

Corporate Communication: Legitimacy for Employee Wellbeing during Crisis

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Abstract: Introduction: Effective communication has always played a vital role for any organization. It acts as a pillar on which the foundation of an organization is built upon. The importance of communication mounts during the tough times like hit of the Covid-19 outbreak. The year 2020 has seen as an exceptional global crisis due to COVID-19 outbreak. The word 'Legitimacy' means something which is good and right. Why the thing is right may be because it follows the law, a religion says it is right, or maybe it is naturally accepted..

Purpose: The crisis like pandemic outbreak pooled in high complexities at workplace due to which the employee well-being led to a questionable state. This study aims at explore role of corporate communication in employee wellbeing.

Methodology: This study is well structured approach to review the secondary data from quality data source like: Mckinsey & Company, The survey report by Business Group on Health & Fidelity Investment (2020), A Quantum Workplace Benchmark Report and Analysis (2020), various research articles from sage publication and other sources constructed base for literature review and bringing meaningful discussion related to study.

Result and findings: Corporate communication plays vital role in employee well-being and their mindful engagement contributing significantly to organizational performance. During crisis, the unprecedented public health affects all stakeholders. Employee's well-being is most important factor for emotional and physical health and to ensure business continuity. Strains and pressures are very high during crisis, the role of internal as well as external corporate communication is crucial to deal with. Being sensible and maintaining a human component in corporate communications will help organizations in the long run.

Implications: This study will serve as input for many corporates in designing their future corporate communication strategies in regards to employee wellbeing. This will help to maintain business continuity and sustain in the crisis situation..

Keywords: Corporate Communication, Employee Wellbeing, Covid-19 Pandemic, Crisis, Internal Corporate Communication, External Corporate Communication

1. Introduction

Outbreak of COVID-19 has spread to all over the world. Huge number of territories and countries are suffering from this issue and trying to deal with this global crisis. Today's organizations have to stay careful and adaptive to unexpected measures. For example external crises, which generate ambiguity and insecurity among their employees and stance instant extortions to the company's enactment and sustainability? This pandemic continues to challenge the world. The onslaught of the COVID - 19 pandemic has changed the social lives of people across regions and economic sections. Every industry is affected by pandemic; this initiated an exceptional failure and collapse in economic happenings. Today's place of work is changing. Although working for the duration of the pandemic has been challenging and from time to time tough to sail across. It has also emphasized the need of improvements to make workplaces run more efficiently.

This crisis has a great impact on employee communication processes, style, and characteristics. Corporate communication becomes gradually more essential for effective internal and external communication as it keeps employees well-versed and tied up so they can concentrate on accomplishing corporate goals. Organization need to ensure timely and correct information flows in every direction to supports and build a unified team and a positive work environment. However, the alterations in the workplaces function during COVID-19 have put a focus on corporate communication practices. In the present study efforts were made to bring out significance of corporate communication for employee wellbeing especially during crisis.

2. Statement of Problem

The Pandemic outbreak pooled in high complexities at workplace. With the rise of these complexities, the employee well-being led to a questionable state. Corporate communication played a legitimate role for employee wellbeing and business continuity at large.

3. Objectives:

1. To explore the significance of employee wellbeing, especially during crisis.
2. To design guidelines for corporate communication for employee wellbeing during crisis.

4. Scope

The scope of the study is limited to corporate communication and employee wellbeing during crisis, special reference to covid-19 outbreak. As employee wellbeing is commonly expected demand of all the workplaces during crisis, the study is general in nature hence applicable to all industry sectors. This study gives general guidelines to establish necessary internal and external corporate communication required for business continuity.

5. Literature Review

The organizational culture impacts the organization's performances. The quality of the employees' communication effectiveness and efficiency are able to improve the business performance. With the way of communicating and behavior, the employees succeed in appealing over the clients (Sashko Gramatnikovski, 2015). With the purpose of corporate relationship to work properly there is a need of effective communicate (Beverly Mallett-Hamer, 2005). There is a connection between HR communication, employee wellbeing and employee engagement as the result of each it leads to increasing employee performance, employee commitment, employee loyalty and purpose to stay which nothing but behavior is revealed by engaged employees (Nupur Veshne, 2017). Organization plays a vital role in encouraging participation through projects of investigation that uses interviews and focus groups, can be regarded as more consistent. "Workplace counselling initiatives can be contemplated, aimed at reducing stress and improving proactive adaptation to the workplace" (Gianluca Biggio, 2013).

