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3 Comms Campaigns that Make or Break Your Business

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Communications professionals at large companies have a harder, more complex job than ever. Every day, employees are bombarded with information about upcoming deadlines, company happenings, and the news and events of the wider world. It's hard to break through the cluttered and noisy information ecosystem to ensure alignment across an organization.

Meanwhile, employees expect more from comms teams and their companies. Employee concerns have extended beyond salary and benefits, as they grow more mindful of fairness, equity, and their employer's positions on sociopolitical issues. A decade ago, employees engaged their communications and HR teams on the basics of their employment—pay, benefits, time off, and the like. Now, DEI and CSR are at the top of employees' (and customers') minds. The Harvard Business Review has reported a 658% increase in CEO communication about these issues in the past 5 years.

These factors have expanded the role of the communications executive. Research from Gartner indicates that 83% of CCOs recently reported that their influence in the C-Suite has grown. But the complexity also makes their jobs more difficult, especially at enterprise organizations. Only 8% of communications executives feel their teams can meet the organizational demands of their jobs, and only 6% feel they can manage declining employee engagement.

To keep up with these pressures, today's comms leaders need to drive fast, consistent, and effective campaigns and measure their performance in detail. This paper will take an in-depth look at three major categories of comms campaigns in 2023: culture campaigns, top-down communications, and crisis communications. For each, we'll explore an exemplary case study, why it worked, and the KPIs comms leaders can use to guide their thinking and measure success.

Culture campaigns
Company culture is the foundation of corporate success.

Culture isn't easy. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to building an impactful company culture, and it's especially hard to build at enterprise-scale companies, where teams are disparate and often disengaged from one another's projects. Between predicting the success of the campaign, ensuring alignment with brand values, and what seems like an endless amount of factors, building a culture campaign is no easy feat.

In the age of the Great Resignation and employee empowerment, building a culture that resonates with employees is quickly becoming a priority with 77% of workers considering a company's culture before applying. The pressure on organizations to create effective culture campaigns doesn't make it any less difficult to kickstart a strategy.

Organizations large and small can meet the rising demand for company culture by implementing tools that can easily intake and track employee feedback, execute cohesive internal communication, and personalize and manage the employee experience to build a culture campaign authentic to your organization's brand.

What is company culture?

"Culture" is an elusive concept, something that means things to different groups. Company culture is equally hard to define. It encompasses the long-term values and goals of an organization as well as the day-to-day experience of employees. One of the greatest challenges of building a company culture is knowing whether or not your organization's shared ethos is felt by the majority of your employee population.

For larger organizations especially, it's imperative that your culture feels authentic to your organization's brand values. Employees in the marketing department should know that their value-based experience is no different from their finance department counterparts.

Building a company culture ends up paying off in the long run. An investment in your culture is an investment in your business. Companies with strong cultures outperform median companies by 60% (McKinsey). When executed well, company culture motivates employees to excel. In an era where workers are less likely to go above and beyond for their work and more likely to mentally check out, it's more important than ever to find an inspiring force to encourage employees' best work.

The benefits of a motivating culture for your employees is two-fold. A positive work environment can turn your employees into your organization's best brand advocates. Employees who feel supported and ultimately enjoy going to work share their enthusiasm for their organization with their professional and personal networks, creating mini-brand awareness campaigns for your organization. Their company culture praise enhances your organization's brand and delivers on your employer value proposition. Strong culture also makes employees happier, thereby boosting employee recruitment and retention. A MIT Sloan Management Review drew data from over 34 million online employee profiles that left their positions during the height of the Great Resignation. They found toxic culture is 10.4 times more likely to contribute to attrition than compensation.

Company culture can be difficult to foster, however, especially at large organizations. Company culture cannot be dictated. It thrives when it arises organically. Efforts to build culture can thus be counterproductive if poorly executed. Leaving room for your employees to evolve your company culture is an essential part of a flourishing culture

For example, the most successful employers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic didn't just resist layoffs, they listened to their employees' needs. In changing times, they delivered the clear communication their employees needed to feel supported and heard. Communication is a two-way street. Companies that create space for employees to share feedback with their leadership team allow room for growth for the employee, leadership, and ultimately your business. It's important to foster a culture that doesn't rely on bi-annual reviews for this kind of communication.

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Because communications professionals are engaged with company culture, they are the best positioned to create a culture at scale. The most effective way to do this is through culture-focused campaigns/initiatives. They're the best resource for ensuring external brand values are implemented throughout your organization. With software-based platforms and tools, they can seamlessly integrate brand-powered communications campaigns. Understanding the state of company culture is the first step toward a rich campaign. The second is providing your communications team with the proper resources to scale an effective culture campaign.

