

CORE4

The monthly communication toolkit



January 2008 | Volume 1 | Issue 1

2-Way Communications Programs / Employee Engagement / Training & Skills Development / Ongoing Measurement



LEADERSHIP TRAINING & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Communicating for Results and Relationships Leadership Development Program

This comprehensive training program combines live and online tools while integrating real learning experiences to develop the critical skills your senior leaders need to engage your organization's workforce.

Rapid Assimilation Program (RAP) - Training for New Leaders

L.M. Dulye & Co.'s latest training program specially designed for newly hired or promoted senior-level leaders. RAP promotes multi-directional, work team communications.

Please contact [Roger Gibboni](#) for more details on how these Leadership Training & Skills Development programs can work for your organization.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Melcrum's 4th Annual Employee Engagement Conference

Feb. 26-28, 2008, Atlanta, GA
Join Linda Dulye for her pre-conference interactive workshop on Employee Action Teams. Linda is also the conference's Day One Honored Chair.

American Association of Legal Administrators (ALA) Annual Conference

May 5-8, 2008, Seattle, WA
Linda Dulye, will be leading a session on Feast on Feedback: How to Rev up 2-Way Capability in Internal Communications.

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CORE4 The monthly communication toolkit formerly 2-Way Tips & Trends Newsletter

What is CORE4?

L.M. Dulye & Co.'s proven solutions for helping organizations communicate more effectively and increase their productivity and profitability through;

1. 2-Way Workforce Communications Programs
2. Employee Development (including engagement)
3. Leadership Training and Skills Development
4. Ongoing Measurement

To learn more about CORE4 please contact [Laurie Anne Plax](#), Director, Marketing & Development, L.M. Dulye & Co.

Ice Breaker

In 2008, what one work-related New Year's resolution are you most determined to keep? To get the conversation started, send your replies to [The Icebreaker](#).



Dulye Noted

by Linda M. Dulye,
founder and president, L.M. Dulye & Co.

Core Beliefs

It's a new year. And for L.M. Dulye & Co., it's the 10th year of an amazing story that I'm proud to be a part of. You see, 2008 marks the first decade of the company that bears my name. As an entrepreneur, surviving and — even more important — thriving for that period of time is a huge accomplishment.

As part of my company's yearlong celebration of this milestone, my talented and diverse team and I are renewing our commitment to helping our clients communicate more effectively and increase their productivity and profitability. [Read more...](#)

C R E D I T S

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CORE Beliefs

Building on a decade of success, we're going back to the basics.

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As part of my company's yearlong celebration of this milestone, my talented and diverse team and I are renewing our commitment to helping our clients communicate more effectively and increase their productivity and profitability. One of the ways we're doing that is through a new marketing approach that includes a revamped and repurposed newsletter, which you're now reading.

Now known as the CORE4, this newsletter — or "toolkit" — each month will focus on a different area of our 4 core client solutions programs. Yes, we will still work to help our clients improve the way their leaders and employees talk to each other through our proven 2-Way Communications initiatives. However, we also will bring to the forefront the other three pillars of the CORE4:

- Employee development including engagement
- Leadership training and skills development
- Ongoing Measurement

When I started this business 10 years ago, I was passionate about helping employees and leaders within organizations communicate better with each other. That meant helping them learn to talk to each other in a new way. Basically, it was a process of teaching leaders how to listen to their employees and convincing employees that they could speak up freely to their leaders without fear of reprisals. Today, I'm ever bit as passionate about that mission — because there's still a lot of work to be done in the future.

Yes, I've seen tremendous progress among the clients my company's worked with. Yet just a few months ago, I held series of meetings over a three-week period with a company's top executives. Surprisingly, at the beginning of the meetings, these senior officials didn't feel that "communicating" and "leadership" were part of their job descriptions. I'm happy to say that when we finished the sessions, their outlooks had dramatically changed. But that situation illustrates the challenge ahead for me and my team — and for every professional communicator in the business world today.

These days, it's not acceptable for executives to be "just" decision makers. Today's dynamic business climate demands that they also be leaders who build and nurture teams that will drive and take ownership in an organization's success. One of the best ways to do that is through effective internal communications.

With 10 years of success stories to learn from, we also have a decade's worth of data to support our claims. In fact, L.M. Dulye & Co. research shows that when it comes to receiving information about the company employees overwhelmingly want to hear it from the organization's leadership — and the more direct the link between the employee and leader the better. Here's why.

One of the biggest lessons I've learned since I started this company 10 years ago is that leaders and managers influence the knowledge and involvement of a workforce more than any other communication source. Regardless of the relationship between the two sides, the line of communication between leaders and employees is the most important source of news in any organization. Which is exactly the reason why top executives and management at all levels need to know how to talk to the people who work for them.

