

Strategic corporate communication in vodacom

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Strategic Corporate Communication is communication that happens in a corporation e. g. business, company, shop or group of companies. It is about laying a plan to reach the intended objectives of the company. Let say if the company needs to make profits it should have its strategic plan to reach that goal. On the other hand, those strategic plans must involve internal and external public. Mainly Strategic Corporate Communication is supported by a detailed research plan. Corporate communication is now making its entrance in Tanzania though it claims historical links to the field of Public Relations.

The core functions of corporate communications are more similar to those of Public Relations though they differ a bit. This paper is going to examine the Vodacom Tanzania company, to see how they implement Strategic corporate communication techniques and make the company the so successful in mobile communication industry in the country. The study also is interested to know how Vodacom communicates with its employees, the external audiences and other stake holders. INTRODUCTION The field of corporate communication has developed to a large extent since its first inception in the mid-90s.

Corporate communication began as what many of us recognize as Public Relations (PR). The function of earlier PR departments was focused on preventing media from getting too close to management. Argenti argues that “ the first PR professional were asked to protect the company from bad publicity, often by ‘ spinning’ damaging news in a positive light. ” This idea became popular through the 1960s, however, organizations soon found that external communication was not the only solution to their communication problems. Argenti, J. F. (2002)

<https://assignbuster.com/strategic-corporate-communication-in-vodacom/>

Strategic Corporate Communication refers to communicating a concept, a process, or data that satisfies a long term strategic goal of an organization. It is communication that happens in a corporation. It is about laying a plan so that to reach the intended objectives of the company. In fact, Corporate Communication is a managerial position which involves managing and coordinating all internal and external communications. It deals with the dissemination of information by a variety of specialists in an organization, with the common goal of enhancing the organization's ability to retain its license to operate.

Strategic Corporate Communication can do a lot for an organization. It is a new way for an organization to respond to a changed business landscape that results from today's networked communication environment. Strategic Corporate Communication helps to build organization image, combining its vision, mission and values and supports the organization by communicating them to all of its stakeholders; to mobilize internal and external support behind corporate objectives; to develop plans that will minimize differences between the organization's desired identity and brand features.

Argenti, J. F. (2002) Like in most countries in Africa; in Tanzania, Corporate communication is making its entrance though I can say in a slower pace. A number of local organizations still embrace the Public Relations traditions. The forces behind this transformation from Public Relations to Corporate communications has its base in globalization whereby regional economies, societies, and cultures have been included in a global network of political ideas through communication, transportation, and trade.

The mixing of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment and the spread of technology has changed the world of business in so many ways. Companies have to manage their communications to the employees and the public, Industries have to advertise their products so that to face increased competition. The need to employ corporate communication personnel in their businesses was not an option. This paper is going to examine the role of strategic corporate communications in Vodacom Tanzania limited and problems that may arise from this process.

Background of Vodacom Tanzania limited. Vodacom Tanzania Ltd is a subsidiary company of Vodacom (Pty) Ltd based in South Africa. Vodacom (Pty) Ltd owns a majority share portion of 65%, the remaining 35% is owned by a local company called Mirambo. Vodacom Tanzania was issued its license in December 1999 and commenced operations in August 2000. By August 2000, Vodacom (T) Ltd completed its state of the art GSM infrastructure and went live on August 14, 2000. On August 15, 2000 Vodacom (T) Ltd officially started its commercial operations.

Vodacom is a profit making company. The core functions of Vodacom Tanzania limited is to provide mobile communication services focusing on voice and data communications, with a great emphasis of quality and coverage. Recently, Vodacom has positioned itself as a total communication provider with the launch of Vodacom business which is one stop solution for corporate data needs, specifically catered to address the need for high

speed internet, data and Virtual Private Networking (VPN) powered by 3G and WiMAX services.

Vodacom, (No. 01, 2009) Vodaworld Tanzania, magazine. Tanzania has adopted a free market economy. The growth of cross-cultural contacts; arrival of new categories of realization which symbolize cultural diffusion, the desire to increase one's standard of living and enjoy foreign products through free marketing, adoption of new ideas and new technology are the results of globalization policy. Therefore, Vodacom is lucky to operate in such a country where there is no political, economic, social or cultural restrictions.

