

2019 Gold Quill Awards Communication Management Division Work Plan

Entrant: Alison Evans	Division: Communication Management; Category 1 Internal Comms
Organization: Greater Bank	Time period: January 2017 – August 2018
Entry title: Leadership Communication & Engagement Framework	Entrant's role: Internal Communication & Engagement Specialist
Your team members: Jacinta Campbell, Senior Manager Internal Communication & Engagement, Kath Muscat, Graphic Designer	
Project description: In late 2016 formal executive communication at Greater Bank was limited and ad hoc. When benchmarked against the mutual banking industry, key engagement factors were below our competitors and trending downwards, in particular; awareness and clarity of our purpose, mission and strategic priorities; organisation pride; and satisfaction with information received from senior leaders about what was happening in the business. Following Executive renewal (70% of team with short-term tenure) and 100% turnover in the Internal Communication & Engagement team we had an opportunity to introduce an Executive Leadership strategy to establish long-term, foundational employee engagement enablers, introduce a consistent rhythm of communication from the top, and improve employee understanding of the bank's strategic plan. This entry focuses on year one of the program.	

1. THE BUSINESS NEED OR OPPORTUNITY

At Greater Bank our customers are at the heart of everything we do. As a mutual bank with no shareholders, we provide better value products and services for customers and use profits to foster development of the communities we operate in. Headquartered in Newcastle (a regional area of New South Wales, Australia), with 60 branches spanning the states of NSW and QLD, Greater Bank has more than 750 employees, 260,000 customers and over \$6 billion in assets.

In early 2017, there was significant executive renewal at the most senior level of Greater Bank - 70% of the Executive Team were new. It was also the mid-point of a three year business strategy, 'Blueprint for Change', designed to prepare the business for future transformation. Formal executive communication was limited and ad hoc. The Executive Team had a low profile, employees lacked understanding of the business strategy and their role within it, and also felt underappreciated. When benchmarked against the mutual banking industry, key engagement factors were below our competitors and trending downwards, in particular; awareness and clarity of our purpose, mission and strategic priorities (15% lower and just over 50% employee awareness); organisation pride (30% lower); and satisfaction with information received from senior leaders about what was happening in the business (10% lower).

In late 2016 a restructure resulted in 100% turnover in Greater Bank's Internal Communication & Engagement team providing an opportunity to introduce a fresh strategy to establish long-term, foundational employee engagement enablers, introduce a consistent rhythm of communication from the top, and improve employee understanding of the final year of the Blueprint for Change. Until this point, the communication 'ask' of the Executive Team had been limited, communication support was largely tactical and there were no formal whole-of-bank leadership communication channels. With only 12 months to ready the business for significant transformational change and a new strategic plan, it was critical the Executive Team build visibility and begin inspiring, informing and involving employees with our mission, vision and strategic direction to ensure our people would continue to go the extra mile to deliver great outcomes for our customers – the defining feature and key competitive advantage of Greater Bank.

Utilising data from multiple sources (including the 2017 Employee Engagement survey, sector benchmarking, internal focus groups, one-on-one meetings, 'Engaging for Success' studies and informal 'watercooler' employee feedback), we reinforced the links between employee engagement, effective leadership communication and customer outcomes to the Executive Team, and recommended a leadership communication framework designed to build four key engagement enablers - a strong strategic narrative that inspires; engaging leaders and managers who inform; a focus on employee voice that involves people; and say-do alignment that builds integrity. This was underpinned by a suite of fit-for-purpose communication channels and a 12 month program of activity for the Executive Team.

2. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

All employees are stakeholders for the 2017/18 program of work however the Executive Team were identified as the primary stakeholders given the absence of formal communication touchpoints, the low visibility of the team, the short tenure of 70% of the team and the lack of awareness of the strategic priorities among employees at all levels. External research tells us that organisations with high levels of engagement and performance have leaders who are visible and consistently champion a compelling strategic narrative. Given the relative immaturity of leadership communication across the bank, we needed to spend time setting the tone from the top to lock in solid engagement and communication enablers to help us inspire similar behaviour from other senior leaders and people managers in preparation for the rollout of the a new 3-year strategic plan in 2018/19.

