

Do you engage your staff?

The promotion of effective internal communication is big business. A simple Google search reveals a whole host of impressive, creative and slick-looking companies who position themselves as experts in the field of communication, helping



employers and employees to work together towards the same organisational goals. It's no secret that it's the people on the inside of a company that make it what it is on the outside and effective employee communications are undoubtedly an important part of any successful organisation.

However, judging by a recent survey by Ibis Communication, there are few companies who are actually taking this message on board by ensuring employee engagement.

"Only 13% of all UK employees are fully engaged with the organisation they work for according to new figures ... The survey of 1,425 employees also shows that one in four is actively disengaged." (www.personneltoday.com, 19 June 2006). The report suggests that many employees simply do not feel valued by their employers and even struggle to trust them.

It's clearly important that employers consider their approach to people management and internal communication, and this should come right from the top of the organisation. It's often the senior people in a company who directly impact the commitment and motivation of staff.

If you are a people manager, how often do you take the time out to ensure that your staff are feeling valued? How often do you say "please" or "thank you" or "you are doing a great job"? This might sound obvious, but it's so important to staff members. It features right up there with salary incentives and competitive terms and conditions of work.

There are a number of things you can do to help your employees know they're recognised and valued:

Set clear objectives

Share goals and objectives with them, and let them know if these objectives change. You may think that you're communicating well, but the employee may often be of a different opinion. Ensure you get feedback from staff so that all parties are clear on requirements.

Be confident

Be confident with your staff and arrive at work with a positive attitude. Don't start the day growling about how high the mountain is that you have to climb. Try telling them instead that it's going to be a great day - and then see if you notice any differences.

Spend time with your staff

Take time out of your schedule to feed back to your team. They need to know what they've done well, and what they could have done better, and as soon as possible after the event. And listen to them, respond and act upon any concerns they have and encourage them to talk to you about their personal career aspirations.

We all get bogged down in our day to day activities and schedules and it's hard to make time for the less tangible outputs such as effective communication and feedback. But give it a try for a while. You may find the results extremely rewarding.

For further information contact Cliff Sewell or Philip Hill at Sewell Moorhouse - an independent and specialised accounting, financial and administrative recruitment consultancy based in Sheffield, Doncaster and Leeds.

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Westfield mark of quality

WESTFIELD HEALTH has successfully achieved certification for a major Quality Assurance standard.

The not-for-profit health insurance provider has secured ISO 9001:2000 certification – the internationally recognised standard for an organisation's internal quality management.

Westfield Executive Director Julie Gill said: "ISO 9001:2001 is a quality management system which helps us to go through a framework of continuous improvement. It is a quality kite-mark which is recognised by all of our customers and has value in the worldwide market place.

"Because we believed ourselves to be a quality organisation and we have successfully achieved certification in other ISO areas, such as Environmental and Health and Safety, for a number of years now, we decided to go for the quality management certification.

"We had very positive feedback from the assessors regarding not only the staff involved but the quality and control environment in place at Westfield in general - this is a great tribute to us all."

In order to attain the certification, Westfield had to demonstrate to an external, independent assessor that they have a 'Quality System' in place. This is built around a series of processes within the organisation where the methods and procedures used are designed to give the customer what they want, first time and on time.

Explained Julie: "Westfield were able to show that we exercise good control over everything that we do and that we resolve any issues quickly and efficiently.

"Westfield has also established a programme to review its performance in the area of Treating Customers Fairly, which is a requirement of the Financial Services Authority. This is to ensure we always pay due regard to the interests of all of our customers and have systems in place to ensure this principle is embedded throughout the company at every level."

Westfield also had to show that it passed various other accreditation requirements including -



Westfield Chairman Graham Moore and Executive Director Julie Gill

- A culture of striving for continual improvement
- An objective assessment of the level of customer satisfaction with Westfield's products and service to be used as a pointer to weaknesses and strengths in Westfield's systems
- Effective methods of internal communications

Westfield's lead ISO assessor, Keith Smith of ISOQAR, said: "A professional customer focussed operation was demonstrated by all staff during the assessment at Westfield.

"There are many benefits to being ISO 9001 accredited, but companies tell us some of the main results can include improved internal working, a boost to morale and motivation and increased profitability."

Added Julie: "We're thrilled to not only have

secured the ISO certification but to have done so in only four months. This further endorses what we have been confident of for a number of years now – that we are a quality organisation doing all that it can to deliver a strong service to our customers."

In February this year, Westfield scooped the 'Healthcare Cash Plan Provider of the Year' at the Employee Rewards and Benefits awards.

