

Successful communication start from within

For the last year and a half, since I started my work in a consulting company, I have met a considerable number of HR staff and managers of miscellaneous companies. Our meetings focused on a range of topics from defining their development needs to designing education schemes and other tools for advancing their companies. They have always been interesting to meet with. It is already the initial phone conversations with potential clients that reveal aspects, which often do not directly correlate with their primary request. On this occasion, the following joke usually comes to my mind: "They called us because of the time-management training just to realise that they kill most of the time by attending staff meetings."

What is it that companies really need? I am not talking only development planning or mystery shopping, but rather the needs organisations have in general. What I learned in my previous jobs and from experienced consultants – experts, I am lucky to be in close contact with, is that **companies do not learn what they need unless they ask to their employees.**

There are numerous examples, but I rather come back to the joke about killing time in staff meetings - well, it is not exactly a joke.

In one of the assignments I managed as a project manager, I asked the client a few basic questions and together we located their actual need somewhere else. In our follow-up meeting, we found out that the employees of the company had no issue with time management. The issue was the organisation and progress of staff meetings. A follow-up on the assigned tasks was catastrophic. The employees hated the staff meetings and accordingly, they did not make any preparations. They considered them inefficient, instead of receiving clearly defined tasks, they would leave with a feeling of misunderstanding and most importantly, they were really killing time sitting in the staff meetings, because the meetings resulted in was a mess in task assignment. That directly influenced their performance and cooperation with other departments. Despite assumptions, the problem persisted despite training the managers in charge. The solution to the problem has been and is that the employees were actually asked about their needs and their needs were analysed. Interviews with the employees and their immediate superiors addressing their work, competences and description of awkward situations, the management opened a communication Pandora's Box, unveiling many a surprising but useful information. The client is one that I do not see too often now - he understood the challenge and seized the opportunity. Currently, the client is dynamically creating and implementing tools of internal communication and has been able to enjoy the first benefits thereof.

Another example is my bank. For a couple of years now, I have been a satisfied customer, handling my banking affairs through the Internet banking. One day however, I needed new information and I wanted to discuss my options. In the midst of our conversation with the employee, the computer system encountered a failure and she was not able to tell me exactly the details and conditions applicable to me. Accordingly, she became increasingly stressed out, causing her to forget that I was still there and she started muttering "oh well, I've been reporting these failures for two months now..." After the system crashed, she apologised and wrote down my details to contact me later. As I was leaving, I overheard her further complaining "I really shouldn't give a damn...". Obviously, it was not her mistake; maybe she just had a bad day or inexperienced to keep calm. It was a very unpleasant situation. You can train her, motivate her by bonuses or trendy benefits, but if the basic working tool (her basic need) fails to perform, what suddenly becomes apparent is the ignorance of the issue. That way her demand is lost somewhere in the process, making her anything but a happy employee. She will probably not tell friends that she is a happy employee, unable to persuade anybody that their cash will be well taken care of by the bank.

In the end, we spoke on the phone and had an appointment planned, but it did not work out, because I had no time and the product was not that important to me.

A happy employee sells the brand efficiently. If an employee is satisfied in the position he spends at least 8 hours daily, **he will become a true ambassador of the company and its products.** Add open communication and an atmosphere cultivating proactive approach, and we will be able to discover a person - employee, who is willing to propose solutions, share his opinions on the product and the actual needs of consumers. If the employee feels good in a team, his superior will listen to him and ask questions (because his superiors ask questions too) and he will get a whole new feeling working and will perceive his job as pleasure rather than earning a living.

Why is Google globally the most popular employer? It is not because the Internet is full of video interviews with their employees enquiring about their jobs, but because the employees want to talk

about these things. *Why is Facebook becoming a more prominent player in the employment market?* It is because they offer benefits, but those are benefits, which please the employees (mothers with small children will not really appreciate fitness vouchers). *Why do thousands of people continue to perceive IBM the largest global employer?* Because the company provides enough room for the employees to express their opinions also to other topics than employment (ethnic diversity, sexual orientation, the handicapped, etc.) and proclaims openness and tolerance as their underlying values.

Why are these companies successful and their success is rising? For millions of reasons often quoted by dissertation papers. One of the key reasons is the clear message for the whole world to know that **their employees are satisfied to work for them. These firms do everything so that their employees are even more satisfied. And that is what appeals to the employees and the customers alike.**