To support our stakeholder understanding, we completed a desktop communication audit, reviewed data from the 2016/17 People & Process Transformation and 2017 Employee Engagement surveys, conducted internal focus groups at all levels and divisions of the bank, held one-on-one meetings, and considered informal 'watercooler' conversation. Factors of overall note that influenced our approach included; only a little over half (54%) of employees were aware of our mission; only 66% of employees felt well informed about where Greater Bank was heading; nearly 40% of employees didn't know what our strategic priorities were and couldn't describe them (15% lower than mutual banking sector benchmark); only 58% of employees felt they received regular leadership communication; employee pride overall in Greater Bank was 7% lower than the mutual banking sector benchmark and 8% lower in regard to pride in our strategic purpose; and only 49% of employees were satisfied with the recognition they received (30% lower than mutual banking sector benchmark).

PRIMARY: Executive Team:

Six members of the Executive Team were new to the bank and the CEO had been recently appointed (promoted from within) to the role. Based at Head Office, all Executive members had limited exposure to the branch network, were time poor with competing priorities and competitive among themselves. It was also apparent that members of the Executive Team had limited exposure to strategic communication advisory services and were unaware of potential benefit realisation. The team generally recognised the importance of employee engagement but were

less certain of how leadership communication could enable engagement to flourish. There were varying levels of communication confidence and skill and initial buy-in was critical to long-term success. They had a significant ability to influence employee sentiment but were confused about communication roles, responsibilities and themes to champion. Employees look to this group to bring the business strategy to life in a compelling way that builds an emotional connection to the bank and translates relevance for their operating division and unit – however limited formal channels existed to enable this.

Specific research

7 x individual 2 hour face-to-face briefing meetings (information discovery and education focus); Employee Engagement Task Force “Nailing the evidence” workgroup report; Engaging for Success (MacLeod Report); and White Paper: Employee Engagement in the Banking Sector (build evidence and compelling links between employee engagement, customer satisfaction and profitability).

SECONDARY:

Senior Leadership Group (SLG)

The top 25 employees responsible for managing a business unit and cascading communication – majority based at Head Office with varying degrees of communication capability (Executive Team aware of capability gaps) but strong appetite to engage with the Executive Team and understand more about future direction of the business. This group relies largely on the Executive heading their division to translate strategy information for their part of the business. Historically they haven't been provided with tools to effectively cascade and translate strategic narrative for teams – which provided an opportunity to test communication capability to inform the 2018/19 communication strategy.

Branch Managers

Adopt a role similar to an SLG Unit Manager within the Branch Network (i.e. responsible for cascading and translating strategic information) but have limited opportunities to get their whole team together. Support materials have a strong 'sales' focus and preference is for structured communication support resources. They have few visits from leaders and tend to feel 'neglected'. Communication support was rarely tailored to the branch environment causing ongoing frustration and 'switch off'.

TERTIARY:

Branch Employees

This group has the most significant influence on customer experience. They are customer facing between 9am – 5pm with limited time for team conversations (15 minute team huddle at start of day predominately sales focused) and significant technology constraints - internet speed and connectivity is poor in many geographic locations. They like to receive information from Branch Manager and utilise email and intranet. They struggle to articulate the bank's mission, vision and strategic priorities and many feel disconnected from group-wide initiatives.

Head Office Employees

Have easy access to direct managers, email and intranet though often rely on information via the 'grapevine' (significant number of employees with long-term tenure) and operate across a broad range of support functions.

3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: The overall goal was to introduce strong, long-term leadership communication foundations to inspire, inform and involve employees, ultimately engaging our people to deliver great customer outcomes and support the final year of the Blueprint for Change business strategy.

Objective 1: Improve awareness of our purpose, vision and strategic plan among employees at all levels of the bank so employees can identify the role they have in helping the bank achieve the final year of the Blueprint for Change.