Now effective communications isn't just a matter of people talking to each other. What leaders "say" is one thing. However, what leaders "do" is equally — and maybe even more — important. The best way to show that leaders and employees are communicating is when leaders take action on employee suggestions. Nothing kills communications faster than when employees realize that leaders are only paying lip service to the process.

So as we move ahead in 2008, the L.M. Dulye & Co. team is ready to help you improve the way your organization communicates through this newsletter. And through our renewed commitment to our CORE4 solutions we'll give you the tools you need to improve your organization's productivity and profitability.



Linda says:

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Get It Straight From Linda

Q: As a new internal communications officer, I've been asked to explain how my role can support the delivery of effective communication within a publicly traded company. What advice can you give me?

A: In your role as communications officer, you are many things to many people — coach, consultant, writer and strategic partner. I strongly believe that internal communications can support the successful performance of a company, publicly traded or otherwise, in a couple of significant ways.

Improve your leaders' visibility

To help build trust between your employees and leaders, make your leaders more visible. Research compiled by L.M. Dulye & Co. shows that trust in leadership is one of the highest-ranked priorities among employees. Going hand-in-hand with establishing trust is routinely getting your leaders out of their offices and seen by employees. To do this, I advocate the "Management by Walking Around" technique, where leaders actually take time to walk around to informally talk to employees. That should be supported by more formal gatherings such as frequent town hall meetings and other regularly scheduled face-to-face interaction between employees and management.

It's important to make the most of these meetings by measuring their effectiveness. You can create easy-to use pulse checks to use on site at the time of the meetings or to send to attendees by e-mail immediately after the meeting. Gauging how well employees understand key messages is a critical role that internal communicators play.

Build-in direct employee feedback channels

The second key factor is effective 2-Way communications. As the internal communications officer you need to ensure that managers at all levels influence what employees know about their jobs and their performance, as well as the overall goals and performance of their business units and the company.

Your ultimate goals are to inform employees through clear, timely and meaningful messages and to engage them by listening to their ideas and facilitating their active involvement in key initiatives and programs. In other words, you want to create a "spectator-free workplace," where every employee — from the CEO to the newest front-line worker — plays an active role in the organization's success.

As publicly listed company, an organization faces challenges such as employees hearing reports about the company through media channels. Therefore, internal communicators must work to establish trust in the leadership team. You must develop open and honest ways for employees to offer feedback and act upon that feedback. Let your leaders know that even when they don't know the answer it's okay for them to say so. Your employees will respect them for it.

The Core4 Checklist

Management By Walking Around (MBWA) is one of the most effective ways for supervisors and leaders of nearly every rank to keep their fingers on the pulse of their employees' morale and opinions. Here are few handy tips to help make every walk-around a successful communications tool:

DO talk with at least 2 to 3 people during your walk-around.

DO carry a small pad or some index cards for taking notes.

DON'T bring along other managers or supervisors. One-on-one is less threatening to the employee and establishes a relationship and trust.

DO jot down some open-ended questions to help keep conversations going. Some questions to ask are:

- How do you think our business is doing?
- What's going well, that you see?
- What's not going so well?
- What's the hot rumor out there?

DO discuss changes and new developments (business, department, product, etc.) directly and with candor. Give people the facts, not a façade — they will see through "smoke and mirrors."

DON'T be put off by strong employee emotions. Remember that perceptions are real in the mind of the person talking.

DO answer questions on the spot whenever possible. If you don't know the answer, say so and promise an answer by a specific date. Write down a reminder to yourself to respond on time so that your commitment to follow up is met.

From the Field

How to communicate the good news — and not so good.

Okay, let's start with the good news. The U.S. economy most likely will avoid a recession in 2008. That's the word from Marshall Front, chairman of the Chicago-based investment firm Front Barnett Associates.

A frequent contributor to **The Bloomberg Report** and other noted business publications, Front predicts in his Winter 2007 Commentary that the economy will return to "trend growth" in the second half of the new year. Unfortunately... it's not a completely rose-colored forecast. During the first half of 2008, Front warns that an ailing housing market, skyrocketing energy costs, tight credit, weak job growth and a bearish stock market will create some headaches.

Which means that as a professional internal communicator you could be performing a delicate balancing act during 2008, delivering a positive long-term projection in the face of your employees hearing a not so bright snapshot of economic indicators. Or worse predications about your industry or your own organization's state of affairs.

