

THE ANATOMY OF A BUSINESS VALUE-FOCUSED COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTION



A Diagnostic Tool

- Sense Opportunities for Creating Value
- Optimize Resources to Highest-Value Work
- Extend “Reach” Through Enabling Organizational Communication
- Create Value by Creating and Disseminating Messages



WHAT THE BEST COMPANIES DO

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THE ANATOMY OF A BUSINESS VALUE-FOCUSED COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTION

Eighteen Attributes of Functional Excellence and Related Council Research

SENSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATING VALUE

1 TRACK EXTERNAL RISKS

We actively monitor stakeholder sentiment and broader social attitudes in order to spot any gaps between public opinion and our actions that may present a risk to our company.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Issue Action Matrix

2 IDENTIFY EMPLOYEE NEEDS

We keep a close eye on employee frustrations and attitudes to spot opportunities to improve.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Employee Listening System

3 SPOT CLIENT PRIORITIES

We surface our internal clients' communication needs and priorities to provide direction for focusing on high-value work.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Business Partner Alignment Survey

4 SELECT WORK THAT WILL CREATE BUSINESS VALUE

We deliberately tie our work to organizational business objectives.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Problem-Solving Process

Outcome-Based Strategic Planning

OPTIMIZE RESOURCES TO HIGHEST-VALUE WORK

5 CREATE A HIGH-VALUE STRATEGY

We formulate an annual plan to focus our resources on the most valuable activities and help us draw boundaries about what we will and will not do.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Strategy-Centric Communications Planning Process

Strategic Planning Resource Center

6 REDUCE LOW-VALUE WORK

We routinely examine our portfolio of activities to pinpoint and discontinue lower-value work.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

ROI Workbook

Principled Service-Level Tiering

7 MAXIMIZE IMAGE ASSETS

We set goals for our image (reputation, brand, etc.) that will produce the biggest return for resources expended.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Strategy-Driven Reputation Metrics

Comparative Reputation Assessment Tool

8 OPTIMIZE SKILL PORTFOLIO

We build or buy the most important Communications skills for organizational needs.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Critical Thinking Workshops

Functional Management Decision Support Center

18 TEST MESSAGE EFFECTIVENESS

We test the success of our communications and alter our approach as necessary.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Message Progress Quick Poll

Mobilization Audit

ATTRIBUTE GRADING		
CURRENT EFFECTIVENESS		POTENTIAL IMPACT
5 = Superior	We do this regularly, systematically, and with continuous improvement.	If performed to the highest standard, the impact of this attribute on our firm would be the following: 5 = Very High 2 = Low 4 = High 1 = No impact 3 = Moderate
4 = Strong	We do this regularly and systematically.	
3 = Adequate	We do this regularly but in an ad hoc manner, or irregularly yet systematically.	
2 = Marginal	We do this irregularly and in an ad hoc manner.	
1 = Weak	We do not do this at all.	

URGENT CHALLENGES						
POTENTIAL IMPACT	5 = Very High					
	4 = High					
	3 = Moderate					
	2 = Low					
	1 = No Impact					
		1 = Weak	2 = Marginal	3 = Adequate	4 = Strong	5 = Superior
CURRENT EFFECTIVENESS						

9 ENHANCE MANAGERS' COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

We help line managers to communicate more effectively with their employees.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Dialogue Workshop for Leaders

Dialogue Prep Sessions

17 STREAMLINE ORGANIZATIONAL MESSAGES

We regulate the volume of communication to avoid overwhelming employees.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Message Gatekeeper Team

Personal Productivity Module

16 WRITE COMPELLING MESSAGES

We craft messages that motivate our audience to appropriate action, when necessary.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Dialogue-Provoking Message Tool

Message Alignment Review

15 BUILD AUDIENCE UNDERSTANDING

We construct a deep understanding of our key audiences' behavior drivers in order to tailor messaging where necessary.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Stakeholder Intimacy Sessions

14 LEVERAGE INFLUENCERS

We prioritize outreach to the most influential stakeholders, both internal and external.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Social Network Tapping

Influencer Management Program

13 EQUIP MANAGERS TO HANDLE CRISES

We rely on managers to spot potential crises and deal with them on a local level where we cannot reach.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Crisis Sensitization Sessions

12 ALIGN EMPLOYEE BEHAVIORS

We help employees to align their behavior and decision making with our strategy.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Brand Action Workshops

Strategy Support Groups

11 CREATE EMPLOYEE ADVOCATES

We equip employees with the tools and knowledge to help them act as advocates with both internal and external stakeholders.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Stakeholder Relations Playbook

Brand Values Activation Team

10 ENABLE EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

We facilitate peer to peer collaboration and information sharing across the organization.

