



For social media buy-in, focus less on tools and more on business benefits

PROFILE: NEIL JENKINS

COCA-COLA ENTERPRISES' VISION FOR ENGAGEMENT

The IC team at Coca-Cola Enterprises (CCE) is working closely with leaders to reach a long-term goal of world-class engagement scores across the business. Neil Jenkins believes that clear messaging around business strategy and CSR commitments, and the use of social media for collaboration will lead the company to success in this area.

Tell us about your role at CCE.

In Europe, CCE is the exclusive bottler of Coca-Cola products in Great Britain, France, Benelux and Monaco. I work closely with our internal communication teams in those countries, as well as my colleagues at our HQ in the US and at The Coca-Cola Company, to make sure we're telling employees a consistent and compelling story about our business in Europe. That ranges from engaging leaders and managers in our long-term business strategy, to helping our 11,000 employees in Europe understand how we plan to meet our CSR commitments. It's by far the most varied role of my career, which is why it's also the most fulfilling.

What was your career path into internal communication?

I trained as a journalist and decided to put the skills I'd learnt into practice in the business world. I spent the first few years of my career agency-side, writing and editing employee magazines, then moved in-house to manage the main UK internal communications channels at Siemens and Vodafone before joining CCE.

What are your current challenges?

In early fall we ran a week-long companywide campaign to raise awareness of our CSR commitments on energy and water use, packaging and recycling, wellbeing and diversity. We threw everything at it – site activities, videos, blogs and much more – and it was

a tremendous success. We now need to find ways of sustaining the passion our employees had that week, and balance it with their engagement in our other business objectives.

What are the most effective communication channels at CCE?

Face-to-face is still hard to beat. There's nothing like the buzz of a great conference or event, and it's a vital operational channel for the thousands of our employees who work in manufacturing or field roles where they're not online regularly. Making line managers effective communicators, so they can understand business goals and make them relevant for their teams, is the holy grail of most internal communicators and it'll be an area of focus for us in 2010.

How important are engagement and social media to CCE and its leaders?

Achieving world-class engagement scores is one of our long-term business priorities, so our leaders are committed to it. At a recent conference for our top 300 managers in Europe, they insisted that we devoted an entire afternoon to analyzing the headline results of our latest employee engagement survey and forming some early action plans, which



Neil Jenkins is European communications manager at Coca-Cola Enterprises. He has previously held senior internal communication roles at Siemens and Vodafone and his specialist areas are internal communication, employee engagement, channel strategy and social media.

is really encouraging. Social media is an area that we're only just starting to explore and they're cautiously supportive. So we're planning to trial it with small groups of employees and benchmark with other companies, to help build the business case.

Was the company affected by the global financial crisis? If so, how was the impact communicated?

We operate in some of the world's biggest economies and our share price hasn't been immune to the volatility we've seen in the financial markets. But CCE has performed strongly in Europe for the last two years and most analysts were pleased with our recent overall results, so it's been important to remind employees of those facts. The message throughout has been to focus on delivering what we can control to the best of our ability, and that will be the same in 2010.

What was the biggest communication lesson you learned in 2009?

I've become more and more of a social media evangelist this year, but I've also learnt that business leaders quickly switch off if you start talking about things like micro-blogging, hash tags and followers. Mention collaboration, knowledge-sharing and productivity and they start listening again. To get their buy-in to social media becoming part of the internal communication strategy, we need to dwell less on the tools and more on the business benefits.

What will be your top priorities going into 2010?

First, to agree with HR how internal communication can best support our employee engagement strategy next year. We're also preparing to move our intranets in Europe to SharePoint and are installing digital signage at our manufacturing facilities, to complement line manager briefings. If we can get the balance of global and local content right on both platforms, we'll have a tremendous opportunity to bridge the digital divide and bring more interactive and involving content to all of our employees in 2010.

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