The Great Diversification of Internal Communication by Deborahswa

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A recent piece of research with one of the UKâ€™s best known companies reflected the great diversification of internal communication. The study showed that a fascinating statistic that only one third of staff prefer to receive communication in a read-only form. Of the rest, over 40% prefer to receive it in an audio-visual form, whilst the remaining 25% want to interact with the content they receive by either discussing it locally with colleagues or more widely with other communities across the organization. But despite this spread of preference, read-only remains the dominant form of internal communication.

Should these findings come as a surprise? We know different personality types take in information in different ways. We also know that people learn in different ways and much help is being given to those who find reading difficult. So what is the case for extending this principle and bringing greater diversity to an internal media mix? One of the most striking aspects of the research was the strength of the stated preference. Respondents who prefer read-only communication argue that content in this form is portable, flexible, easily scanned and useful as a reference to check detail. They would take a great deal of persuading that any other form is superior and even those that generally prefer other forms recognise that read-only has an important role to play.

Equally persuasive are those who argue that read-only lacks the richness of audio visualor discussion-based communication. Hearing or seeing someone speak stimulates more senses and makes it easier to engage. It also allows the receiver to focus on more than one thing, switching attention between different content sources according to interest. Those favoring discussion or interaction of any kind believe itâ€™s essential to be connected with groups of like-minded people and have access to exactly the right information at the moment they need it. They want to ask questions, clarify understanding and enhance the personal relevance of communication either through face to face dialogue or tools such as Wikis or Instant Messaging. None of these points of view is right or wrong: they merely tell us that people are different and balance is essential

Another argument in favor is the perceived discrepancy between internal Communication and how we receive communication more generally. If we take our daily intake of news as an example, some will be happy with a short two minute radio update whilst others prefer to read the newspaper or watch the TV news. Our expectation is that we receive the news in the way that suits us best and yet most organizations provide their news in a single, usually read-only, form. An increasingly media-savvy world will not accept this discrepancy forever.

The purpose of any communication is to engage the receiver and prompt a desired action. Logically, our greatest chance of success comes if we provide the communication in the form most likely to achieve that objective, be it read-only, audio-visual or discussion-based. Wider societal trends and new technology are accelerating the need for change making it essential that internal communication grasps this opportunity and introduces greater communication diversity. For more diversification of internal communication, see http://www.deborahswallow.com/

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Hello, I'm Deborah Swallow and, for the last fifteen years, I've worked in over thirty countries addressing the complexities of people working internationally across multiple cultures . Wider societal trends and new technology are accelerating the need for change making it essential that a internal communication grasps this opportunity and introduces greater communication diversity.

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