Efforts to build trust with employees through corporate communication can provide benefits for both employees and organization. Employees feel more involved, build trust with their superior and the organization, and are therefore more empowered to build relationships with customers on behalf of organization. More effective corporate communication can enrich and enhance this engagement (Karen Mishra, 2014). Execution of an innovative communication platform based on ICT technology allows characterizing the changes that occur in the field of communication of an organization (Katarzyna Jasińska, 2019).

Importance of Employee Wellbeing at Workplace: Work is an integral part of human life. Individuals work for various reasons, from external motives such as financial problems to internal motives such as self-development. Most people spend much time at their workplace, working and communicating within their environment. As a result, it is obvious that the workplace conditions have significant influence to them, and vice versa. Work can have positive impact on an individual's mental health as it giving a sense of social status and identity, as well as time structure. A good workplace is need to encourage positive components such as respect and employee growth. The idea of wellbeing in the workplace is something that has risen in prominence in recent years. Many companies have implemented programs under the work-life balance to give an healthy work environment to their employees. Many organizations offer gym memberships, or started gyms in workplace to helping employees be fit and healthy. Human Resource departments would design and implement the programs and initiatives, and would handle the corporate communications for employees' wellbeing.

Corporate Communication: Nowadays corporate communication has become an important component of organizational management. Corporate communication is the process of facilitating exchange of information and ideas between the internal and external groups and persons that have a direct relationship with an organization. It is concerned with communication management of the modern corporate houses from the stand point of sharing knowledge and decisions from the enterprise with employees, shareholders, clients, contractors, traders, members of the community and other participants of the organization. Corporate Communication deals with the communication with internal individuals such as employees and partners. It comprises management of corporate publications for employees and partners and organizing in-house events for employees.

Corporate communication helps in sharing information about the company so employees can perform their jobs efficiently. It keeps employees informed. Role of corporate communications is to be responsible for an effective flow of information between an organization's departments and coworkers. This applies both up and down the management/employee chain. It also works among employees who are work together in the company. Existing perspective describes corporate communication as an exchange of information, ideas and feelings that creates positive conversation and action throughout organization. The way in which news and information is received, discussed and acted upon by employees will have a positive or negative impact on performance of the organization.

Employees that feel better informed about their organization generating higher quality work. Corporate communication can improve productivity, increased levels of innovation, reduced absenteeism and costs. There are several forms of corporate communications for employees, which includes Global Communications, Small Group Communications and Personal Communications. Good internal communications is not just about company announcements, but also an ongoing, open dialogue between all employees that need to know.

Benefits of Corporate communication: When an organization is communicating effectively with its internal stakeholders, whether they are employees, management or volunteers, it develops a unified culture where everyone is engrossed on the same goals and has the same objectives. By working within a cohesive culture, the employees can work together more efficiently and effectively. Benefits that can result from effective corporate communication comprise: Employees can make more decisions since they have the tools and knowledge to know the correct decisions coherent with the organization's goals. Employees can identify better with the goals, mission and procedures of the organization, which can result in making a difference and increase effort and efficiency at the work place. Programs and departments share more resources and information ensuing in less repetition of work and robust impact as a whole organization. Day-to-day conflict can be reduced since a lot of differences is the result of conflicting ideas on what is essential to the organization. Although effective corporate communication may not bring about all above results for all organizations, it can go a long way towards building an organizational culture where people work together effectively towards a common goal.