Vodacom Tanzania limited has a corporate communication office. It is reflected in its organization structure, and is referred to as The Head of Division of Corporate Affairs who reports direct to the Vodacom Managing Director. (see appendix1). The corporate Affairs office has to take care of employee relations, community relations, media relations, government relations, investor relations, advertising and marketing communications functions. This indicates that communication is a core value to Vodacom.

Vodacom strategic corporate communication plan is to incorporate internal and external stake holders very closely to an overall corporate communication strategy. To keep them informed on the progress of implementing the strategy and to ensure that communications with the Vodacom management is directed to strategic planning development. This strategic corporate communication plan gives Vodacom an opportunity to link strategy with communications and preserves the direct connection with the management. Strategy and corporate communication case studies.

<https://assignbuster.com/strategic-corporate-communication-in-vodacom/>

The corporate communication function needs to add significant value to the business and must be fully aligned with those making high impact strategic decision for the company. Every organization has its goals, and we need to develop a strategy to accomplish those goals. Through corporate communication it is easier to know the organization vision (where we want to go) and mission (reasons for existence). Then the strategy has to be communicated so that to bring changes. This is where the corporate communicators intervene to help the internal workers and external audience to understand the organization.

A study done in United States 2004, By Tim Leberecht, titled ' Internal branding as a strategic corporate communications tool"; A case study of JetBlue Airways, has shown clearly how these two combinations can do to an organization. JetBlue Airways gains its high customer loyalty by making its employees understand and experience the brand character. The researcher defines Brand as the internalized totality of all impressions received by consumers resulting in a distinctive position in their mind's eye based on perceived emotional and functional benefits, Knapps, (2001 p. 22).

He explains that Internal branding includes promoting the main corporate brand to the employee base in a fashion that makes them understand the connection between brand promise and brand delivery. Tosti & Stotz (2001). Internal branding then leads to a marketing strategy, as (De Chernatony 2001, p. 5) puts it " People's impressions of brands are more strongly influenced by the staff they interact with". The study uses qualitative research methods and draws on both primary and secondary sources.

Through the analysis of secondary sources including articles and magazine features the brand character as perceived by customers is identified.

Primary sources, including email correspondence, newsletters, or Intranet content, indicate how the airline accomplishes its strong customer loyalty by making its employees understand and experience the brand character.

JetBlue Airways Corp is a relatively young organization (founded in 2000) has implemented internal branding from the very beginning as a founding pillar of its business model. The internal communication strategy in JetBlue corporate practice has work so powerful due to the implementation of additional training or incentives that are necessary to encourage, support, and reward the employees required behavior.

In JetBlue Airways the employees are behind the success of the corporation because they totally identify with their brand as a result they become good ambassadors of their own brand to the public. The internal branding as a communication strategy have given a chance for the JetBlue employees to experience the brand and feel the connection of the brand to themselves as a result support to deliver the brand promise. Another study done in United States 1984, By Michael Dell; A case study of Dell Corporation. Dell was found by Michael Dell in 1984. Dell company is producing both customer based PC's and also organizational based servers.

Dell's sales came from enterprise products and 73% from desktops & notebooks. Their basic purpose is to cut off middleman and selling to customers directly for its lower cost. This organization is having well image in US & Global market. Though Its structure is complex and fluid; the

organization has a well disciplined direct communication system known as “direct Mails system” for its customers and employees in organization. It is the easiest way of communication because everyone in organization can talk to higher authority. Team communication is very strong in Dell. The company has relationship with GCI & other public-relation firms.

Dell looked internet as a source of staying connected with these agencies by using its own extranet for file sharing and online dialogue about specific issues. Talking about its corporate strategy, company strategy came from senior management rather than formal strategy process. Michael Dell found its strategy very important. Dell would find in late 2002 that its commitment to communication played a direct role in allowing company to implement strategy, even during crisis situation. And of course, Dell prove itself a successful company from both customer and financial perspectives in market during this crisis.

