demonstrated an employee roadshow with a life-size replica elephant in the corner, a play on the western saying of avoiding "the elephant in the room", so I couldn't wait to hear how that particular situation arose. In fact, it was just one of the innovative visual disruptive measures he has taken at Kingfisher to refresh internal communication and employee roadshow events, to help them get involved around change. However, what particularly struck me during his presentation was when he spoke about the grey area surrounding his job title. He believes it should actually be "Fear Management" as that is at the core of what a communicator has to deal with everyday, reassuring employees following crisis or any other kind of change.

I think we can all agree that, regardless of the size or industry of your organization, Internal Communication needs to wear several different "hats" and fear management around change, in whatever guise it comes, is a core competency. In Melcrum's work on our [IC Competency Model](#) we've mapped out the evolution of the IC function, which the theme of the Melcrum Summit was focused around – Competing on the Curve. Our model demonstrates that Internal Communication's role has moved from organizing entertainment ie "balloon-blowing", to strategic business partnering activities – such as promoting dialogue, managing organizational networks and driving collaboration – but not off-loading any of these responsibilities along the way...a reality that communicators globally have had to adjust to.

Benenati added that you need to establish IC as a disruptive force behind any cultural change and you need to take these measures to combat employee “fear” following change. He then spoke about another highlight for me from the Summit..

Love.

The (business) power of love

One little word that is easy to gloss over and bat away as a throwaway concept in business. Maybe people don't like saying "love" in connection with IC as it's seen as "fluffy" when compared to the language of finance for example – this is understandable when Internal Communication is coming into its own as a hard function after being seen as "soft" for a long time. However, Benenati made the point of telling the assembled delegate how he combats employee fear with love, that he believes it's a "highly powerful business tool" and that as communicators, we have to take that holistic approach. But what if have a leader who can only think in terms of ROI and demands solid numbers?

During her presentation, Rebecca Edwards, Director, Employee Communications, GE told us that she calculated the weekly cost of employees not being able to get to the information they need due to poor channel accessibility at her company, and found it was £1,200 – a hard figure that any CEO can understand and digest. When it comes to how much time you dedicate to calculating ROI or not, only you can decide what is best for your business and whether instead you take a holistic approach to IC. What is important though is that we have to understand that using our creativity and individuality is paramount – regardless of our approach.

It's not just the labels we use for job roles that can be misconstrued as Mike Barry, Head of Sustainable Business at M&S, shared. M&S initially established a CSR department that was focused as a preventative measure to protect its external brand from negative media coverage, but now it's evolved into a Sustainability department, pushing towards bringing sustainable issues into the company's values and connecting employees to those values. Barry views the main difference between CSR and Sustainability as being reactive vs holistic with the latter creating stronger employee advocacy. Melcrum's current Forum research is focused on the relationship between internal and external communication and, within that, how employee advocates are coming much more to the fore with social media use and the notion of the “social enterprise,” an emerging trend that Anne-Lisa Kjaer, Futurist & Founder, Kjaer Global, spoke about during her presentation, adding how the new currency for

companies was online reputation.

Lastly, Flemming Norrgren, Professor of Management, Chalmers University, Sweden provided a key takeaway from the event – his steps to designing a rapid strategic change process:

- 1. Clarify by engaging the top team in crafting crisp statements**
- 2. Create a high trust context for open and honest conversations**
- 3. Deploy disciplined process for getting hard facts and issues on the table and reduce politics**
- 4. Engineering some of the most talented people to research the organisation**
- 5. Engage people at all levels and in all units to participate**

Additionally, for further coverage of the Summit, take a look at the blogs below:

<http://jenniwheller.wordpress.com/2012/10/10/melcrum-summit-day-one-from-the-tweetersphere/>

<http://strategic-hcm.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/melcrumsummit-more-time-for-time-out.html>

For SCM readers, keep an eye out for your next issue of [SCM](#) (November/December 2012) which is themed heavily around change. You'll find an interview with Ray Scippa, Head of Internal Communications, ConocoPhillips, case studies supplied by Avery Dennison and Celanese and articles focusing on mergers and acquisitions as well as a Q&A on SAP's recent Disconnect to Reconnect Program.

Until next time,

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