

BEST PRACTICES FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSIONALS: DOING MORE WITH LESS



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Internal communications is changing. Gone are the days when Human Resources and Public Relations took on the brunt of employee communication. Internal communication has taken on a life of its own, serving as a discrete function in companies made up of its own Directors, Managers and Coordinators.

A new generation of communicators is evolving to meet the needs of a web-savvy audience who expect the same communication experience internally as they receive externally in their every day lives. As the Vice President of Engagement at Expedia Inc. recently told me, "Communicators aren't necessarily in it for the money these days, they join a company if it seems to offer an engaging work experience."

In this white paper, we will examine what CEOs and employees want more of in the workplace, what internal communication units are lacking, how to deliver external information internally, and how to get more for less with your internal communication plan.

Good communication starts at the top

Research conducted by VMA Group – a UK based recruitment company who specialize in this field saw a 25% increase from 2009-2010 in getting executives on board with internal communication. While 2011 figures for CEO advocacy remain static, 60% of those polled are making a stronger effort toward internal networking, with more leaders engaging with managers and front line staff.

The economic downturn of 2008-2010 forced many leaders to take a good, hard look in the mirror. As employees witnessed the layoffs of friends and colleagues, many were forced

to take on added responsibilities without a pay increase. As a result, morale suffered and employees were more disengaged than ever before. In order to reconnect with staff, leaders had to be visible and approachable.

Bill Emerson, CEO of online home lender Quicken Loans (one of FORTUNE's 100 Best Companies to Work For), now maintains an open door policy for his 3,000+ employees. He also hosts a weekly, face-to-face forum with staff where they're encouraged to ask questions, feed back about the company and offer their own personal input about how the organization can improve.

"Very rarely do you find our leaders stuck in offices or conference rooms, instead they are 'in the trenches' alongside their teams. We've found that by integrating more closely with our team members, our senior leaders are viewed as more approachable and are able to stay close to the business to keep that trust and morale at a high level," Emerson says.



At WD-40, the 58-year-old San Diego-based company, "communication doesn't come in one flavor," according to Chief Executive Garry Ridge.

He says, "The key to communication is the permission to communicate. There are four things that come into play here: care, candidacy, accountability and responsibility. I care about my people. I take a deep interest in who they are and what they do. I consistently take initiatives to make them feel cared for. Ultimately, communication is all about consistency," Ridge explains.

Ridge makes it his business to inspire his employees, even sending staff a daily quote of the day and signing off emails with "Believe in yourself." He also assures employees that any grievances will be addressed within a day.

In keeping with the importance of transparency, internal communication managers are working more closely with CEOs so that they appear as real and authentic as possible.

Coca-Cola has had considerable success in this area. According to Kari Bjorhus, VP of Enterprise Communications at the Atlanta-based company, "The importance of getting your leaders off script is key. When employees see a manufactured, produced, slick video where the leader is obviously reading from a script in front of a beautiful background, it just doesn't come across as something real."

To loosen up leaders and get them comfortable, Bjorhus and her team provide the relevant data and talking points and remind them that they'll ultimately be in control of what goes into the final edit.

The Grocer's Blog Not so chubby



At Waitrose, the popular UK supermarket chain, Head of Communications Dara Grogan worked side-by-side with CEO Mark Price in 2008 to introduce what would become a highly successful and award-winning blog, "The Chubby Grocer". The aim of the year-long blog was to promote transparency by presenting a diary of his dieting efforts. Costing less than 10,000 GBP to implement, the social media initiative proved to be quite cost-effective.

"What I do, where I go, the sort of meetings I have. I can talk about the things that important to me; our price proposition; the way we harness democracy. It's a light-hearted way to get to an internal and external audience," Price explains.

When it comes to leaders delivering key messages to internal audiences, UK-based presentations coach Louise Beckett remarks that showing empathy is critical for connecting with staff.

"What's common is that (CEOs) want to project care. They want to project

understanding; they want to project clarity, understanding and reassurance in a fast-changing insecure world.”

Beckett says that successful leaders need to realize that it’s not about them.

“They need to know their audience. It’s vital that they express emotional empathy so that we’re getting a balance of head and heart from our leaders. That’s what everybody is wanting now.”

The impact of authentic leadership

When CEOs are in the trenches, side by side and face to face with their workforce, it often results in renewed employee engagement. Smart leaders know that employees are the heart and soul of the company – it is ultimately their productivity that fuels the success of the business.