The Digital Transformation for Communication with Employees: Many organizations have employed work from home for their employees in this pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is creating the platform for the beginning of an innovative type of corporate communication. It is found that company can communicate more quickly and effectively with the help of digital channels. This includes online meetings, messengers like WhatsApp, video conferencing, and more. Not everyone from the organization is working remotely; some may have a combination of employees working from their usual workplace while some are working from home. And in other workplaces there is no option to work from home: employees' needs to remain on premise for essential duties. The pandemic is leading many organizations to identify and adopt novel digital communication methods for corporate communication with their employees. The pandemic also opens up possibilities and affects how we use digital media in all other aspects of our lives (Minh Hao Nguyen, 2020). These employees need to be available at all times in the event of an emergency such as a positive COVID case in the workplace. It's, therefore, become obvious that enterprises need to be equipped with communication tools that can reach people fast no matter where they are. The situations with the pandemic are constantly changing: directives, policies, and news being shared with employees are changing very often. When something important happens, it's critical to share accurate information about it with employees. If there is a time-lag, people may continue to act in a way contrary to what the company would like. This can include compromising their own health and safety. When there is no news from management, a void can be created that can be filled with assumptions, rumors, and misrepresentation. During the pandemic, there are many conspiracy theories, tricks, and fake news stories that circulate on social media. It's important for companies to address these and communicate with employees before they take a position.

The changing face of corporate communications during crisis: Organizations lead rapidly to overhaul corporate communications to ensure their companies function smoothly and efficiently during the pandemic. Corporate communications with employee's best method that to introducing change in the workplace, employees should be kept informed about important information in a timely manner, communication should be clear and concise and delivered via effective channels. "Pandemic demands strengthening the personal relevance of effective communications." (B Venkatashiva Reddy, 2020). The pandemic helped to focus on the benefits of corporate communication with employees. It changes the policies of corporate communication and what organization should communicate, and how often it communicates.

Corporate communication and its focus on employee wellbeing: The current Covid-19 circumstances are exceptional with many now anxious about both the health impacts and financial impacts of this pandemic. It is very natural that employees will be experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety. Beyond all physical protection measures organizations has to make sure employees know where to find information, guidance and support for mental health. There is huge need to maintain open channels of communication to hear how employees are feeling and, importantly, listen and respond. Employee health and wellbeing has often been a focus of internal communications, but now more so than ever. In addition to the coronavirus itself potentially affecting employees and their families, there is a range of other mental health and workplace health issues that could arise during this time. Isolated, stressed, and worried employees may be struggling with their mental health and need to access programs and activities that can help them to cope up with it.

During COVID employee wellness programs are specifically important in this pandemic period for healthy life of employees. "The company needs to demystify the situation for employees, put everyone's mind at ease, and provide hope for the future" (Paul A. Argenti, 2020). "Be consistent and over communicate via standard channels; provide easily referenced Q & A and FAQs; and provide regular updates on company policies, SOPs and business operations" (Covid-19: Communication Strategies for Your Organization, 2020). The HR of every organization must consider the behavior of individual and to take care about the emotional and cultural needs of the employees. Communicator of the organization need to reform the vision and rules to achieve a goal of organization effectively in this epidemic period. This can safeguard and confirm each employee of the organization and the communities

they work for can flourish and feel safe and protective under the roof of organization. There is also a need for remote employees to ensure they have a safe workplace so they are not get infected while working from home, and therefore need to communicate more information about the appropriate steps to take precautionary. "All communications from companies and HR to their employees must be entirely transparent and emanate from a single source of truth." (Puja Lalwani, 2020).

