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■ CORPORATE RELOCATION & EXPANSION ■

Maintain sound communication during times of flux

Open channels bolster employee morale and client confidence

Companies by nature are dynamic and ever-changing entities. Although all internal changes may not be newsworthy, it is critical that an external communications strategy be part of the mix for larger shifts.



The risk during times of significant corporate change — like a merger or acquisition, a relocation or expansion — is that companies get so internally absorbed that marketing and PR becomes an afterthought. Companies claim to have changed but haven't explained what changed or how that affects their customers.



Additional signs could include marketing materials that still feature the old logo or tagline as well as corporate Web sites that haven't been updated within the past 12 months.

Depending on the nature of the change, and given the Web-speed of rumors in today's business environment, companies should communicate clearly, consistently and in a timely fashion to the outside world as early as makes sense.

As your organization undergoes change, here are some questions to consider:

- Will the way you describe your company today reflect your business and customer/partner base accurately tomorrow? Because product, industry and competitive yardsticks change over time, positioning and messaging should evolve, too — this can be just a small tweak or a major overhaul. But they shouldn't change on a whim.
- Does your current web site do justice to your new strategy and reflect the changes? Is it designed and written for the right audience at the right time? Is the home page broad or narrow enough? We all know companies whose customer targets changed over time while their web sites remained static.
- Will your logo, tagline and corporate color still project the image and message you want over time? Some companies are understandably concerned about the costs of updating a logo, replacing stationery, business cards, corporate signs. Logos don't have to be updated on a regular basis, but that doesn't mean they might not need to be updated after a number of years or have taglines or elements tweaked.
- Do your press materials reflect the company as well as changing market conditions? Press kit language should be timely, product and service info should be up to date, and customer case histories should be fresh.

- Is the medium or content you use to communicate with customers or partners still effective?
- Are there material disclosure issues to take into account with this change due to Sarbanes-Oxley or other regulations? Will that effect your communications internally and externally?

When it comes to corporate change, the earlier you start to think about the perception your customers, partners and investors have of you, the sooner you can align your internal communications with your external marketing objectives to maintain a competitive edge.

An effective communication program can help companies, whether to survive a storm or to extend power and value in the marketplace during times of corporate flux. Companies that don't start early enough may find a significant lag before their new messaging initiatives reach potential customers — and that can mean a costly delay in priming the new business pipeline.

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