HCL Technologies CEO Vineet Nayar has a much-discussed leadership policy of putting employees first. He believes “the asset base of his organisation resides in the talent and creativity of his employees” who determine the internal culture of HCL:

“At HCLT, we focused on one specific trust-building action: pushing the envelope of transparency. When you bring this information out in the open and make the challenges public, employees feel included.”

Sandip Mallik, HR Director of Aviva India, says, “It is very clear to us that by taking extra care to recognize employees as individuals, each and every time we engage with them, we will connect more powerfully, serving their needs better - and our business will benefit from their engagement and loyalty in return.”

To engage employees, some companies involve their staff in helping to realize the organization’s vision, mission and strategy.

From 2009-2010, global packaging company Tetra Pak achieved much success with a global internal communications initiative called LiVE Tetra Pak aimed to educate staff on the company’s renewed core values and the Tetra Pak brand.

Tetra Pak partnered up with a London-based events company, spending a year putting the content together, then pilot testing the

production with factory and office workers in Turkey and Sweden.



The program consisted of a four-hour event delivered in different venues around the world– from Tetra Pak factories to canteens to conference spaces. Attendees were taken on an emotional journey sharing company stories and personal experiences living the brand. Completing the experience, audiences took part in games, dialogues and Q&A sessions; several brand identity videos were also produced for the event, helping staff understand economic, environmental and market forces that affect Tetra Pak.

LiVE Tetra Pak was delivered in the local language of each location and consisted of regional teams to localize content to ensure consistent messaging to employees. In the end, the program was delivered to over 20,000 employees in 25 languages in 50 countries. I had the opportunity to witness the delivery of the initiative in Tetra Pak’s American headquarters and saw first-hand how employees interacted with one another, while successfully grasping the messaging and understanding what the company is all about. As a result, employees achieved a greater sense of pride in their place of work.

Doing more for less with your resources

As communicators, we are all faced with the challenges of workload prioritization, especially since internal communication teams tend to be small to mid-sized in most organizations. We have intranets to oversee, newsletters to publish, numerous e-mails to send and review; sometimes we simply don’t have enough hours in the day to carry out all our tasks.

Recruiting new talent for the internal communications discipline however has grown much easier, thanks to popular networking sites like LinkedIn and Facebook. Everything you want to know about potential new employees – from work experience to writing samples – are right there in cyberspace for you to see.

But it is uneconomical to hire staff for bulges that happen in the workflow of internal communication. It's better to staff for the median instead. This means that during quiet times you have a bit of spare capacity to train staff or to overhaul some of your systems. But on an average day you can cope with the internal communications demands of your organization.

However as soon as any change comes along internal communications will get overwhelmed so it is important to have some regular suppliers on hand to assist with the surges.

Insurance broker QBE has writers on tap from simply**good**advice who can turn around stories into copy that suits the house style of their newsletters and magazine. It is important to have a regular pool of writers to call upon who understand your business.

Another area for outsourcing is to populate intranet sites. As a result of the merger of two major UK banks, Lloyds TSB and HBoS needed to communicate the new harmonized Terms and Conditions to all staff. The material was highly sensitive and many drafts were burned through by legal and HR experts. But once agreement was reached it needed to be made accessible as quickly as possible to the newly merged Lloyds Banking Group's 140,000 employees around the world. Intranets require a thorough understanding of html coding as well close attention to detail and intense copy proofing. Such a workload would have burned out the internal resources of the communications team and so again writers and html programmers were drafted in from an external agency to meet the punishing deadlines.

Tetra Pak Middle East use a similar service to produce their monthly email to all staff. Rather than being a simple text email GME Spotlight is produced to the highest levels of consumer marketing emails with colorful design, attractive layout and compelling graphics, photos and headlines. The internal

team looks after the stories but they export the design, programming and distribution of the article using an external agency and some clever proprietary software.

Companies can license appropriately filtered content aggregated by service providers like Factiva, as it relates to the organization's needs for employee communication. Factiva's content collection includes over 31,000 global news and information sources, thousands of which are not available for free on the Web, from 200 countries in 26 languages, including 600 continuously updated newswires. This content can be tailored to a particular industry, business objective, or communication need.



Critical news you can be delivered consistently and efficiently in various formats to suite a company's needs. Breaking news can be delivered via enterprise widgets, integrated into intranets and other applications, while users have the ability to set up email and mobile alerts for the most timely information possible. And when employees are away from their desks, Factiva Mobile is available to facilitate news and information searches. There's also a Factiva iPad app enabling access to archival news and information.

