

**2016 Gold Quill Awards
Communication Management Divisions Work Plan**

Entrant: Angela Sinickas, Tara Champetier, Charlotte Perrot	Division/Category: 2) Communication research
Organization: Sinickas Communications and JTI	Time period: Jan. 7 – Dec. 7, 2015
Entry title: JTI Communication Effectiveness Study by Sinickas Communications	Entrant’s role: Lead consultant and client
Your team members: Sam Shiromani, William Robinson, California Survey Research, Inc.	
Project description: Focus groups and survey to measure the impact of internal communication for a global company involving online and paper surveys in 24 languages and tailored PPT reports for communicators in 51 countries, 6 regions and 16 business functions.	

1. THE BUSINESS NEED OR OPPORTUNITY

JTI is a leading international tobacco manufacturer. With headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, JTI has operations in more than 120 countries. Its core revenue in the fiscal year ended December 31, 2014, was USD 11.9 billion. Tara Champetier is JTI’s Director of Internal Communications.

Company/communication goal alignment: Internal Communication’s **mission** is to foster an informed, motivated and productive workforce that adds measurable value to the business: effectively communicate the organization’s goal (to be the most successful and respected tobacco company in the world), values and culture; open lines of communication and build trust between management and employees; give employees a voice and cultivate a sense of community. Continuous improvement is a key element in achieving JTI’s [strategy](#) and was a key driver behind conducting the survey.

The **opportunity** for this research project resulted from a change in Company leadership at the end of 2013 and a heightened focus on effectiveness and cost efficiency Company-wide. The printed flagship publication, *INSIDE Magazine*, one of the most visible cost items, was originally targeted for elimination. The editorial team, based on an earlier readership survey and qualitative feedback, knew the magazine was highly valued by employees. In March 2014 the magazine team proposed three alternatives for reducing the cost of employee communication without killing the magazine; three months later, the first edition of a newly integrated global and local magazine format with a sharper business focus was produced. By the end of 2014, Tara had obtained approval to conduct a comprehensive communication effectiveness study by not only describing the advantages of the research, but also the risks to the Company if it was not done. Tara selected my firm to conduct the study. During planning discussions, she shared many of leadership’s questions that needed to be answered in the study: Was the magazine meeting the needs of JTI and of employees? Was it read? Did reading it result in better business outcomes? Did it need to be printed and translated? She also wanted to know similar information about other channels. The research would let her build a solid business case for future recommendations.

2. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The aim of the research was to identify the diverse communication needs of **employees**, the object of the research and the ultimate beneficiaries of changes resulting from the research. Employees work in 364 offices worldwide, 25 factories, 8 R&D centers, and 5 tobacco processing facilities. JTI is a matrix organization with functions at both the global and local/market level, as well as regional band market/country-specific activities, such as Sales. According to HR statistics, 68% of employees have 10 or

fewer years' service; the average age is 38. Key psychosocial characteristics from the 2015 engagement survey: 87% would recommend JTI as a place to work and 88% are proud to tell others they work at JTI, both of which outcomes internal communications contribute to—the communication survey showed that 75% said reading INSIDE Magazine helps them feel positive about working at JTI (75% for INSIDE Online and 70% for INSIDE TV). JTI's voluntary employee turnover at 3.4% is 0.6% lower than other top multinational companies. In 2015, JTI earned Global Top Employer status for the first time – one of only five employers in the world.

Vice presidents of Regional Corporate Affairs and Communications, as well as the market communication managers for the countries and the functions, were the intermediary stakeholder group who needed to receive the research findings in a way that they could easily grasp and act on since they are the ones responsible for the communication experience for their segments of employees. In addition to 11 functional communication managers based in HQ, about 65 communicators throughout the world are responsible for both internal and external communication.

