

Ragan's **TOP CASE STUDIES** in Employee Communications & Culture

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Introduction

Many say that communication is the lifeblood that keeps an organization alive, but it's also the thread that holds an organization together.

Information, shared top-down, bottom-up and sideways, has to seep into every pore of an organization for it to survive and grow. But without clear purpose, information is just raw data. If it's to mean something, it all has to be sewn together. Kind of like a quilt.

And like a quilt, the spreading knowledge base of an organization is stitched together from many different shapes, sizes and colors, crafted by teams of individuals with diverse backgrounds and unique viewpoints. Communicating values, objectives, a mission or a success calls for focus and discipline, also it requires a willingness to try something new, to go beyond the borders of what's been done time and time again, to forge something different in a fresh, never-seen-before configuration of words, images and actions.

The case studies Ragan Communications have compiled in this book run the gamut of communication challenges in the year of the COVID-19 pandemic—from staying in touch via intranet and email in the age of working from home to championing diversity and empowerment in the aftermath of George Floyd's death and the unrest that followed.

You'll discover how these organizations took on the challenges and thrived:

- **Ford Motor Company** launched regular "Think" sessions to quickly engage cross-functional teams in tackling priority items throughout the year. The "Think" team meets weekly and maintains a speedy pace to ensure the employee experience is evolving to meet employee expectations and preferences for how information is delivered.
- **Sachs Media** uses its mascot and spirit animal, a hard-charging rhino, to inspire employees and support teamwork. Managers begin each staff meeting with "Rhino Recognitions," as team members acknowledge colleagues who made a difference or contributed to excellence.
- **Hotwire**, a global technology communication consultancy, kept up its global annual bootcamp even though employees weren't able to travel this year. The company transitioned to an all-virtual multiday event, #HWRWired, and brought in a number of high-caliber speakers. The event included DJ sets, virtual team dance parties, influencer talks and Q&As.
- **Southern Company Gas** needed to keep its 4,400-member workforce up to date, so it created FUEL, an employee communications platform designed to reach every employee, no matter their role, location or access to technology.

- **Prudential's** AuditCon 2020 brought internal auditors from around the world together in a four-day virtual event that included speakers, live polling, breakout sessions and even a Pictionary game tied to topics discussed during the event.
- **Medela**, a supplier of breast pumps, breastfeeding accessories and medical vacuum technology, developed a six-stage email series for expectant Medela parents. Among advice on managing pregnancy, each email provided appropriate, accurate contact information to ensure easy connection to HR when and if questions arose, saving time and resources while minimizing misinformation and inconsistencies.
- **Philip Morris** International began a transition to smoke-free products, requiring a "Transformation Narrative" created to explain why PMI needed to transform and how employees could take ownership in the new mission.

These case studies show the creativity and innovation of communicators in varied industries. You'll find ideas here to admire as well as strategies to replicate in your own organization. They should help you communicate with your employees better—and weave a tight connection between management and your workforce.

Recognition

Financial service corporation celebrates ‘unsung heroes’ and tracks diversity in its ranks 102

‘Heroes’ teamwork recognition program draws 100-plus nominations in just one hour 104

'Heroes' teamwork recognition program draws 100-plus nominations in just one hour

Working to keep its culture intact and strong, Cardinal Group Companies enlisted employees to channel the message, 'We survived and thrived together.'

With more 1,700 employees operating in 36 states, Cardinal found itself in a crisis. Would its culture of inclusivity and collective strength survive when its team members were faced with a choice between personal safety and serving each other and Cardinal's residents through a worldwide crisis?

Like many other industries, Cardinal Group Companies, a Denver-based property management, investment, marketing and construction company, found itself with no playbook or precedents to draw from during the rise of COVID-19.

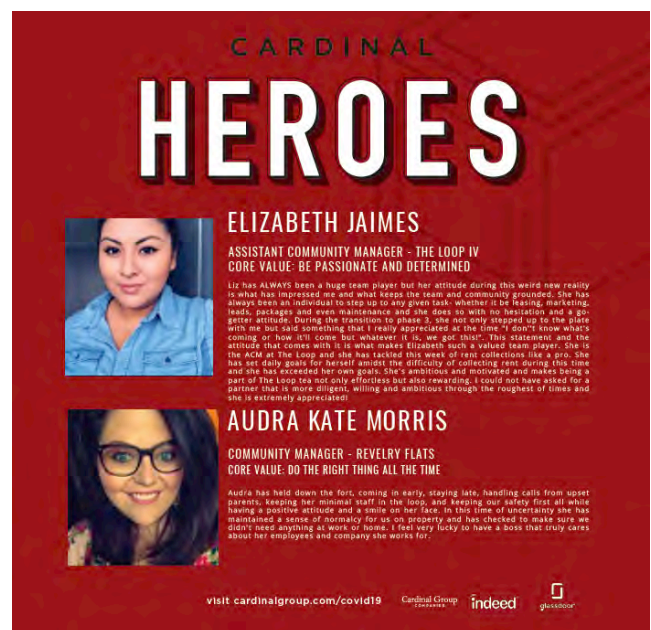
Cardinal's goal during the crisis was clear: If it wanted to survive the pandemic with its culture intact, teammates would have to lead the conversation. It's one thing for a CEO to say, "We are all in this together," but a different thing for a relatively inexperienced team member to say, "We survived and thrived together." Cardinal had to create a method for employees to celebrate each other in a meaningful, public way.

Recognizing heroes

Cardinal created and distributed a nomination process whereby any Cardinal team member could celebrate another teammate as a hero of the pandemic, whether it was someone who kept the team enthused and optimistic or someone who leaned in just a little further to do the right thing, providing relief to someone else within the organization.

With more than 100 nominations in the first hour, managers found that the company was full of heroes who took ownership over processes, emotional health, procedures, etc., all with the selfless desire to be a team player and respect those they worked with.

Each nomination was compiled and blasted out through internal boards and external social media platforms as a celebration of those who, despite the risks, chose to be emotionally invested in their teammates.



These posts also were made into downloadable awards that managers or other stakeholders could memorialize through framing and presentation to the nominee and posting at the community for residents and teammates to see (and in one case, sending along with a personal letter to a teammate's mother).

Results show success

The program got results. Cardinal's social media platforms collected 154,572 impressions, an average engagement rate of 21.84% (the average for other posts is .54%), 3,054 likes on Facebook and Instagram and more 250 apply starts on Glassdoor alone in the four-month period in which the program ran.

Cardinal was featured in four industry publications and two independent news sites, as well as being highlighted by clients in their own internal communications.

The internal impact can best be highlighted by attrition. Where the industry norm is about 20% voluntary attrition each quarter, only 6.42% of Cardinal team members chose to depart.

The program also was instrumental to senior leadership when making the case for preserving employee jobs, when many Cardinal clients were pushing to downsize their teams to save payroll dollars.

In total, Cardinal Group Companies had no layoffs, furloughed only four team members and kept the jobs of more than 99.9% of its employees.