Events

When it comes to events, many companies also look to suppliers to help with logistics and productions elements.

The bigger the event, the bigger the budget, and in some cases, a combined budget, as internal communication departments are now going where the money is to present large-scale initiatives.

Heineken's Internal Communication Division

teamed up with the Heineken Brand Team to launch an internal table football competition to educate employees about brand sponsorship while uniting and engaging 75,000 employees working in 140 breweries in over 70 countries. The platform chosen was the UEFA Champions League, of which Heineken is one of the major sponsors.

"We knew that sponsorship budgets are generally higher so we said, 'if we can combine both our resources and expertise, we will help set up the communications toolkit and activate the program.' It was a good way for departments to work together and for Internal Communication to go where the budget is and to strengthen engagement and relationships across the company. A real win-win situation," according to Jan-Willem Vosmeer, then Program Activation Officer at Heineken Group.

To add to the excitement of the 2010 competition, the head office commissioned a video produced by a supplier, featuring Robert Atha, Table Football's official world champion – explaining his tips and tricks of the game. A highlights video of the competition was also produced, capturing the fun, spirit and employee camaraderie of the event.

Local winning teams of the internal football competition – along with their coordinator – were flown to the World Final at Heineken's headquarters in Amsterdam on April 29th, 2010, while the grand winner of the competition was awarded with a trip to the UEFA Champions League Final a few weeks later in Madrid.

The investment in the program paid off as engagement and brand awareness numbers at Heineken soared.

Communication gets social

To maintain a strong brand reputation internally – and externally – many companies have created specialized social media teams within their communications division to monitor what is said about the company online and deliver the information to employees on the inside.

At motor giant Ford, Scott Monty was appointed Digital Multimedia Communications Manager in 2008 and helped put them on the map in the area of social media – during a time when the motor industry was suffering.

His chief role has involved overseeing a core group of approximately 70 communicators, "seeking tools for employees to connect with each other and teaching them how to go outside of Ford and communicate with the online world on (Ford's) behalf."

Initially, this was not an easy task given the fact that many employees at the time were used to traditional methods of internal communication.

"I wanted to help people understand that new technology is nothing different than human behavior and communications. It's just a new way of doing things with new tools - that is our hurdle – but at the same time the goal is to educate comms staff more broadly," Monty says.

To train employees, Monty has often hosted "Lunch and Learn" monthly sessions and bi-weekly meetings, also known as 'communications university' to ensure Ford communication teams feel comfortable about using social media tools.

The barriers to technology come crumbling down

Fortunately, social media tools are relatively inexpensive and more importantly, user-friendly, which is why user-generated material is on the rise in companies. The barriers to technology have come crumbling down, allowing us to do more and to communicate in new and innovate ways for less money.

Thanks to these tools and techniques, no longer is internal communication merely top-down. Employees are contributing content more than ever before - they're blogging, they're posting photos, they're making videos. Communication is also interactive; intranets are no longer just a place to read about your company benefits or what's being served in the canteen that week. Click on a story nowadays and you'll surely find comment threads linked to employee profiles. Of course, nothing enhances a story and disseminates company information like video which is why an increasing amount of organizations are introducing internal video sites.

At Verizon in New York, video has become a popular tool used to spread knowledge at

Top 10 tips

on running an Internal Communication Unit

1. **Promote outside voices inside the organization.** Use automated news feeds such as Factiva to keep colleagues abreast of the latest trends in your industry and among your competitors.
2. **Get closer to the business.** Be curious about what the business units are doing and what is keeping the Directors awake at night.
3. **Stop managing communications** and start helping managers communicate.
4. **Do a comms audit.** Find out which of your channels are popular and trusted and cull that newsletter that no one reads. Pinpoint the right tools to help save time and energy instead of doing everything manually.
5. **Make allies.** You will not achieve as much as you want unless you have the support of two vital functions – IT and HR.
6. **Balance your team.** Many communicators are trained in traditional print journalism; great editors with a fine eye for accuracy, but can be averse to the speed and informality of online. Hire a Gen Y who knows their tweets from their hashtags.
7. **Take a presentation skills course.** You can't give credible communications advice in the executive suite if your own delivery is stumbling.
8. **Think on your feet.** Give your advice at the meeting – don't tell them you'll get back with a strategy. By the time you do the issue will have moved on.
9. **Know your suppliers.** In the communications world agencies, design houses and production companies are in constant flux. Make sure yours are at the leading edge and not declining.
10. **Network with other communicators.** Join one of the larger trade associations such as the IABC – International Association of Business Communicators www.iabc.com.



the telecommunications giant. The company's internal video site, V-TUBE, enables user-generated content and video posting and is most widely used by the IT and Sales Departments.