3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In order to support one of JTI's company strategies of continuous improvement for enhanced productivity (and the new leadership team's related focus on effectiveness and efficiency):

- Focus the vast majority of communication survey questions (67% to 75%) on either **measuring communication outcomes** to address senior leaders' desire to know if the communication program was effective in supporting business goals, **or providing actionable information for communicators' decision-making** on where to focus their budgets and time for continuous improvement to better meet employee needs.
- Use survey data to **start making changes in communication approaches** where need gaps existed at HQ and at the local levels within three months of receiving the final reports.
- Obtain a high enough **survey response rate** so the results would be accurate for the Company as a whole within a 1% margin of error (for JTI, a response rate of at least 15% would be required) and margins of error between of 5% and 15% for the majority of larger country and functional subgroups.

4. THE SOLUTION OVERVIEW

The study involved 16 focus groups in eight countries, and 118 questions on a survey available online and/or on paper in 24 languages and administered to eligible employees (office, factory and sales based) to increase the accuracy of the results for country and functional subgroups. To ensure that **employee stakeholder needs** were met, we asked questions in focus groups in highly diverse locations to learn what employees wanted management to know about communication so that we could include all their key issues in the survey to obtain quantitative baselines. For example, we added two topics to the survey that no one had realized were important to employees across the globe: getting more information about how different parts of the Company work together and changes in laws/regulations affecting their local markets. To make sure **local communicator needs** were met, Geneva HQ communicators consulted them throughout the study: choosing focus group locations, reviewing survey questions, extending the survey administration from 2 weeks to 6 weeks, and identifying the exact type of information they wanted in the research reports. Because of the importance of getting local communicator buy-in, Tara was willing to let the schedule slip in the interest of doing the study in a way that better met their needs, and ultimately employee and executive needs. The way we created the

individual subgroup reports was geared to make it as easy as possible for communicators to see which numbers they should pay the most attention to in developing action plans: We put their numbers in red if they were low enough based on the size of their group to be statistically meaningfully worse than the Company average and in blue if they were better. We used the same color coding approach to the Executive Summary and Detailed Finding reports at the Company level to show where JTI results compared favorably or unfavorably against Sinickas database norms for other companies.

Major Steps	Planned in 2015	Actual Schedule 2015
Planning meeting	January week 2	January 7
Focus groups conducted	February week 3	Brazil, Canada, Romania, Russia, Switzerland, Taiwan, UK in April; Tanzania in July
Survey administration	March weeks 1-2	July 6-August 16
Final report presentation	April week 3	September 17
74 subgroup PPTs	Not in plan	October 28-December 7

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES

- Budget:** Planning meeting in Switzerland, including travel: \$5,000. Sixteen focus groups in eight countries, including developing question content, sourcing and working with facilitators, conducting focus groups, summarizing findings and discussing implications for the survey: \$58,588. Master survey at the Company level, including question development and revisions, creating online and paper versions in English, data processing, two PPT reports, an Excel report of color-coded demographic variations, verbatim comment analysis, factor/regression analysis, but not including translation costs and printing of paper surveys: \$46,650. Extra survey costs for creating 22 additional language versions online and 15 on paper, and data processing for consolidation of 38 data sources: average of \$1,402 per language. Two report presentation meetings, including travel from Atlanta to Geneva: \$13,718. Additional unbudgeted PPT reports by country, region and function: cost for each from \$2,500 to \$3,500 depending on length (38 to 124 slides each).
- Challenges:** Most challenges were logistical, especially given the scope and sheer number of countries, languages and functions involved. However, the most challenging aspect was gaining the buy-in and support of the local communicators tasked with implementing the communication plan and coordinating in their locations. This survey followed a Company-wide Employee Engagement Survey the month before, and communication managers voiced concerns over not having enough time, timing with summer holidays, and potential employee survey fatigue. To make it as easy as possible to implement, JTI's Charlotte Perrot prepared a communications plan and roll-out package that included template emails, INSIDE TV animations, news items and reminders to adapt in their markets.
- Consultation with stakeholders:** Charlotte worked closely with JTI market communicators to develop detailed documents about each of their countries. For example, in order to select the most diverse focus group locations, we needed to know which countries created online or mobile versions of the Magazine and which locations had INSIDE TV screens. In order to later correlate survey outcomes with communication inputs, we needed to know which countries were translating the Magazine. Later, when we were preparing to run the data tables for each country, we needed to identify which subgroups should be included in calculating each country's "total" column; for example, in Russia the country communicator is responsible for communicating with Russian factories so factory employees needed to be *included* in the Russia total, but in many other countries, factory communication was the responsibility of communicators working for the function overseeing the factories—so factory employees had to be *excluded* from their country total.