Case study: Sitecore's Pride campaign

Sitecore, a global software company that offers a comprehensive digital experience platform, runs a highly successful culture campaign every June for Pride. They've mastered the aforementioned principles.

But it wasn't always like this at Sitecore. Early in the company's history, communications professionals launched "campaigns" that amounted to faceless department announcements. Meanwhile, as their employees enjoyed rich cultural experiences and developed exciting interests outside of work, Sitecore was completely removed from them.

DoZen empowered Sitecore employees to share their own experiences via blog posts, intranet messages, and, where applicable, on their personal social media channels. Then, in partnership, they kicked off Pride's first-ever user-generated Pride campaign. By providing their team with the tools and incentive to share their own experiences, their employees fueled a campaign that grew all month long.

In one instance, an employee shared a blog post, "What I Hate (and Love) About Pride Month." The post gained positive traction within the employee's work group.

The Sitecore communications team responded to the post then boosted it across the employee, where it continued to generate positive sentiment about the employee, the company, and LGBTQ+ pride. Both these actions—the employee participation and the subsequent reuse by the comms team—are possible because Sitecore fosters a regular, clear sequence of communication that primes their employees for the company's inclusive culture mindset.

Ultimately, Sitecore's user-generated Pride campaign outperformed previous communications campaigns at the company by an incredible 372%.

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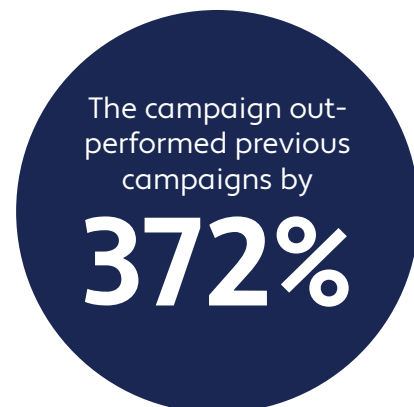
When all is said and done, there are three factors that mark a successful culture campaign:

Good culture campaigns are:

Grounded in established rhythms of communication
Communications teams must regularly use some channel to connect with employees so that when they need to share a cultural update or initiative, staff understand the infrastructure through which that update is shared.

Participatory
Campaigns thrive when employees engage with them. Communications teams have a responsibility to create these opportunities for engagement.

Responsive
Communications teams must acknowledge and respond to employee participation in order to create a sense of dialogue and community.

Actionable insights

DoZen was able to measure employee participation, effectively taking the temperature of Sitecore's culture. By measuring KPIs such as likes, reshares, and comments, DoZen helped Sitecore understand who was participating in their Pride campaigns and how often.

DoZen created a system for two-way feedback. Instead of just posting an announcement from executives, Sitecore could make full use of an intranet that simplified sharing and inter-office communication. By removing roadblocks for participation, DoZen was able to help culture flourish.

DoZen was able to promote high-performing content, creating a feedback loop of positive culture. With an agile CMS, Sitecore can select the user-generated Pride content it wanted to share and reuse it as needed.

Through consistent and clear messaging, communications teams can strengthen company culture by running active, participatory campaigns. As Sitecore's example shows, a well-executed culture campaign can boost employee engagement by more than 3x, yielding long-term performance gains for the organization.

Top-down communications

Clear executive communications are necessary to align at scale.

Aligned organizations are successful organizations. When executives can communicate a clear vision across their organization, enterprises can work in sync. Of course, that's easier said than done. Each organization faces unique challenges that prevent it from functioning like the well-oiled machine management hopes to build. To foster alignment, executives need to communicate key updates to every level of their organization with ease.

This has been more apparent than ever in recent years.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, company policies on remote work and emergency response changed month to month, and in some cases, day to day. Boston Consulting Group has argued that executive communication was the most vital part of successful pandemic response plans. The ability to "reinforce corporate purpose" and "anchor on communication principles that reflect core values" were essential.

Crucially, this kind of communication came from the top. Executives who could clearly communicate a connection between their pandemic response and their employee value proposition succeeded.

Not every instance of top-down comms is so extreme. Changes in policy, exciting new projects, executive hires, rebranding efforts– there's a wide range of important items that employees need to know and that leadership needs to communicate, nearly all of them centered on transformation.