"In our complex sales organization, it's important for those teams to stay abreast of new products we're bringing in to serve the enterprise business space, so very often those teams create user generated content around new products and service capabilities, what our competitors are doing, as well as featuring sales presentations that have been made around those products, in the government space, banking space or healthcare space. A lot of it is about helping with knowledge transfer and getting the information shared very broadly and quickly," explains Kathleen McKenna, Verizon's Vice President of Global Employee Communications.

Much of the user-generated videos produced in companies are made possible by inexpensive equipment such as Flip cams and Canon Powershot cameras. Employees who may have only worried about obtaining quotes for the corporate newsletters are now coming to company meetings and events armed with these shiny tools. I'm often armed with my own Powershot camera wherever I go since I never know when I'm going to stumble upon the next great photo opportunity.

Everyone's a photographer or a videographer these days, thanks to smartphones, so a transition to shooting internally is fairly seamless.

Addressing the changing nature of your teams and audiences

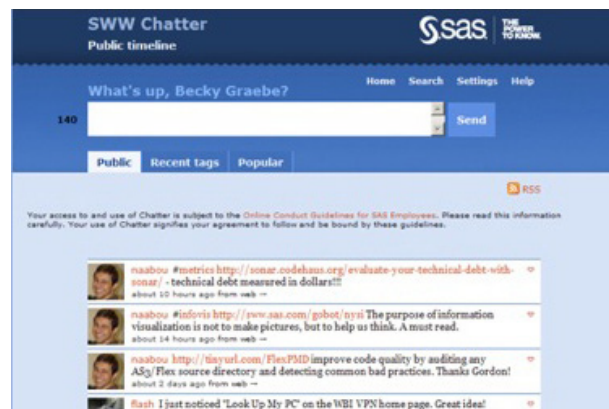
Although Generation Y'ers are comfortable with new tools and are able to multi-task in a heartbeat, how do you mesh their digital wants and needs with older, more established employees? By offering a tasting menu to suit every comfort level.

At SAS – twice voted the best place to work in America – the internal communications team ensures that they provide a space for people to become comfortable with using social media. To drive employees to the intranet, known as the SAS Wide Web, the company ensures that everyone has an opportunity to post comments on each article. Some articles are even light-hearted in nature to draw

people to the site to read about more relevant company news that matters.

At SAS, there are over 100 departmental newsletters, originally distributed as PDF emails which made it difficult to retrieve information. In a major move, content providers were asked to put all the information online, onto their departmental sites improving searchability.

As expected, the response wasn't too hot – at first. "It was like turning a jumbo jet around in a driveway. They didn't want to do it saying 'we've always done it this way.' But when we told them how important it was to find information, to let people pick what they wanted on their desk tops, it started to sound more attractive," SAS Internal Communications Manager Becky Graebe explains.



Internal microblogging has become a particularly popular tool at SAS since it satisfies employees' needs for quick bursts of information.

When it comes to communicating to employees around the world, SAS realized that global colleagues did not have the same domain name as their US counterparts so the company started using Chatter as an alternative to Yammer - the popular enterprise social network - to get corporate messaging out to everyone.

Meanwhile at Philips, the lighting/healthcare/electronics company recognized people's overall desire to connect by introducing their own version of Facebook for the enterprise.

Philips has had remarkable success with the site (powered by their supplier, Socialcast). Within eight weeks of the launch in May 2010, the site saw an impressive growth rate of

2000% and continues to grow till this day.

A particularly strong appeal of the site is its ability to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing around the world. It can also be accessed from anywhere, any time regardless of time zones.

At Ernst & Young in London, Head of EY Global Services Communications Howard Kraiss has created a different style of communicating to a worldwide audience of 7,000 employees going through global transformations of their respective functions.

“Over the years so much of the corporate communication I’ve seen can be described as ‘wallpaper.’ People often just glance at newsletters, if they pick them up at all. What I tell my team is ‘If we are going to create something, it needs to be something that has traction and can make a difference to our audience,” he explains.