Westfield has also lifted both the prestigious 'Best Health Insurance Provider' crown in the highly respected Guardian and Observer Consumer Finance Awards 2005 and the 'Best Healthcare Cash Plan Provider' in the Health Insurance Awards 2005. These major accolades were secured for the second consecutive year.

Making sure your Will is up to date

CLARITY is a term which has become increasingly distant from proposed new legislation and budget changes. The alterations proposed in the Chancellor's budget for the taxation of Trusts, which could affect the existing Wills and Lifetime Trusts of many people if they are passed in June, are no exception. Whilst the Government claims only a small minority will be affected, the reality could be much more significant.

Traditional Trusts set up for children to receive funds after their 18th birthday from estates which exceed the Inheritance Tax (IHT) threshold of £285,000, will face charges of up to 20% at the outset and 6% of the value of the Trust every 10 years.

Rising household wealth means that over 4 million estates are predicted to be above the IHT threshold by 2020, meaning that many people will need to review and change their Wills and Trusts to avoid a major tax liability.

Furthermore, proposed changes to accumulation and maintenance Trusts, often used by grandparents to provide for their grandchildren's school and university education would result in such Trusts having to be reviewed before April 2008 to prevent significant tax charges.

Mary Butler, *pictured*, senior partner at Sheffield Law Firm, Bell & Buxton offers this advice: 'This legislation may be passed as proposed or reviewed yet again and things should become clearer over the coming weeks. The important message is to be sure that you have an action plan for keeping your Will or Trust up to date.'

Apart from the impact on those with existing Wills, this should perhaps be a wake up call to those with none. Alarmingly, recent research suggests that 57% of adults in the UK have not made a Will, including 40% of people with homes worth more than £150,000.

Mary Butler comments "Many people put off making Wills because it's something we don't really like to think about. Our advice is 'please just do it and treat your will with at least the respect you would your bank account – ultimately this could have a significant impact on your family and loved ones.'

For further information, contact Bell & Buxton Solicitors on 0114 2495969



Stocks & Shares

Market commentary compiled by Rensburg Sheppards

WPP, the global marketing group said on Tuesday that it would buy back more of its shares this year and reported 4.5% growth in comparable revenues for the first five months of the year.

Shares in the London listed group fell on the statement ahead of the company's annual shareholder meeting and were off 2.1% to 628p in the early afternoon. The revenue growth for the first five months, excluding acquisitions and the impact of exchange rate fluctuations, was just short of that expected by some analysts and marked a slight slowdown from the first quarter growth rate of 4.8%.

EMI's attempt to create the world's second largest music company took an unexpected turn on Wednesday after it confirmed that it rejected a £2.5bn counter-bid from Warner Music Group. The statement from EMI read, "The Board of EMI has unanimously rejected the revised alternative proposal and considers it to be wholly unacceptable, having regard to EMI's prospects, the potential synergy benefits of a combination of the two companies and the range of strategic options available to EMI." The offer of 320p per share came after EMI revealed it had offered \$28.50 per share, or \$4.2bn

for Warner Music Group earlier in the year.

Standard Chartered, the London listed bank, on Wednesday reported "very strong" growth so far this year as it benefited from the inclusion of SC First Bank, the South Korean lender it bought in April 2005.

The company, which does most of its business in Asia, reiterated earlier warnings that the Taiwanese credit card market had proved more challenging than anticipated, as consumers struggled to repay.

Despite itself being the subject of persistent takeover speculation, Standard Chartered in March said that it had the capability to pursue further strategic acquisitions, as strong economic conditions in Asia and the Middle East helped it to deliver record profits. Shares in Standard Chartered rose fractionally on the statement ahead of the bank's half year results to £12.92.

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Seven Day share prices

Stock	Price	Change	Stock	Price	Change	Stock	Price	Change
Alliance & Leics	1140	-15	Cadbury Sch	514	-4	Kelda Group	757	-4
Aviva	753	-8	Carlo Eng	69	-1	Lloyds TSB	522	-7
BAA	934	+4	Centrica	272	-13	M J Gleeson	394	-6
Ben Bailey	392	-12	Corus Gp	437	+32	Int Power	278	-3
BG	711	+34	EDP	56	-2	Northern Rock	989	-20
Billam	19	+1	GKN	266	-4	Rolls Royce	401	-1
BP	624	+11	HBOS	941	+3	Severn Trent	1139	-56
Brit Aerospace	362	-2	Henry Boot	805	-3	Sheffield United	14	-2
Brit Airways	336	-13	ICI	352	-3	SIG	863	+24
Brit Telecom	234	+2	J & J Dyson	193	+5	Thorntons	130	n/c