Dell established formal and structured approach for team communication including standing meetings and conference calls. However, Dell spends low budget on research & development. The researcher concluded that Dell has a good image in the market that is why it is still in the market. Its corporate communication was effective and its appropriate strategies have been applied to satisfy customer and the employees. Although there had been crisis but Dell was able to handle situations because of its proper communication techniques.

However, the researcher recommends the company to spend more budgets on Research and Development sector and to retain its lower cost

commodities according to its goals and strategies. As we have seen Communication is a core value in Dell. Team communication is very strong in Dell. That is why in late 2002 its commitment to communication played a direct role in allowing company to implement strategy, even during crisis situation. Corporate Communication strategy in Dell focuses on team communication which includes standing meetings, conference calls and by emails.

This kind of communication strategy (direct mails system) have worked so powerfully for them due to the fact that the system creates a good platform for interaction between the management and the employees (internal communication), as well as between the company and their customers by selling direct to them without the middle men. On the other hand, JetBlue Airways recognized that internal employees has a big part to play to make the company successful. Companies can save considerable time and by ensuring a measure of compatibility between their employees and their corporate or product brand.

Communication Audit of Vodacom Tanzania Limited. As noted by Columbia University's Centre of Continuing Education, a good communication strategy is a map that connects the present state of an organization to a future desired state. In order to design a good customer relations plan, it is important to evaluate how an organization has been dealing with its customers in the past and whether such communication approaches have had good impacts on the organization or not. According to Vodacom communication policy (2007), Vodacom Tanzania Limited operates

throughout the country and has offices in all regions both in Island and Mainland.

In order to achieve both smooth operations as well as to keep employees well updated, Vodacom opted for multiple channels of communication in order to implement the internal communication. Notice boards; news letter called Voda News and internal memos are some of the channels of communication which are used at Vodacom to implement internal communication. Other channels of communication used to run internal communication are online news letter, telephone, outlook emailing system is the main tool which controls the internal communication flow in the company. This system is very fast and offers instant feedback from employees.

As we have seen in both case studies earlier, that effective internal communication systems is particularly crucial when organizations operates in an environment of rapid and sustained changes like Vodacom.

Organizations must be innovative to be able to respond and adapt to the challenges presented by such changes. It is now increasingly evident that those organizations which promote good internal communication reap positive share in meeting these challenges. In most occasions, employees' disloyalty and lack of commitment to organizational goals are a result of lack of effective two ways communication between management and employees.

In a publication titled “ Designing a Communications Strategy” by the International Research Center of Canada (IDRC) it is emphasized that reviewing a company's past and present ways of dealing with its publics is

<https://assignbuster.com/strategic-corporate-communication-in-vodacom/>

an essential first step in designing a good corporate communications strategy. In this case the first public to deal with is the employees.

Recommendations. Channels of communication adopted by Vodacom to implement Internal Communication are notice boards, news letter, internal memos, online news letter, telephone, outlook emailing system.

All these channels are quite good. However, I would recommend a reliable and proactive communication strategy to be used. Off late Vodacom has decided to change its brand. Before the launching of a new brand, most of Vodacom employees were kept in the dark except those working in corporate communication department. The Vodacom corporate communication professionals should know that when employees are informed about the brand after the brand has been defined and positioned, they will be a passive audience.

As we have learnt in both case studies that Strategic corporate communication is the heart of any organization. Being a communication company, Vodacom Tanzania should make sure that more budget is allocated on research and development, maintain a good communication system within the company, maintain its strategy by communicating with the customers, management and all other important pillars of their company. Whatever plans they have must be well known internally and well communicated externally to their customers and other share holders.

That is the biggest secret if they want to remain the number one service provider in mobile communication industry. Conclusion: This paper has analyzed strategy and corporate communication in Vodacom Tanzania. Like

any other profit making company Vodacom has strategies and objectives to achieve. Through well articulated corporate communication techniques Vodacom has managed to be the leading mobile company in the country. However, there are some areas need to be improved, especially on strategy development where by internal employees are being side lined so far.