Rather than rely on drier, more traditional newsletters to distribute corporate messaging, Kraiss has opted for an engaging, storytelling approach in 2011 with a newly created *Leadership Digest*, published monthly and distributed by email as a PDF.

Written from an individual’s perspective, the writing style has been challenging for management to adapt to; however, Kraiss believes in being “resolute in not backtracking to those used to other styles.” To avoid obstacles, he says it’s important to bring leaders in from the beginning when it comes to introducing any new approach.

In the *Leadership Digest*, communicators are encouraged to write creatively but before doing so, Kraiss instructs them “to take a step back and consider how the project they are working on relates to (our) vision and message framework.”

So far, well over 50 stories have been featured in the publication and employee feedback has been quite strong. There are also plans to integrate more multimedia into the publication to make the digest less text-heavy and further engage staff while delivering valuable company information.

Going mobile

When employees are on the go, they

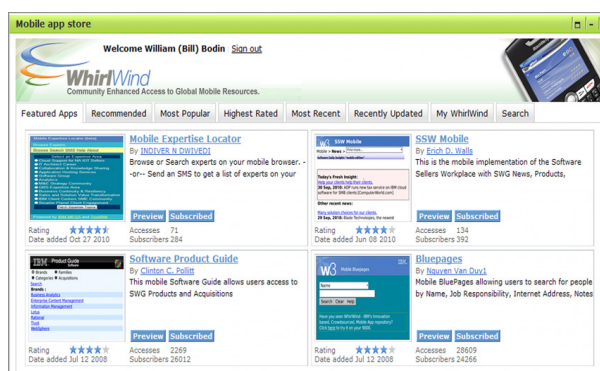
expect to be able to access quick and timely information. People also want to have the ability to absorb information at a time that suits their busy work schedules.

Microsoft introduced their Academy Mobile video podcasting platform in 2007 - an innovative way to promote knowledge sharing. Employees have the ability to produce and upload content, with motivation made sweeter by Microsoft distributing equipment to employees in return for creating a minimum amount of podcasts. Podcasts are organized chronologically and can be downloaded right onto employees’ iPods.

Enterprise social video consultant and former New Media Business Manager of Microsoft’s Enterprise and Partner Group, Paolo Tosolini, explains, “There is no doubt that mobile is the way to go to access even reach media content such as audio/video podcasts. Employees appreciate the convenience of mobile learning. It helps their work life balance because it respects their busy schedules. You can learn something new every day as you drive to your customer’s office vs. being chained to your desktop. Mobility = freedom to learn at your own time and pace.”

Apps

With so many people relying on apps on their iPhones and BlackBerrys these days, some companies are now introducing employee apps to increase productivity and help make people’s jobs easier.



At IBM in the States, Bill Bodin, the company’s CTO of Mobility, and his team analyzed existing internal communication channels such as employee directories and instant messaging which helped set the bar for mobile communications at the company.

As a result, they created *WhirlWind*, IBM’s

mobile app store for employees, launched in September, 2010.

Bodin recalls:

“Recognizing that my team was already engaged in creating various solutions for mobile devices, we sought out ways to socialize and distribute these apps. We created a repository for the apps, open to the entire IBM employee population so that any employee can contribute an app. They can also have the ability to preview apps to test the look and feel before subscribing or downloading them to their smartphones.”

WhirlWind offers seamless accessibility; with one click, employees are able to access the apps they need and have over 400 to choose from. Even if accessed via their desktop, the apps are delivered simultaneously to employees’ smartphones. Among the most popular apps is IBM’s mobile *Bluepages* employee directory allowing a one-click way to reach colleagues. Downloading airline apps has also grown popular, particularly with staff who travel quite a bit.

Looking ahead, Bodin and his team plan to categorize the applications in *WhirlWind* based on an employee’s function and office location.

Global meetings

In 2009, Communicators at eBay in Germany developed a revolutionary way to conduct their European Team Brief (ETB).

To bring management together, eBay connected 12 offices across Europe for hour-long meetings to talk strategies and present business updates.

Tobias Huebscher, Senior Manager, European Employee Communication, remembers:

“In Comms we created a structure for each week and people liked it. They could put faces to the names and get a live experience of one team in Europe. Participants had the chance to ask questions and people who worked for eBay marketplaces told us that they were better informed than they have ever been.”

