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'BONDING' WITH THE BEST

Today, every organization boasts of a global workforce that spreads across diverse geographies and varied time zones. However, keeping such a workforce connected is a daunting task. Given the need for constant communication with employees spread across the globe, many organisations have devised a wide array of tools to enhance employee communication, finds out Priya C Nair.

Picture this office scenario twenty years ago... a CEO wants to call an emergency staff meeting to make an important announcement about a new business strategy. How would he ideally do it? Texts message all employees, right? Wrong, twenty years ago, cell phones didn't exist, remember? So what does he do? Ask his secretary to type out an official letter, literally make copies and paste it on various notice boards across the organisation and in other areas like the canteen, library, recreational centres etc. where employees assemble, right? True! Many might see the notice and assemble for the meeting. However, chances are that many might miss the meeting too because the information didn't reach them on time. But the risks, back then, were comparatively negligible as organizations were small, not as globally dispersed as they are today and most of the information would spread through word of mouth. Today, conducting an emergency meeting may seem like a faraway dream for organizations, especially if they have employees dispersed across diverse geographies, right? Experts think otherwise. They confirm that technological intervention has enhanced a smooth and clear flow of information. Today, every organisation boasts of operational efficiency and is abreast with the latest in the technology domain to keep its workforce connected.

"TeamLease has about 70,000 employees in over 468 locations across the country. Our core team of 850+ employees operates via a network of 19 branches. With such a huge manpower in our ambit, we have to maintain active means of communication not only to support effective realtime decision making but also to maintain effective client and employee relationship, spread across a big and culturally diverse nation like India," says Rajesh A R, Vice President, Temping, TeamLease Services Pvt Ltd. Today, firms leverage online and offline forms of communication to disseminate information across the organisation. In-house communication happens through various initiatives like periodic staff meetings, internal newsletters, magazines, bulletin boards, intranet, emails, blogs, anonymous staff queries, employee opinion surveys, suggestion boxes, executive chats, instant messages etc.

"The online medium ensures commonality and consistency in the messages that are going out to the employees," says Harish Govind, Vice President, HR, Blue Star Infotech Ltd. "It is important to ensure that the employees are informed of organizational developments, irrespective of which location they operate from," says Shantanu Banerjee Director, HR, Steria India.

Another advantage of reaching out to employees through various online tools is that it enables a two-way communication and makes information sharing more interactive and effective. People who bond with the organisation strongly give the organisation the exalted status of being an employer of choice.

Even though the corporate world is flooded with various online tools, the importance of traditional print medium cannot be negated. According to Soma Sajeevan - EVP and Head - Global HR, Polaris Software Lab Ltd, "As the size of the organisation increases, in-house magazines become the essential tool for knitting the company together. It collates information from different locations and disseminates it organisation-wide."

"The biggest impact these tools have had is towards creating a single globally-connected community of employees," opines Chetan Shah, Managing Director, Synygy India. "These tools for reaching out to our employees have enabled better customer service, encouraged clarity of purpose, enhanced employee motivation and dedication to the company, fostered teamwork, inspired productive staff input, and established the organization's transparency and integrity. This has helped us break through the barriers of rank and status and foster greater synergy between employees and managers for advancing our strategic vision and attaining the goals we have set for ourselves," concludes R Ramkumar, Director, Corporate Marketing and Communications, Cognizant.

Technology intervention has proved fruitful for organisations as various technological tools have been proven effective in bringing widely dispersed employees closer. And experts say that 'staying connected' has never been so easy!

STAYING CONNECTED...Directi uses 'wiki', software that allows its users to create, edit and link web pages easily for internal communication purposes. Information related to news announcements, emergency business meetings, corporate agendas, new HR policies etc. are posted on wiki to enhance clear communication. "There are even community spaces where employees have complete freedom to socialize. Few of our employees post job openings for their roommates and some even conduct internal auctions," says Bhavin Turakhia, CEO, Direct Group. "It also serves as a sounding board where internal policies and guidelines get exposed for employee discussions/debates, before being formalised. There is a dedicated space called 'recruitment' where policies and information related to recruitment are stored. "Wikis are powerful tools because they enable geographically dispersed employees to create a central repository of what is essentially the company's intellectual property," says Turakhia. A unique feature of wiki is that it enables documents to be written collaboratively which are used as substitutes for conventional newsletters and emails," adds Turakhia.

LET'S TALK News and event announcements get communicated to all the Blue Star employees through their employee portal, 'Ozone'. Official transactions, leave accounting system, resource booking etc. are also uploaded on this portal. It also has inbuilt discussion forums wherein the management can take into account employee grievances and also suggest possible solutions. Apart from this, important organizational manuals/newsletters are uploaded on Ozone. Ozone has various zones catering to different needs of the employees. For example, the 'Fun Zone' provides an open space for employees to share their thoughts, jokes, write product reviews, film reviews etc. There is a 'Transaction Zone' where personal transactions about buying or selling of various products take place. And the 'Messaging Zone' allows employees to send messages to their colleagues across diverse geographies thus enhancing open communication and connectivity.

RIDING A NEW WAVE 'Brainwave', an employee communication portal is introduced by WNS for nurturing innovation among employees. The portal captures ideas from employees and creates a knowledge bank, which is then used to derive business benefits. "Employees post their ideas on the intranet which is then assessed by quality managers. Once the idea is approved, the idea owner has to complete the realization of his/her idea using the six sigma methodology," says Ujjwal Majumdar, Senior Vice President, WNS.



FIG: BALA RINGE, ILLUSTRATIONS: AMIT MITHKAR

