



## Establishing inspirational leadership communication

### Develop a strategic story

When it comes to defining the role of leaders in the organisation, internal communications is crucial. It's important to develop a credible internal communications story that explains who the leaders are, what they're trying to achieve and how they intend the business to do it. Then tell that story through all the available internal communications channels.

### Involve colleagues in the strategy

Set a clear direction for leadership communications but ensure you involve those leaders in developing your internal communications strategy. In turn, see to it that leaders incorporate your views on how information will be received in their business planning. Your communications strategy should reflect how your company does business.

### Sign up the leaders

Try to develop a shared sense of leadership communications in your organisation. Get leaders to 'sign up' to what they agree needs to be done. Build this into objectives with HR and make sure they're measured on a regular basis.

### Create visible leaders

Leaders will only be seen to be leaders if they are out there among colleagues at all levels. This could mean making presentations on progress and direction, taking part in a back-to-the-floor programme or roadshow, reinforcing the role of line managers, or sponsoring the annual employee report on achievements. Internal communications people should have access to directors' diaries to make sure leaders get out there - not just to fashionable locations but parts of the business where their presence will make a real difference.

### Keep looking ahead

One of the secrets of the world's most successful companies (Hay, 2003) is that they continue to focus on the long term even when the chips are down. Make sure your leaders continue to look and talk ahead. That way your people will be able to picture where they're headed and take you there.

### Get feedback for the team

Communications people need to know how well they are supporting leaders in the business. Encourage directors to hold one-to-ones with the internal communications team on a planned, regular basis. These meetings can be used to update on progress and develop messages and a calendar of communication activities.

### Respond positively to resistance

The internal communications team needs to create forums to encourage leaders to listen to and respond to any resistance in ways that explain complex and unpalatable messages in a direct and honest fashion. It also needs to make sure that leaders keep their heads up and are seen to do so. The ultimate role of internal communications is a positive one of building long-lasting commitment among employees.

### Check their style

Some leaders are aware of how they come across as leaders, others are not. It's up to internal communications people to tell leaders how their messages are received internally and help them to improve if necessary. It might be a case of suggesting a personal mentor or encouraging wider networking.