Communication and Leadership



Health, Wellbeing, and Balance

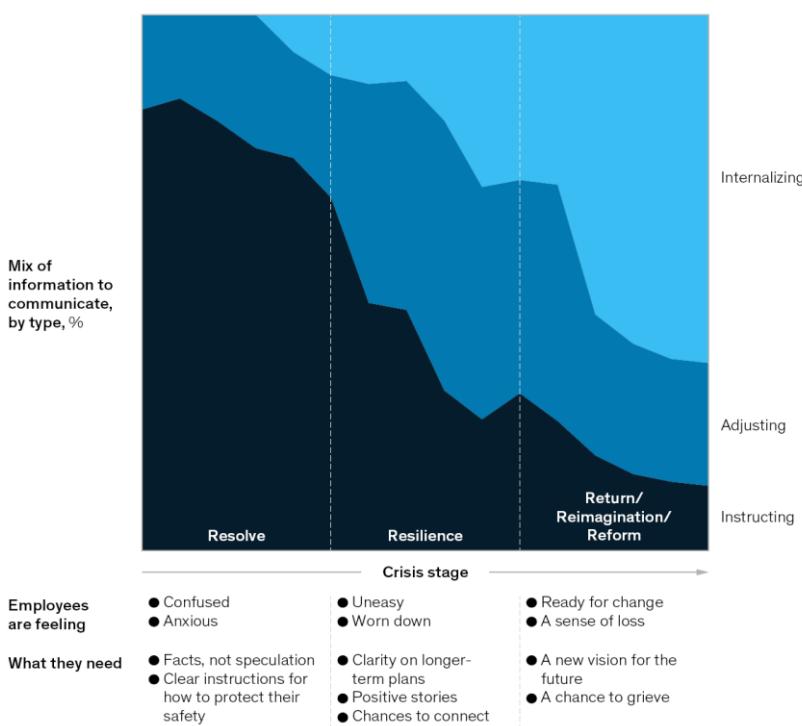


Source: A Quantum Workplace Benchmark Report and Analysis (2020)

These increases in favorability indicate that many organizational leaders were obligated to become agile in the face of disruption. And organizational communication became paramount as leaders and teams coordinate their responses. This might indicate that organizational leaders acted responsively to set guidelines and change policies to improve the health and wellbeing of their workforces during this chaotic and unprecedented time.

Adjust your communication mix by your current crisis stage.

