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- ▶ www.internalcommshub.com/trial/channels/casestudies/gmleadership.shtml

Coaching managers to become better team leaders at Norwich Union

- ▶ www.internalcommshub.com/trial/managers/casestudies/norwich.shtml

TOP TIPS: Getting value from your measurement

- ▶ www.internalcommshub.com/trial/measuring/toptips/getvalue.shtml

How to learn from your communication mistakes

- ▶ www.internalcommshub.com/trial/managers/howto/kaiser.shtml

Inspiring change: Reuters' success factors

- ▶ www.internalcommshub.com/trial/change/casestudies/reuters.shtml

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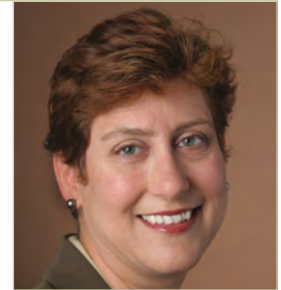
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Global research and training for internal communicators

OPINION: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Pave the way to play to your professional strengths



To work purposefully in employee communication, draw up a professional development plan for your career, says Liz Guthridge of Connect Consulting Group in the US, a communication and change management firm. Read on for her 10-step guide.

Recently, I've noticed a change in those approaching me for career advice. They're too transparent, have an inflated sense of entitlement and are often over-confident.

Take Bryn, for example. She wants to move from external to internal communications, and maybe also from agency to corporate. Could I help? I connected her with a director of internal communications who's actively recruiting. He called her at their prearranged time of 11am on a weekday morning. She yawned, said she was tired and then explained that she was still in bed. Not very respectful behavior on Bryn's part.

Then there was Hillary. When we spoke about career options, she turned the conversation to focus on her health problems. This was too much information for a stranger to hear. And what was I to do, share this information with prospective employers or keep quiet?

Avoid overestimating your abilities

Another example is 24-year-old Josh. He works for 30 hours a week in a retail store, yet he proclaimed that he was qualified to be the next CEO – not just of his chain, but of the entire corporation. Josh also said that nobody older than 35 should work there because they aren't hip to current fashions and employment practices.

Even though he expressed interest in moving to corporate, he made minimal effort to contact the people I suggested could help him with career options.

Granted, college students, recent graduates and others still fairly new to the workforce live in a different world, especially compared to my generation, the "baby boomers" (those born between 1946 and 1964). Many boomers have always been obsessed with their careers. The younger generations have a healthier interest in maintaining a balance of free time, physical well-being and work. This broader perspective can serve them well and make them well-rounded and eventually financially independent adults – provided they work well with others.

Professional development pointers

For those who want to work purposefully in employee communication, here's a 10-point professional development plan:

1. *Look out for yourself, yet not at the expense of others:* Good relations with your boss and co-workers help more than hurt. Try to see things from others' perspectives.

"Video is a successful medium as it can bring to life difficult-to-grasp concepts"

Katy Eyre, Jacaranda, page 8

2. *Play to your strengths, yet take on challenges:* Follow your passions and interests. If you're not certain in which areas you excel, take tests such as Myers-Briggs or Strengthsfinder to find out. Yet also recognize that you can't always avoid the tasks you don't like.
3. *Cross-train, internally and externally:* Internal and external communications are melding. The more you know about each, the better, and the more career options you'll have.
4. *Get exposure to both corporate and agency/consulting firms:* The lines between consultant and client are getting fuzzier. Increasingly, consultants are outsourcing work to freelancers, so the consultants are actually turning into the client. Corporate communication professionals increasingly need to be more process-oriented and consultative in their work.
5. *Track trends:* Stay on top of what's happening in technology, business and popular culture. Your employees live in real and virtual worlds outside of the work world and expect all of these worlds to share some traits. You can bridge these worlds better if you know what's going on in all of them.
6. *Read books:* Read more than just short

- articles. Books explore topics in depth, which helps expand your thinking.
7. *Take a global role sooner rather than later:* The earlier in your career that you can work abroad the better. You generally will have more flexibility in your personal life and you can apply your learnings sooner.
 8. *Build a broad network:* To avoid working in an echo chamber where you only hear like-minded people, surround yourself with diverse individuals who have different backgrounds, interests, ages and lifestyles. Make sure you include people in the physical world, not just your virtual worlds like Second Life etc.
 9. *Develop strong partnerships inside your organization:* Effective internal communication is not a silo. You need to work with other functions, building strong relationships with colleagues.
 10. *Join a non-profit board:* Being on a board provides multiple benefits. Besides the community service perspective, you meet more people and get greater exposure to organizational dynamics. Try out new skills in a low-risk setting.

Remember the importance of asking for advice and trimming down arrogance. Thanks, respect and humility go a long way in life. (NB. All names used are fictitious.)

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INTERNAL COMMS GROUP ON THE COMMUNICATORS' NETWORK

Planning internal communication for 2008

Q: I've been tasked with compiling the 2008 internal communication plan for our organization. I was wondering if anyone has a plan or format they would be willing to share that might help me pull together something quite in-depth and interesting?

A: There's no particular format per se. One has to develop the plan according to the company's requirement at that point of time, but your internal communication plan could think about the following:

1. Target audience.
2. Channels available (or those that can be made available), and their frequency.
3. Nature of the messages.
4. Resources available (including time, budget, personnel and so on).

Anoop Joshi replying on the Internal Communication Group on the Communicators' Network

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