When it's time deliver information during times of change or crisis, remember to ensure that your message creates an effective and productive impression on the target audience:

- **Keep it simple:** Whether it's great news or otherwise, avoid jargon and overly formal language when addressing people as individuals or groups. Get to the point in as few words as possible. A concise delivery may not ease the sting of unpleasant news. However, a brief but thorough message won't make matters any worse.
- **Stay on the message:** Too often, communicators try to soften a blow by relating an anecdote they believe will reduce the impact of tough news. When careers, salaries, benefits and more are on the line, no one wants to hear how the communicator got over the loss of a pet frog in the second grade. And when there's good news, don't beat around the bush with that either.
- **Let them speak:** Once you finish what you have to say, give your audience the opportunity to say what's on their minds. During times of change and crisis, nearly any message — even the simplest and most direct — can create even more uncertainty and anxiety if employee questions remain unanswered. Whether you deliver a message to small groups or larger gatherings such as a town hall meeting, allow an ample amount of time to let your audience air their thoughts.
- **Tell the truth:** Honesty really is the best policy, especially when it comes to change and crisis communications. Anything short of complete truthfulness can — and usually does — lead to problems later on. As much as possible be upfront and open when relaying information that's less than pleasant. If permanent pay cuts and employee terminations are part of a revised business plan, then say so and tell why the moves are necessary. Don't give people false hope where there may be none. On the other hand, when temporary employee givebacks and sacrifices are necessary, explain they're necessary and how long they may last.

Most important, remember that sometimes you may not have the answers to employee questions, whether it's a matter of confidentiality or because there are no answers at the moment. Still, anything less than 100 percent honesty in such a situation will lead to ongoing skepticism towards all news you deliver in the future.

Of course, a positive message is always easier to deliver. Everyone enjoys hearing good news. So when there are reasons to recognize employees capitalize on those opportunities and celebrate your company's successes.

Still, whether it's good news or otherwise, an honest, straightforward delivery that allows for employee feedback is always the best approach.



The Lean Communicator Professional development the lean way

By Liz Guthridge

When it comes to professional development plans, the road to good intentions is often paved with hell—including budget barriers and time bottlenecks.

What can you do to make sure you'll carry out your 2008 professional development resolutions — especially when you're crunched for time? As the Lean Communicator, I frequently work with individuals who are having trouble getting all of their work done because they don't have enough time, staff and other resources.

Professional development — in its traditional incarnation — often seems like a luxury. Yet, in this fast-paced and ever-changing world, it's vital to stay current if you want to remain relevant. You also need to expose yourself to new ideas, information and inspiration to stay creative, innovative and energetic.

The trick is to think about professional development not as just a major, stand-alone, "must do" commitment, but also as "fun-to-do" actions that you integrate into daily life to help recharge your batteries.

So try these five tips. Note that most of these actions are relatively low-cost, high-value, which also helps you do more with less and get great results—the point of lean communications:

Leverage others. When you're meeting with colleagues you trust and admire, try to find a few minutes of downtime to ask them some questions about their learnings. For instance, "What are you reading these days that you'd recommend and why?" "What new developments are you noticing?" "Anything that's surprised you lately that you think we should be more aware of?" Your colleagues can serve as a special type of search engine for you.

Also ask these questions of recent college graduates and other newcomers to your organization. Their perspectives and experiences can refresh your viewpoint.

Track trends. For 2008, promise yourself that you'll track two to five topics that genuinely interest you—even excite you—and apply to your job and career. For example, three potential hot topics for this year are "followership" (what matters most to employees who follow leaders); "stakeholder engagement" (influencing not just employees, but also customers, suppliers, investors and others to invest discretionary effort); and generation politics, the continuing challenges of four generations working together. Look for ways to talk about your newfound knowledge with others, even to teach them what you're learning.

Play to your strengths. Take advantage of opportunities that fit your learning style: visual, auditory or kinesthetic and tactile. (If you don't know how you're hard-wired, [you can take a free, simple test](#).) That way, you can maximize the value of the training and not feel frustrated.

Fit the learning into your life, rather than vice versa. For instance, if you feel overscheduled right now, avoid taking classes or going to workshops that will require you to show up and pay attention at a specific time. Instead, consider self-paced pursuits, such as online learning or studio time where you can draw or write on your schedule. Or, if you have school-age children, learn along with them and relate the knowledge to your job.

Make learning fun, not a chore. Always remember, you're an adult. You don't have to repeat your childhood experiences, especially gym class. So choose things that include an element of fun with the learning. But speaking of gym, don't discount the value of physical exercise as a way to revitalize yourself. Riding a mountain bike, hiking or other physical activities can give you a different perspective and new insights into a whole variety of issues, including possibly solving your latest work challenge.

With a little ingenuity, you can make sure you're developing professionally throughout the year.

Liz Guthridge – The Lean Communicator and Senior Strategic Consultant, L.M. Dulye & Co.



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