Crisis communication life cycle, illustrative

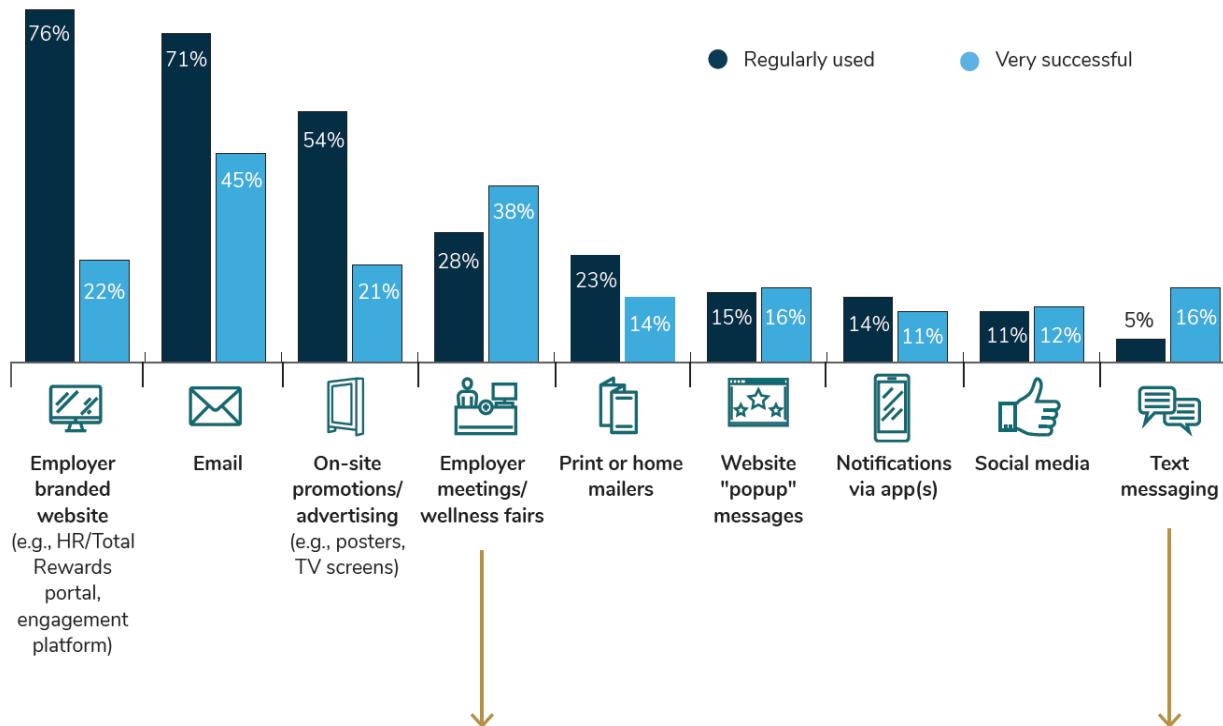


Source: Ana Mendi, Mary Lass Stewart, and Kate VanAkin(2020), Mckinsey & Company

Every crisis has a life cycle, and emotional states and needs vary with the cycle's stages. Superior crisis communicators tend to do five things well: 1. Give people what they need, when they need it. People's

information needs evolve in a crisis, connect to a deeper sense of purpose and stability. 2.. Communicate clearly, simply, frequently. 3. Choose candor over charisma. Trust is never more important than in a crisis. Be honest about where things stand, don't be afraid to show vulnerability, and maintain transparency to build loyalty and lead more effectively. 4. Revitalize resilience. As the health crisis metastasizes into an economic crisis, accentuate the positive and strengthen communal bonds to restore confidence. 5. Distill meaning from chaos. The crisis will end. Help people make sense of all that has happened. Establish a clear vision, or mantra, for how the organization and its people will emerge. (Ana Mendy, Mary Lass Stewart, and Kate VanAkin 2020, McKinsey & Company)

How are employers communicating to employees about well-being? What works best?



The two methods of communication that are potentially underused are employee meetings/**wellness fairs** and **text message**, based on the fact that more employers view these channels as very successful than who actually use them.

Source: *The survey report by Business Group on Health & Fidelity Investment (2020)*

Employers are using email and an engagement platform/well-being portal the most for pushing out well-being messages and program availability. In-person communications, such as on-site meetings and promotions, continue to play a role in reaching employees, although less frequently given the growing virtual workforce.

6. Findings and Discussions

1. Corporate communication plays an important role in the organizational performance.
2. Managing corporate communication imperative and adds significant to corporate social responsibility at large. During crisis, level of external public confidence in companies depends on how they have dealt with issues of their employees.
3. During crisis, the unprecedented public health affects all stakeholders. Strains and pressures are very high. To address these issues customized and informed messaging regarding safety and security, business impact, changes in corporate level strategies, work process and organizational initiatives to handle crisis for society at large will be critical and paramount.
4. The role of internal as well as external corporate communication is vital. Internal communication is to be built to appreciate employees, guide employees, consistent and frequent communication with employees, plan to communicate on tangible issues are important.
5. The external communication should address posting dedicated updates regarding crisis on company's websites, development of plan for external questions with the help of social media conversations and search traffic

analysis to answer common questions. In addition, providing financial disclosures and business impact updates to investors. Incorporating philanthropic/CSR communications is essential to be added.

6. Being sensible and maintaining a human component in corporate communications will help organizations in the long run

7. Leaders acts as a catalyst and spokesperson on behalf of organization. They are expected to manage empathetic communication transparently, clearly, calmly and frequently with employees is essential.

8. Wellbeing of employees is most important factor as crisis situation affects emotional and physical health. Organization need to take care of emotional and physical health of their employees to ensure business continuity.

9. Employer branded websites, email, on-site promotions found to be the best ways of communicating regarding employee wellbeing.

7. Conclusion

The crisis like, Covid-19 is an extraordinary adversity that ask for thought-provoking professional and personal communication around the globe. While certain concerns and worries may at first slow down progress of the company but, stable and optimistic communication from all employees and HR department will help to sustain everyone's confidence and self-esteem while going through this challenge. Businesses face a great set of challenges starting with the lack of human interaction to ineffective online tools that don't cater to their needs.

8. Scope for further Research

An empirical sector specific study can be done regarding corporate communication during the period of crisis to understand actual impact, challenges faced and changes required in communication policies. The scope is vast as effective corporate communication has become essence for employee wellbeing.

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