Unfortunately technology proved challenging with audio echoes and video freezes, forcing Huebscher and his team to rely on basic

webcams, camcorders and a phone bridge. In spite of the technical difficulty, the ETB attracted audiences of 400 employees and became quite popular with senior management.

Eventually, the Internal Communications team collaborated with IT to build a business case for a broadband hi-definition and hi-fi videoconferencing network throughout Europe. With the improved system, microphones on the tables are able to pick up each participant’s audio while the video remains seamless.

Huebscher says:

“People love the opportunity to share updates with the team. We rotate the host each week among the different leaders of the business and they try to personalize it to their location or nationality.

What’s made the ETB so successful is the fact that eBay employees are watching the meeting in a designated viewing room with their colleagues, rather than at their desks, creating a sense of teamwork both locally and on a European level.”

When Heineken rolled out their aforementioned internal table football competition, a communications toolkit was created, providing global offices with logos, artwork, templates and ready-made articles for local internal magazines and the intranet. Individual markets had the option of printing materials as is or to translate them into their own local languages. They were also given the green light to promote the competition in their own way; for example, the final match in Egypt was played in front of the pyramids of Giza.

What’s external is internal

At the Con Edison electric company in New York, communications teams collect stories that the media posts on their websites and group the items together as ‘Con Edison in the News’. The compilation is distributed to employees via email.

At Unilever in the UK, its News Centre – managed by the Global Channels Team – has become a valuable resource for employees to learn about global happenings at the company.

The internal site provides:

- Breaking global news and announcements;
- Different internal and external news and insights;
- A wide range of interactive media.



The News Centre includes links from Unilever's global SharePoint homepage and is supported by weekly HTML emails summarizing new content to global employees. The latter cuts down search time for employees seeking out news on the site.

At Rothschild – one of the largest private banks in the world – Factiva enabled the 200-year-old institution to effectively manage and distribute essential daily news.

Rothschild turned to Factiva when its Information Centre relied too heavily on employees' time to manually produce press reviews for the Investment Banking, Private Banking/Wealth Management and Corporate Marketing Groups. The set-up interfered with productivity and took away from the Centre's other responsibilities.

To alleviate Rothschild's press review process, Factiva's newsletter tool quickened production significantly via four critical steps.

Step #1 involved Centre staff creating **alerts and searches** on key topics.

During Step #2, a **template** was created via Factiva's Newsletter Builder which offered custom layouts and sections for Rothschild, as well as its company logo and other features.

In Step #3, daily editions were produced by

simply **adding and updating** content and selecting a publication date.

Step #4 involved the **distribution process** – the Rothschild's press reviews were delivered via e-mail, RSS feed and widget in HTML, PDF and mobile formats.

As a result of using Factiva's user-friendly newsletter tool, Rothschild experienced notable time savings and improved productivity.

"The new daily press reviews saw very strong adoption due to their attractive features. The customization tools like article comments and table of contents help our readers quickly find articles that are especially interesting to them," says Martine Meheux.

According to Meheux, the ability to deliver the newsletters via employees' mobile devices has also scored points with banking staff:

"Our bankers appreciate the ability to stay informed wherever they are, even when they're travelling for business or leisure."

Perhaps most importantly, Meheux says, the use of Factiva's newsletter tool has cut the time spent on newsletters each day from two hours to 45 minutes. In addition, she feels using the service is a great way "to distribute premium news while complying with copyright restrictions."

Conclusion

Just as the Web has allowed people to access information at little or no cost, the same is happening internally. Employees are uploading content at the click of the mouse, they're participating in conversations with everyone from overseas colleagues to senior vice presidents, and their absorbing and sharing knowledge without even being in front of their computers.

Through hands-on leadership, catering to employees' needs and expectations, embracing the growing array of helpful and inexpensive tools, and outsourcing where appropriate, you truly can do more for less in your organization and in return, be rewarded with a happy and productive work force.

About Factiva

[Factiva](#) can provide managed news services to keep employees in the loop with pertinent company – and industry – information, enabling businesses to remain one step ahead of their competitors. Factiva experts work closely with internal communicators to establish relevant topics, regions and companies to ensure a quick and effective news delivery program. News inputs include RSS and web content delivered daily, weekly or monthly via email as a Word or HTML attachment. The service is multilingual and can be tailored for iPhone or BlackBerry use. To learn more please visit www.factiva.com/doingmorewithlessWP.