The challenges of communicating at scale

Transformation isn't easy, though. According to BCG, over half (57%) of enterprise-scale transformations fail to achieve their target goals. They found that among those that do succeed, communication was essential. 90% of executives that lead successful transformations make a point to articulate clear reasons behind change, and 60% of them have a communication strategy in place. (BCG)

The larger an organization, the more important it becomes for them to be aligned in order to maintain brand integrity. Just as it's more important for enterprise-scale organizations to be aligned, it's also more difficult. Work siloes naturally. Large organizations have thousands, or tens of thousands, of employees. They work on different teams on different projects, often with little insight into what their colleagues are doing. Simply put, there's a lot going on at enterprise organizations. The onslaught of deadlines, projects and shifting targets can make it difficult for the average employee to keep everything straight. And with the rise of remote work, teams are more geographically disparate than ever. That trend will only continue – Forbes reports that 25% of jobs will be remote by the end of 2022.

Employees experience all this acutely. They have plenty going on with their actual job responsibilities, and on top of that, they also deal with everything that's not part of their job, from managing benefits to interviewing new candidates to participating in company events. Lastly, it's important to remember that employees have lives outside of work- family, hobbies, and the events of the day. Effective communication departments have to break through the internal and external noise to reach their employees.

Sadly, organizations often underestimate the difficulty of that task. It can be difficult for executive leadership to align themselves. Once a decision has been made, it's often assumed that the organization will seamlessly absorb it. That's not the case. Just because your executive sends an email doesn't mean that every employee will read it, or even open it. Just sending an update or announcement doesn't guarantee engagement. A thoughtless communication can be lost on a content hub or buried in an inbox. And even when communication reaches its target, it's not guaranteed that the audience will engage. Opening an email or receiving a memo isn't enough. Employees need to read, process and absorb. Comms professionals are responsible for making that happen. Delivering key messaging from leadership down and throughout their organization is the core remit of communications teams.

To launch an effective top-down comms campaign, it's important to have a strong communications infrastructure and powerful tools–for comms professionals and emp-loyees at large. Most of all, though, top-down communications campaigns need to keep three central ideas in mind:

Good top-down communications campaigns are:

Clear
Your employees must be able to under-stand both medium and message. The content should be clear and correct. The format should be equally clear, too. Com-ms teams need a system they can trust to circulate executive messaging, and the format must designate the content's importance. As such, top-down formats should be used exclusively for priority communications.

Concise
The longer you try to hold any audience, the more likely you are to lose their inter-est. DoZen finds that the most effective top-down communications express their point quickly.

Loud
Critical messaging must break through the noise with the most impactful format available, be it a video, a push notifica-tion, or a direct message.

Case study: A CEO finds new ways to connect

On the anniversary of a global software company's founding, a CEO sent out an email to every single employee in the company. Each email covered a range of ground - broa-der corporate updates, exciting future plans, explanations for shifts in strategy. In 2021, the CMO had to send a particularly important note about the company's marketing stra-tegy for the next five years. So they did what they usually do - sat down, wrote an email, and hit send.

There was just one problem. No one read it.

DoZen was able to help the CMO measure the performance of his email communica-tion, understand why it was failing. DoZen saw that only 2.5% of company employees were even opening the email. The message reached its destination, but didn't have any impact when it got there.

DoZen partnered directly with CMO and the rest of the communications and marketing teams at the software company to find a solution. By analyzing the various types of content deployed at the company, they le-arned that video outperformed nearly every other form of content. They then developed an intuitive and iterative way for the CMO's office to create video content instead of wri-ting an email that no one would read. DoZen also amplified the CMO's content by running . By making the video content impossible to miss, it made a loud, powerful impression on employees.

Ultimately, DoZen saw that the CMO's email open rates increased to 70%.

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Actionable insights:

DoZen was able to recognize and diagnose the software company's communications problem through accurate, strategically chosen metrics. For top-down communications, it's important to measure engagement metrics like clickthrough and time spent.

With data-based insights, DoZen could see that the software company's content was losing readers because it was long and jumbled. By coaching the company through a pivot to video, DoZen empowered them to make clear and concise content.

By promoting the CMO's campaigns across channels and through push notifications, DoZen made sure the campaign was loud. Everybody heard it, as demonstrated by the 67% increase in email open rates.

A clear and concise campaign that can break through the noise surrounding your employees is essential for effective top-down communication. With the right communications infrastructure and strategy, enterprise organizations and their executives can be sure that their messages are heard and their employees are aligned.

Crisis communications
Crises happen. Your organization needs to know how to respond.

All crises are a reputational hazard to an organization, and therefore a huge concern for communications teams. That concern is especially heightened today. The ongoing pandemic has highlighted just how interconnected our world has become, expanding the range of crises that can impact your business. Recent news shows how different responses can affect an organization's public standing.