IMPACT				
1	2	3	4	5
EFFECTIVENESS				
1	2	3	4	5

Employee Connection Center

Principles to Drive Participation

CREATE VALUE BY CREATING AND DISSEMINATING MESSAGES

EXTEND "REACH" THROUGH ENABLING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP

Sample Activities Along the Effectiveness Scale

SENSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATING VALUE

TRACK EXTERNAL RISKS

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Track company mentions to identify immediate risks</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Informally monitor industry and societal trends to keep a pulse on potential risks</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Proactively identify issues that may develop into risks, grade their severity, and track changes in their trajectory</p> |
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IDENTIFY EMPLOYEE NEEDS

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Collect high-level employee information on an annual basis (e.g., employee engagement survey)</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Supplement formal surveys with a one-way employee feedback channel (e.g., "ask the CEO" or virtual suggestion box)</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Incorporate low-profile, hands-off employee "listening" by monitoring employees' ongoing conversations (e.g., chat/discussion board monitoring)</p> |
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SPOT CLIENT PRIORITIES

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Probe for high priority Communications needs</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Ask clients to rank highest priorities from a preliminary list of anticipated needs</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Ask clients to rank business priorities, independent of communication implications</p> |
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SELECT WORK THAT WILL CREATE BUSINESS VALUE

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Use professional judgment to resist work, where appropriate, that appears unrelated to business objectives</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Screen out client requests that do not have ties to a business objective</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Select work with an explicit linkage to measureable business outcomes, reframing client requests where necessary</p> |
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OPTIMIZE RESOURCES TO HIGHEST-VALUE WORK

CREATE A HIGH-VALUE STRATEGY

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Use client priorities to create project plans and a functional calendar</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Work back from business strategy to create an integrated Communications plan</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Co-opt business partners in planning to ensure appropriate buy-in and prioritization of resources</p> |
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REDUCE LOW-VALUE WORK

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Discontinue activities that are ineffective, producing little communications value</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Discontinue activities that, while effective, are producing little business value</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Discontinue activities that are producing relatively less business value than others</p> |
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MAXIMIZE IMAGE ASSETS

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Aspire to an image that nearly all audiences would find exceptional</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Pursue an image that includes the attributes that our stakeholders find most important</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Pursue an image that distinguishes us from competitors and aim for a "good-enough" reputation with the most influential stakeholders</p> |
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OPTIMIZE SKILL PORTFOLIO

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Develop individual core competencies (e.g., writing and technical skills) in an ad hoc manner</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Build a competency framework to identify individual and team opportunities for skill development against a common standard</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Provide opportunities for structured development of business acumen, problem-solving, and consultative skills</p> |
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EXTEND "REACH" THROUGH ENABLING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

ENHANCE MANAGERS' COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Create manager tools, such as talking points and Powerpoint presentations, to help them cascade corporate messages</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Supplement tools with a manager training class that helps them express themselves more clearly</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Give managers tools and just-in-time training to help them learn and use listening and two-way communications skills</p> |
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ENABLE EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Compile and share back employee stories through various channels including newsletters, intranet, etc.</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Provide employees with virtual tools (e.g., bulletin boards, wikis) for sharing information around prescribed work topics</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Help employees build professional and social relationships with a virtual network for exchanging ideas and information on a continuous, as-needed basis</p> |
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CREATE EMPLOYEE ADVOCATES

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Trust that potential advocates will use already available material for independent outreach</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Provide employees with scripting and FAQs to help them answer questions and spread corporate messages</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Give employees planning tools and ongoing support to increase their comfort in informal conversations with stakeholders</p> |
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ALIGN EMPLOYEE BEHAVIORS

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Create consistent strategy messages that emphasize rationale behind strategy</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Find and publicize employee behaviors that align with strategy to model "right" behavior</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Enable managers to facilitate sessions for employees to self-determine and share what they can do to support strategy</p> |
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EQUIP MANAGERS TO HANDLE CRISES

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Create and publish policies and important contact information to direct manager behavior in the case of a crisis situation</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Familiarize managers with the breadth of potential crises and equip them to handle basic local situation until a response can be formulated centrally</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Engage managers in crisis training to enable them to determine the severity of a potential crisis and the best treatment (e.g., keep local or escalate to corporate)</p> |
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LEVERAGE INFLUENCERS

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Focus on relationships with most vocal and most powerful stakeholders</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Identify external stakeholders with more informal, less-obvious influence</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Supplement external influencer activities with employee influencer mapping and outreach</p> |
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CREATE VALUE BY CREATING AND DISSEMINATING MESSAGES

BUILD AUDIENCE UNDERSTANDING

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Gather survey feedback on past messages</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Test potential messaging through focus groups</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Probe for audience motivators and values to inform messaging strategy</p> |
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WRITE COMPELLING MESSAGES

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Aim for comprehensiveness to anticipate audience questions</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Emphasize simple, jargon-free writing to achieve message clarity</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Aim to stir audience emotions and resonate with their values</p> |
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STREAMLINE ORGANIZATIONAL MESSAGES

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| <p>□ 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plan and follow our own communications calendar ■ Automate regulation of large audience distribution (e.g., companywide e-mails) | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Provide employees with guidance and reminders on message distribution to large audiences</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <p>Supplement gatekeeper activity with sensitizing senders to appropriate use of organization-wide messages</p> |
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TEST MESSAGE EFFECTIVENESS

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| <p>□ 1</p> <p>Gather feedback through surveys about perceptions of Communications activities and messages (is messaging clear, helpful, etc.)</p> | <p>□ 3</p> <p>Test for audience internalization of key messages</p> | <p>□ 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Track message flow and internalization through the organization to determine areas of weakness ■ Use behavioral indicators to demonstrate effectiveness |
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