



The Source for Communicators

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Dear Source Reader

When Danish pharmaceutical company Nycomed took over Altana Pharma in 2006, it was the beginning of an intense communication campaign to unite the workforces and form a single identity.

At Melcrum's [Employee Engagement](#) conference in London next month, Mark Watkins, former director, organisational communications at Nycomed, will talk about the company's efforts to keep the workforce engaged during this major upheaval.

Here are five areas Watkins identifies as being critical to the success of the merger:

1. Developing a close relationship with the integration team

Closeness to the core integration team enabled understanding and support of the communication approach, and ensured it was tailored to deal with the business plan for integration. "The greatest challenge" says Watkins, was the management of enforced 'periods of silence' in various pockets of the business. We overcame this using a map of the various activities to ensure not all the communication areas fell silent at the same time."

2. Developing a close rapport with the senior team

The leadership team for the new organization faced a number of challenges including different levels of experience, the need to bond quickly as a team and the pressures of needing to be visible and keep employees informed. Different levels of support were needed from the communication team.

3. Engaging effectively with employees

A companywide survey was repeated twice during the year of integration. "All of this input shaped and reshaped our communication approach and led to us retiring the legacy company communication channels and replacing them with new

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ones," says Watkins. "We also placed much greater emphasis on supplying line managers with something to say, via cascade slide packs with scripts and manager briefings ahead of major announcements."

4. Addressing differing information needs

Employees across both legacy companies and in different areas of the business found themselves in very different situations. The response was to create a communication project team that focused on specific and unique situations. Comprising internal and external communicators, they focused on local media attention and employee communication, instigating weekly face-to-face forums for employees and large all-employee briefings whenever there were significant developments.

5. Addressing the issue of limited resources

The challenge of working with a relatively small internal communication team was compounded by departures from the broader corporate communication team. The creation of a temporary integration office created a solution to coordination within the team. But the two most important decisions were to draw in more junior members of the communication function (some were brought in from other areas), and to hire an external communication consultancy to support thinking, provide senior manager counsel and to manage the alignment of internal and external communication messaging.

Mark Watkins will talk about his role in managing communication and engagement during the Nycomed merger at Melcrum's [Employee Engagement](#) conference in London next month. The full case study also appears in the February/March issue of [Strategic Communication Management](#).

See you next week!



BAA's robust communication for T5 employees
The Internal Comms Hub, April 7, 2008

A recent article in the UK's Observer newspaper saw columnist