On the one hand, silence is dangerous. Even if your organization doesn't have a strong stance on an issue, inaction may leave your employees (and consumers) with the wrong impression. Look no farther than Adidas. Amid continued hate speech from longtime brand partner Kanye West, both internal and external stakeholders called on the company to condemn his words and sever ties. The sportswear giant eventually did both, but not before incurring potentially lasting reputational damage.

On the other hand, a thoughtful and timely response generates goodwill among employees and positions your organization as a strong leader during a difficult time. In contrast to Adidas, LeBron James's production company, SpringHill, course-corrected on their relationship with Kanye West promptly. After West continued to use hateful language while filming an episode of their YouTube interview series, SpringHill CEO Maverick Carter announced that the episode would not air and expressed regret for the initial decision to record it.

These recent dust-ups highlight how hard it is to determine whether you need to say something, let alone what to say and how to say it.

Preparing for uncertainty

Every crisis presents uncertainty. It's difficult to predict which public policy change your employees will expect you to address, or which viral tweet will threaten to damage your company's reputation. That said, today's consumers (and employees) have high expectations for how brands react when problems arise, regardless of the complexity at play. It falls to the comms team to assess the situation, craft an appropriate response, and execute quickly.

But how can comms teams mount a crisis communications campaign effectively with so little room for error? First, understand the tools and channels at your disposal. It may sound basic, but when a crisis hits, your organization can't afford to waste time figuring out how to communicate. A centralized, clear interface for your communications team is a critical foundation for crisis response.

Second, have a plan in place. Leverage the available technology to build a response protocol that's easy to put in motion and adaptable to a wide range of situations.

Third, prepare for uncertainty. Figuring out what makes a crisis is rarely cut-and-dry. Develop a framework of questions and considerations that guide your team in deciding whether the latest news is in fact a crisis for your organization. Questions that can aid your decision-making include:

- Does this situation impact my employees? Does it have a unique impact on any particular subsets of my employees?
- How, if at all, do the particulars of this situation relate to our company values?
- Does this situation impact my business or my clients?
- Is this situation having a notable impact on my industry peers or competitors?
- Is this situation disrupting the media landscape or the culture at large?
- Does this situation appear to be escalating or petering out?

Fortunately for comms teams, the hallmarks of a successful crisis campaign are clear.

Good crisis comms are:

Firm
Messaging should convey attention, care, and authority. Comms teams can achieve this through form as well as content by delivering messages via their most formal channels, ideally under the name of an executive.

Fast
Time is of the essence. Your team should be able to understand a crisis, craft a response, and deploy as quickly as possible. Good tools and proper planning are paramount.

Flexible
Crises evolve quickly. Sophisticated communications tools allow your organization to evolve in tandem as a situation unfolds.

Case study: Carrefour in crisis

International retail group Carrefour provides a helpful case study in successful crisis comms. Carrefour is a global, enterprise-scale retail and wholesaling company. When white security guards killed a black man outside one of their Brazil locations in November 2020, over 1,000 protesters took to the streets.

Carrefour successfully navigated this tragedy with a [fast, unequivocal response](#). The group took a three-pronged approach:

1. Their local outpost in Brazil released a statement decrying the killing and promising swift legal action.

2. They announced the termination of their agreement with the security firm responsible.

3. Their CEO spoke out on his personal Twitter page, where he expressed his sadness, re-stated the company values, and promised a thorough internal review.

Actionable insights:

The key to this campaign's success is speed. Response time is the most vital metric when it comes to crisis communications. As time passes after a crisis, the potential damage to your company's reputation only grows. Carrefour executed its response within 24 hours of the killing.

Carrefour was able to respond quickly and effectively because of a reliable protocol and capable tools. DoZen not only enables fast and easy execution, but we also employ metrics that measure employee sentiment to evaluate the efficacy of crisis communications. An agile, clear system and thorough preparation empower communications professionals to defend their organization's reputation during a crisis.

Conclusion

Communications campaigns in 2023 are high-stakes endeavors growing more complicated by the day. To perform their jobs effectively, comms leaders need sophisticated tools that simplify their daily work, rather than adding complexity.

At DoZen, we make it simple to develop, execute, and measure all manner of corporate communications, whether your organization needs a grounded culture campaign, clear top-down messaging, or fast crisis response.

See how DoZen can elevate your business with [our sample guide](#) to an effective communications campaign with [our communications calendar templates](#), available for download here. These resources can help enterprise-scale institutions:

1. Establish the necessary frameworks for effective communications

2. Organize and schedule their communications

3. Brainstorm cultural topics for your institution.

Learn more by contacting DoZen at hello@dozen.ai.

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