



ANGELA SINICKAS

GLOBAL VARIATIONS IN COMMS PRACTICES – PART 2

Angela Sinickas has mined her survey database to answer a question posed on Melcrom's CommsNetwork: "Are there global differences in how internal communication works?" In this concluding part of a two-part special, Sinickas looks at how interest and information levels vary for typical business topics, as well as how preferences for different types of information channels vary.

Last time we looked at how employee satisfaction with communication overall and with the communication skills of their management varied geographically at eight, very large, global organizations (three headquartered in Europe and the rest in the US). In this issue, we'll look at the influence of geography on two other aspects of internal communication.

Since some of the companies had overall higher ratings on communication than others, the graphs here show the percentage of variation in each company's geographies from their own company-wide averages.

Latin Americans interested and informed

Figure One shows that interest levels in five business topics are pretty close to company-wide averages everywhere, but in Latin America, where interest and information levels are much higher than company-wide averages. EMEA shows a split between German-speaking countries being almost as interested and informed as Latin America, and UK/Ireland employees about 10 percentage points below their company-wide averages. (The topics surveyed were company plans, business unit plans, how employees contribute to plans, company-wide news and local news).

Variations in preferred sources

Though not all eight companies participated in preferred-source questions, some general trends indicate which geographies are more likely to prefer certain information channels. Take a look at Figure Two, which shows variations in employees' preferences for how to receive information on the topic of company strategy/plans.

Averaging all the countries in each geography shows relatively small differences of no more than 5% in preferences for print, electronic or face-to-face communication channels. However, when we look at specific countries within those geographies, larger variations become quite apparent:

- Print is preferred more heavily than company-wide averages in China, SE Asia, UK and France.
- Electronic communication is more preferred than company averages in Germany, UK and US.
- Face-to-face communication is preferred more than company averages in Italy, Spain, China and Japan.

It's important to remember that in spite of these trends, results from any single company in the database may contradict the trends. All it takes is a strong communication director with particularly effective print or electronic channels to make these channels more highly preferred by people in that geography. And a highly communicative business unit executive can turn any geography into a communication oasis for face-to-face communication.

Figure One: How interest and information levels vary by geography

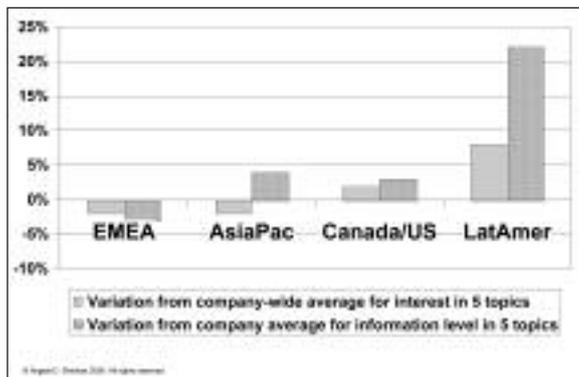
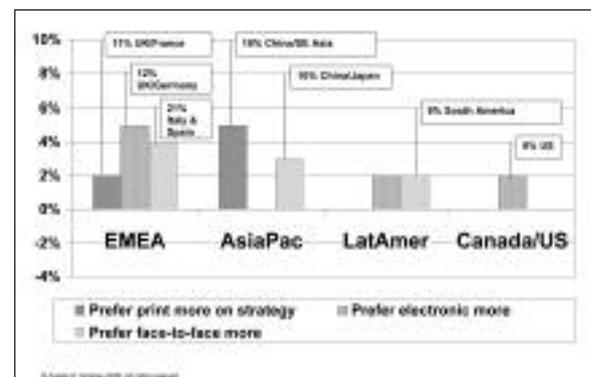


Figure Two: How preferences for different sources about strategy vary



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