- The Executive Team articulate a clear strategic direction and effectively translate this meaningfully within their area of the business so that > 75% of employees feel well informed about where Greater Bank is heading and understand their role in the journey
- 75% of Senior Leadership Group feel supported and confident to have effective strategy conversations with their teams
- Within 12 months, shift employee awareness and understanding of our strategy and vision from 40% to match or exceed the mutual banking industry benchmark of 55%

Objective 2: Increase visibility and voice of the Executive Team by establishing a regular rhythm of communication to build confidence in their leadership, improve employee perception of the team and inform and connect employees with what's happening in the business.

- 100% of Executive team agree with the communication approach and support a positive business contribution (*Primary stakeholder: Executive Team*)
- >75% of employees have a positive impression of the Executive Team and feel more connected to their leaders
- >75% of employees feel regularly informed about what's happening across the business by the Executive team compared to the current satisfaction levels of 58%

Objective 3: Identify and leverage opportunities for the Executive Team to highlight employee behaviours that positively influence customer satisfaction so our people feel recognised and rewarded from the top for their hard work and are proud to contribute to delivering the final year of the Blueprint for Change.

- At least three Executive led employee engagement activities delivered within 12 months that help shift employee satisfaction with 'recognition from the top' for delivering great customer outcomes to at least 75% (up 50% from Employee Engagement Survey results)
- 92% of employees are proud to contribute to the bank's strategic purpose – in line with mutual banking sector benchmark

4. THE SOLUTION OVERVIEW

Improving employee engagement and building strong leadership communication requires long-term focus and unrelenting commitment from the CEO down. We knew our solution needed to lay strong foundations in the initial 2017/18 year to prepare the business well ahead of a new strategy in 2018/19 that will bring significant disruption and business transformation. The first stage of our solution included the development of a Leadership Communication and Engagement framework to guide our strategy and tactical implementation. This strategic framework is characterised by four engagement enablers that high performing organisations with high levels of employee engagement have in common (a strong strategic narrative that inspires; engaging leaders and managers who inform; a focus on employee voice that involves people; and say-do alignment that builds integrity) and it outlines distinct communication roles, responsibilities and themes for our leadership groups (*refer work plan item 1*). We used this framework to educate the Executive Team on the potential business benefits of a structured leadership communication

approach and prioritised the two engagement enablers where we could establish greatest value in the final year of the Blueprint for Change to support them in setting the business up for success in 2018/19.

Our focus for 2017/18 was primarily on inspiring (strategic narrative) and informing (engaging leaders and managers) and our target audiences were the Executive Team and Senior Managers given the considerable gaps in understanding of our strategic direction. We developed a 12 month program of activity including key initiatives that we directly aligned with at least one of our four engagement enablers (refer work plan items 2 & 3), and introduced a number of new executive-led channels to assist us in implementing the program (refer work plan item 4). We consulted with the Executive and relevant stakeholders in developing each initiative throughout the year, using these consultation and co-creation points as an opportunity to reinforce the engagement enablers. A full communication plan was developed for each major initiative and, before executing initiatives, we sought 100% support at Executive meetings and formally presented measurement and evaluation data following each implementation to demonstrate the positive impacts of each initiative. This circling back gave us license to push boundaries and innovate a little more each time. Given the limited exposure to strategic communication support, we worked closely with each Executive to identify communication strengths and preferences and develop a tailored communication calendar. We continually coached and upskilled the team to build confidence and we leveraged the competitive nature of the group to encourage execution of the tactics. In 2018/19 the program will be refocused to more comprehensively address the employee voice and 'say-do alignment' enablers once our 'tone from the top' is more firmly established and our most senior leaders are role modelling desired communication behaviours for other employees.

