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Abstract: The article offers insight to a study called "The C-Suite Challenge 2018: Reinventing the Organization for the Digital Age." It mentions about issues of failure to attract and retain talent; failure to devise an effective internal performance measurement system for employees; and rebuilding public trust in business. It also mentions about corporate communications.

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A New Organizational Chart: Reinventing communication for the digital age

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The Conference Board recently released a great study called The C-Suite Challenge 2018: Reinventing the Organization for the Digital Age. There are some fascinating nuggets in there.

Let's start with what keeps CEOs up at night: One third of the 28 geopolitical, social, and internal issues defined by global CEOs are directly related to problems that communication can solve. The top three are listed here, along with their rank in the list:

- Failure to attract/retain talent (#1)
- Failure to devise an effective internal performance measurement system for employees (#10)
- Rebuilding public trust in business (#13)

By the way, these "hot button issues" (defined as: "short term events, issues, and situations that CEOs and C-suite executives believe will require special focus in the coming year") were given higher priority by global CEOs than terrorism, Brexit, health care policy, and tax reform.

Corporate communication certainly knows how to fix these issues, yet we consistently labor with small budgets and a lack of a seat at the table.

What gives?

The problem: The structure of most organizations

Consider these awkward arrangements:

- Corporate communication departments generally take ownership of "trust," but, typically, "talent acquisition" is in a silo by itself-one communication shares with HR, now often the pariah because of its involvement in most sex-abuse scandals. Go figure.

- "Measurement" is something that everyone assumes soft and fuzzy corporate communicators can't do. So it is typically relegated to finance, which is far too busy reporting quarterly earnings to pay attention to long-term evaluation.

The solution: A radical restructuring

It's in the chart right above. Now, I know it looks crazy, or perhaps proves my megalomania, but hear me out. (And whatever you do, don't show this to legal.)

Without excellent, consistent and compelling communications, how will you attract talent, customers, or investors? Never mind keep them. Think about it.

Also, there are some of us in communication who have known for years how to measure internal performance, but no one has ever listened. But now it seems that CEOs get it. According to The Conference Board report, their priorities include:

- Communicate effectively from all levels, up, down, and across.

- Communicate consistently and transparently.

But all too frequently, those messages get diluted and distorted the further they get from the CEO's brain. Which is why you need communication to be tied at the hip to that brain, not isolated down the hall with marketing or operations.

So, take a look at the chart. The reputation management department would include brand management, pretty much what corporate communication is today.

In addition, there are four new groups:

1. The department of how the customer experiences our communications (and what they do with it), a.k.a. "customer experience" Let's start with the latest fad in corporate reorganizations: the customer experience department. It throws together customer service, UX/IT, customer retention (i.e., market research), and social listening to cook up the stew of customer happiness.

The problem is that far too often, no one in that mix is trained to understand, never mind measure, concepts like trust or relationships, the basic stock of any customer stew. And as you can see by ClearAction's graphic, customer experience typically includes most of the touch points in any relationship a company has with its

marketplace. The only thing missing from this scenario are the relationship experts that theoretically live in PR and the communication team.

2. The customer acquisition department (formerly known as marketing and sales) Next let's talk about marketing. The latest data shows that it costs five times more to get a new customer than to keep an existing one. Which makes it unfathomable why marketing always gets to spend five times as much as customer service. The most egregious example is the amount of money spent on building "engagement" these days. The rationale is the completely erroneous assumption that engagement is connected to sales. In fact, research has proven that engagement is most likely to happen after a sale is complete.

If communication was in charge, it would be the other way around. We would spend twice as much on listening to and half as much on talking at our customers and prospects. In other words, we'd spend resources building and maintaining long-term, communal relationships, not short-term, transactional ones.

3. The bean counters (a.k.a. finance) In my new vision, investor relations reports up to communication as well. A study by Forrester and Watermark Consulting showed that even during the recession, companies with high customer experience indexes saw far higher gains in stock performance, compared to those who scored low in customer experience. So, IR needs to be thinking less about numbers and much more about what the customer experience feels like.

And because IR of course must report to finance, finance would have to report to communication, so they would learn how to communicate the very important things they do, in a language that normal humans can understand. They would also come in very useful when comms has to speak to the financial press. Also, they're in general very good at math and we're not so much, so the synergy would be very useful.

4. Reputation management has always been the strong suit of communication, but too often "brand management" has been parked somewhere else. But ask any customer what the difference is between brand and reputation and they won't have a clue. So when I rule the world, I would include corporate social responsibility as well as brand management.

Talent acquisition doesn't exist today unless you have a good reputation for CSR, diversity, and all the other things most organizations see as part of their brand. So that needs to report to reputation management as well.

5. The good excuses department (a.k.a. legal and HR) Now to legal and HR. Two of the most important ingredients in an organization's success are its ability to track and keep talent, and its culture and integrity. Most of the responsibility for those aspects have traditionally been isolated in legal or HR. But those two are the cause of most reputation crises these days. So, rather than bringing in communication after legal has messed things up, why not put professional communicators in charge so they get to hear the full story first? Legal can figure out how to finesse it later.

I also suggest renaming the combined legal and HR group the "good excuses department," since that seems to be mostly what it does these days. Don't get me wrong, we need folks that are good at crossing "t"s and dotting "i"s (I believe most computers do that automatically these days, but I digress). The problem is that they both get so caught up in protecting the institution that they forget that what is really at stake isn't the building or the CEO. It's the reputation and the brand. Sit them down in a few dozen communication meetings and I bet they'll come around. And then we've eliminated most of the stress and friction communicators feel daily.

There you have it, a re-imagined organizational chart for the digital age.

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