

Communications Management



Square Peg Support

In managing the central communications stream of Project Pioneer we took an agile, phased and flexible approach, including :

Communications 'service' to local project teams - We didn't force materials onto project teams, but provided them with a service. Providing them with communications expertise and collateral (posters, desk drops etc) while leaving each country manager in control.

Utilizing existing communication channels - We knew from experience that staff, like consumers, evolve to ignore marketing/communications materials. We stayed away from the tired old formats of 'project newsletter', instead focusing on mid-level management buy-in and preparing line managers with briefings and materials they could present to their teams with confidence. From the factories to the finance department, this established the project as coming from the top.

Leveraging Exec-level buy in - Briefings, and materials for Exec-level leaders, and buy in from the CEO, was leveraged to ensure that the project stayed at the top of everyone's priority lists. The CEO's Fireside Chats were a great success with the 'influential' members of the organization.

Personal / conversational approach - Corporate communication can lack effectiveness by being too well... corporate. Using a conversational tone, and positive feel, we wrote honest messages with the intention of telling the story of a great project, facing a huge challenge, that would need company wide support.

The right positioning - By positioning the project from the start as 'a bumpy ride' because we were pushing so hard, unachievable expectations were never set. Everyone across the company knew it wouldn't be perfect, and it was from this 'vulnerable' message that we generated significant support.

Result

The success of Square Peg Communications Director, Jason Bates led BEiG Director, Operations Tania Howarth to comment: "Through a series of managed events, carefully crafted communications, coaching and support to other team members, Jason significantly improved the level of understanding, alignment and engagement of all our employees.... The "creativity" of his communications output certainly helped boost the engagement scores!"

The Challenge

With the separation of Birds Eye Iglo Group (BEIG) from Unilever, the business had to re-platform all its activity from telephony to reporting, across eight European countries. The project, known as Pioneer was change at every level of the organisation.

Communications in Pioneer presented a number of challenges:

- Multi-country / multi-culture – many languages and multi-cultural stakeholders.
- Very fast paced project - likely to encounter difficulties and involve tough messages
- Different sized projects under the same banner (thousands in the UK, tens in some of the small offices)
- A 'fit for purpose' solution and some losses of functionality meant the new system was 'a difficult sell' in places