

SUSTAINABLE PUBLISHING — A POWERFUL NEW MANAGEMENT TOOL

Most people in businesses and organizations love to take a hand in producing the promotional video, the company website, advertising or newsletter. Controlling information seems like real power, and corporate communications inevitably becomes the organization's political nerve centre.

You don't exist unless you publish. It's unavoidable and it makes the head of the organization Editor-in-Chief. As boss, you negotiate, but as Editor-in-Chief, you command.

However, publishing has drawbacks. It has a finality that any on-going organization instinctively abhors. Going into print or on-line involves taking an irrevocable decision, and corporate publishing is risky. It can expose you to misinterpretation or ridicule, someone could sue, your picture could be printed upside down.

None of this need worry you, however. You can use corporate communications as a powerful management tool without the risk, expense and responsibilities of actually publishing anything.

Today, fewer and fewer organizations use their PR or communications departments to inform or influence people. They know that publishing is far more valuable, and rewarding, as a process than as a result.

So what are the secrets of sustaining an ongoing communications programme?

Objective research has made a special study of the communications dynamics in more than 150 businesses, non-profit organizations and scientific institutions. From these case studies, we have selected ten of the most successful techniques for communications sustainability in this essential guide for corporate editors-in-chief.

The ten secrets of the successful Editor-in-Chief

1. Never initiate a communications project. You don't claim editorship; you have it bestowed upon you. Someone in your organization is bound to suggest a new website, anniversary book or product mailer that will make you Editor-in-Chief. Get all the projects to compete for your approval. Reject all those that have had the most work put into them, and demand more work on the others. Finally, select the project that you intend to sabotage later. Tell different people they are in sole charge.
2. Set up an Editorial Advisory Board, appointing the most influential people in your organization. You use the Editorial Advisory Board to isolate those who think you need editorial advice, and to ensure the loyalty of those who know you don't. The Editorial Advisory Board plays an important role in ritualising the process and thus ensuring its longevity.
3. Get in some expensive consultants to keep your staff occupied with brainstorming sessions, workshops and self-awareness seminars.
4. In the unlikely event that you do need advice, the people best placed to serve your true interests are your spouse, daughter (who wrote such good essays at school) or special friend. If necessary, create positions for them in the PR or communications department.
5. Delegate the task of providing the content to the most junior level in your organization. Your PR or communications department should have a selection of interns for the purpose. This ensures the content is reviewed and revised through the entire hierarchy before it reaches you.
6. It is inappropriate to reveal your editorial skills by writing anything yourself. The main messages or a few key words will suffice. Best practice is to brief the intern directly. To avoid arousing jealousies and compromising

your dignity by giving time to a junior member of your staff, it is important to schedule a working dinner at a discreet location, followed, if necessary, by a working breakfast.

7. Never interfere with work in progress. Insist on the final print-ready version for review. The changes that you demand will then have maximum impact. Order changes to the layout that require the text to be rewritten. Always ask for more copy. In a printed publication, a small amount of extra text can mean that four more pages have to be added and filled.
8. When editing, on no account be specific. The best technique is to draw a circle somewhere on the text and write in the margin "I don't like that word," or "Find another expression." If you circle a picture, write "Colour balance!!!" or "Wrong size." Try to write angrily. Good editors are always personally affronted by what they edit.
9. Don't be fazed by deadlines. As soon as you submit to a deadline, you are on the slippery slope towards actual publication. The final deadline you're given is always a good month ahead of the true final deadline, so you have plenty of time to go on a trip. Only take action after a suitable amount of chasing and begging.
10. Surprise everybody by approving the last, final version for publication. Then delay publication to include next month's important announcement, new product launch or reorganization. By then, other things will have changed and the whole project will have to be updated.