Initiative + Objective	Purpose	Audience/ enabler*	Key messages	Tactical overview
Strategy Conversation Month - Objective 1	Draw line of sight to strategy and test manager capability	Primary focus on SLG and Branch Mgrs (SN, ELM, EV)	August is Strategy Conversation month. It's important you understand how the work you do each day helps Greater Bank succeed. If your manager hasn't held a strategy conversation or huddle yet – ask them when you can expect your update.	<i>Refer work plan item 2 - Strategy conversation packs developed and support portal tailored by audience.</i>
Bank of the Year Celebration – Objective 2 & 3	Executive-led recognition of behaviours resulting in good customer outcomes	All employees - primary focus on branches (ELM, SDA)	We did it...Again – thanks to you, we're Bank of the Year. Your hard work has seen us make good progress with our Blueprint for Change, and that progress is translating into great outcomes for our customers.	<i>Refer work plan item 3a - Bank-wide celebration including employee gifts, personalised thank you video messages from the CEO and team huddle manager support packs to help build pride and recognise outcomes.</i>
End of Financial Year event – Exec hosted Objective 2 & 3	Celebrate achievements with colleagues and announce employee awards	All employees (SN, ELM)	We've had another successful year. As we close out the Blueprint for Change, we want to thank you for leaving your mark on 2017/18. Join us for a night of celebration with your colleagues. Employee of the Year and Ian Nelmes Awards will be announced.	<i>Refer work plan item 3b - Revamped event, introduced creative approach to focus on employee contribution, say 'thank you', and position Executive as hosts of the evening. Celebration approach for branches unable to attend</i>
IKE (intranet) 12 Days of Christmas Quiz – Objective 2	Recognise employees for their efforts and build Christmas buzz	All employees (ELM, EV)	Thanks for your efforts in 2017. The Quiz will run for 12 days with a new question or activity revealed each morning on IKE. Get in the festive spirit with your team, make a note of your answers and on day 12 you'll find out how you could win a prize pack.	<i>Refer work plan item 3c – launch fun festive competition to build Executive profile and employee confidence using forums to increase employee voice via social collaboration channels longer term.</i>
SLG Off-sites - Objective 1 & 2	Quarterly forum for senior leaders to hear from the Exec.	SLG (SN, ELM, EV)	Strategy updates, performance progress, major project and change initiative updates	<i>Refer work plan item 4 – Built buzz around launch via a puzzle, co-created agenda to help manage resisters, cascade support packs developed.</i>
Monthly 5 in 5 Video Series - Objective 2	Each Executive is asked 5 questions in 5 minutes	All employees (SN, ELM)	What are you most proud of when it comes to our people?; What's one thing we'd be surprised to know about you?; How is your area contributing to Blueprint for Change?	<i>Refer work plan item 4 – Filmed in-house by Internal Communication with questions provided in advance and some 'on the spot' to prompt light-hearted, personal insights.</i>
Branch visits - Objective 1, 2 & 3	Increase Executive visibility	Branch Managers and employees (SN, ELM, EV, SDA)	Key messages developed according to topical issues or initiatives that align with visit timelines – and include branch specific messages developed in response to branch engagement survey data.	<i>Refer work plan item 4 - schedule and briefing packs developed for each Exec tailored to each branch to note positive engagement factors and highlight any current issues</i>
'Message From' intranet feature - Objective 1 & 2	Monthly blog-style story from an Executive	All employees (SN, ELM)	Divisional context related to strategic narrative; divisional plans, progress and results as relevant to broader business; change initiative sponsorship messages; recognising people success stories.	<i>Refer work plan item 4 – released monthly via intranet homepage. Executives encouraged to draft in their own voice and tone.</i>

CEO Update - Objective 1 & 2	Monthly email update from CEO	All employees (SN, ELM)	Strategic narrative & vision, financial results, culture, values, macro environment and highlighting employee behaviour resulting in positive customer outcomes.	<i>Refer work plan item 4 – released monthly via email and intranet homepage</i>
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*SN – Strategic Narrative, ELM – Engaging Leaders and Managers, EV – Employee Voice, SDA – Say Do Alignment

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES

Ambitious program of work and varying degrees of leader communication capability: we needed to implement a solution quickly to plug gaps but consciously balance this with the development of meaningful engagement enablers and strategic thought to ensure an approach that would deliver ongoing, long-term benefit. We identified the need to ‘spoon feed’ the Executive and Senior Leaders initially given the communication ‘ask’ had been limited until this point, as such, we developed very thorough and targeted support resources for each initiative.