- **Timing:** Timing was a challenge due to meeting local communicators' needs. Focus groups scheduled for February were moved to April to allow local staff more time to coordinate them. This meant changes in some of the facilitators who were not available at the later date, but then I could conduct the ones in Switzerland and the U.K. myself since I was already in Europe. The survey closing date was extended by four weeks to accommodate local business or holiday schedules and to reduce the margin of error for subgroup analysis.
- **Report volume:** JTI decided that for the purpose of presenting results to management at upcoming regional Corporate Affairs & Communications meetings, with local senior leadership present, they needed 74 tailored localized reports in an easy-to-read format using JTI corporate templates. However, JTI needed them all in about five weeks (started Oct. 28, last report delivered Dec. 7)—a combined total of 4,040 pages of PPT charts. Each report ran from 63 pages for a country with no factories to 90 with factories. Function reports ran 63 to 124 pages. To produce these reports, first I created the correct template of PPT slides for each country, region or function. I also prepared source data sheets in Excel extracted from the data processing firm's tables to mirror the data tables in the PPT charts for as many questions as possible. Then two of the SCI team, Sam Shiromani and Will Robinson (both of whom also worked on the focus groups and Company-level reports), created the subgroup PPT reports using my templates and formatted source data. I double checked all the numbers and color-coding, added one-page analyses of how the subgroups were different from the JTI averages, and managed project flow. This process allowed us to create accurate reports at the greatest possible speed. Even with optimizing the process, all of us worked 50-70 hours a week on this project, including during the Thanksgiving holiday—and delivered the 74 reports by their deadlines.

6. MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

- **Goal: 67%-75% of survey questions focused on communication outcomes and/or being directly actionable.**
Result: 89% total. 44% of questions focused on knowledge, attitude or behavior outcomes of communication (interest and information levels on key topics, channels leading to understanding strategy, feeling positive about working at JTI, doing jobs better); 45% of questions provided data communicators could act on (where to improve access to channels, which channels to use more or less heavily for communicating certain topics, improving relevance or timeliness for subgroups, increasing/decreasing frequency of key channels, whether to expand availability of mobile channels) and only 11% of questions provided nice-to-know information that was neither outcome focused nor directly actionable, primarily questions about personal social media use.
- **Goal: Action plans in place within 3 months at global, geographic and function levels based on findings.**
Result: Many improvements have already been put into place within the last 6 weeks since reports were received, including: The global (HQ) Internal Communications team has developed action plans for each channel addressing gaps identified in the survey. These have now been incorporated into each person's individual performance objectives for 2016. A comprehensive leadership communication plan is in place to address the request to have more information on organizational direction, more on financials (e.g., CEO is reporting full-year results via recorded video for the first time in February), and more face-to-face meetings (e.g., town halls) planned in leadership calendars. JTI created video performance animations to "explain" financial results on INSIDE TV. Markets have been tasked to do the same as HQ – develop action plans. Only Asia has turned one in so far, but the other regions have begun and still have 6 weeks to deadline. Functions are also using the results to make changes in their own organizations; e.g., Finance is preparing videos of VPs talking about priorities for the year. JTI launched an RFP for *INSIDE Magazine* that will incorporate feedback received from the survey, but leadership's earlier questions were all answered: the Magazine was valuable for business and for employees, and it needed to stay available in print and be translated as much as possible because translation was the single biggest driver of having employees be well informed of Company goals.
- **Goal: Response rate of 15%. Result:** 29%, nearly double the minimum needed for 1% margin of error.