Technology constraints: our innovation was limited by aging channel infrastructure. This presented measurement challenges as metrics like page views and open rates were unreliable or inaccessible. The absence of online social collaboration tools, very slow internet speeds in branches and security considerations related to ‘off the shelf’ or cloud-based technology needed to be factored in to our approach. Maturing our channels is a longer-term focus that we agreed to postpone while we introduced a more basic framework to plug immediate gaps.

Budget and resourcing: all activity was developed in-house by the team (internal communication manager, internal communication specialist and graphic designer) while continuing to support change initiatives, operational communication, manage other news channels and various engagement programs. Budget of \$2,433 was allocated for 12 Days of Christmas Quiz prize packs and \$15,063 for employee ‘thank you’ gifts, video players and printing for Bank of the Year celebrations – small investments for a great return. \$11,210 was allocated for the End of Financial Year event where majority of budget was for food, beverage and room hire.

Geographic spread, customer facing employees and busy Executives: building Executive visibility with employees across 59 branches in regional areas who are customer facing forced us to strategically leverage visits to align with key milestones or events. For example we rescheduled branch visits to coincide with the Bank of the Year award announcement to best use Executive time, build visibility, pride and recognition, and create maximum impact with employees.

Executive engagement: We proactively checked in with each Executive monthly to provide program support, encourage completion of relevant activities, and overcome any perceived challenges or pain points. We reported back to the group formally with results and metrics regularly to consciously establish credibility and rapport – we encouraged friendly competition among the team which assisted us in getting the Executives to complete activities on time and with forethought. Establishing these strong relationships resulted in the Executive trusting us when we recommended activity outside their comfort zone, for example dressing up in Christmas costumes and answering personal questions on video.

6. MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

Based on results of post-implementation initiative-specific surveys the leadership communication and engagement approach has realised significant improvements in its initial year bringing Greater Bank in line with or exceeding mutual banking sector benchmarks. This provides the team with a strong mandate to continue to build and evolve the framework to further cement the four engagement enablers and support the business to deliver great customer outcomes. *Refer to Work Plan item 5 for further qualitative evaluation.*

No	Objective	Result
1	> 75% of employees feel well informed about where Greater Bank is heading and understand their role in the journey (EXCEEDED)	90% agree the Executive effectively communicate our strategic direction; 83% agree their knowledge of Blueprint for Change has improved within the last 12 months; 80% of employees agree they understand their role in the strategy
	75% of Senior Leadership Group feel supported and confident to have effective strategy conversations with their teams (EXCEEDED)	86% of managers agree they have the communication material and information they need to have an effective team strategy conversation
	Within 12 months, shift employee awareness and understanding of our strategy and vision from 40% to match or exceed the mutual banking industry benchmark of 55% (EXCEEDED)	83% of employees understand our strategy and vision; 93% of managers agree they have a good understanding of our strategic priorities
2	100% of Executive agree the communication approach and support has a positive business contribution (MET)	All Executives agree
	>75% have positive impression of Executive and feel more connected to their leaders (EXCEEDED)	98% of employees have a positive impression of the CEO and Executive team (though 36% would value more opportunities to ask questions directly of the Executive)
	>75% of employees feel regularly informed by the Executive Team about what’s happening compared to the current satisfaction levels of 58% (EXCEEDED)	91% of employees agree they’ve been hearing from the CEO and Executive team more regularly; 90% feel the frequency of this communication is ‘about right’
3	At least 3 Executive led employee engagement activities delivered within 12 months that help shift employee satisfaction with ‘recognition from the top’ to at least 75% (up 50% from Employee Engagement Survey results) with 92% of employees proud to contribute to the bank’s strategic purpose – in line with mutual banking sector benchmark (EXCEEDED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bank of the Year event: 93% of employees feel their contribution has been recognised and 100% are proud of their team’s role. End of Financial Year event: 93% of employees felt their contribution to 2017/18 results has been recognised. Christmas Quiz: Almost 100% of employees viewed Executive video for its duration 100% of employees are proud of what greater Bank has achieved throughout Blueprint for Change.