

# **BURN AFTER READING**

## Key takeaways from The Role of Internal Communications in Building an Innovative Work Culture Conference

(so your boss doesn't think you had too much fun)

**Thursday, March 21**

### Stand out! Proven tips to create a compelling brand campaign that keeps employees engaged with your organization's culture

Maren Knaus, communications consultant, Nationwide Insurance

- Overall, 96 percent of organizations are experiencing disruption today.
- Continuous learning is a crucial part of having a resilient workforce: The half-life of a skill for an average employee is about 5-6 years, or 2-3 years for IT.
- The “Got Skills” campaign encouraged employees to take charge of their own development rather than wait to be told to learn a new skill.
- Nationwide used one-hour interactive broadcasts with video, [Yammer](#) for social media and [Mentimeter](#), [Slido](#) and [Poll Everywhere](#) for live polling. Mentimeter is less costly than Slido, but Slido has better polling capabilities.
- It covered emerging skills and shared stories of employees who used their training to advance in the organization.
- Nationwide sent a link to a SharePoint site where employees could watch the live broadcast. The broadcast included a Yammer feed where employees could interact in real time. Panelists would respond live.
- Nationwide promoted broadcasts through its monthly employee newsletter, digital signage at offices, one-minute promo videos, and invites to associates within a profession—for example, the IT department.
- Employees interested in professions other than their own could attend any Got Skills sessions they wanted or watch them on SharePoint, where the recordings lived.
- Nationwide used Yammer to promote before, during and after the broadcasts.
- Its link on the broadcasts sent employees to a three-question survey. Ninety-five percent said the broadcast provided value.
- Takeaways:
  - “Why” matters. You have to show people why they have to refresh their skills.
  - “Make it relatable and they will come”—employees are the face of Nationwide’s campaigns. People learn best from peers.
  - Create two-way, informal conversations between execs and employees.
  - Communicate exact next steps employees can take, and recognize positive behaviors.

- Keep messaging and brand alignment simple and consistent across departments. Ask: How can I make a campaign self-sustaining?

## Internal communications for the modern workplace: How to run your department like a startup

Dorri McWhorter, CEO, YWCA Chicago

- All employees have value; YWCA took an “inside-out” strategy, activating employees first, then external stakeholders.
- Other examples of organizations that put employees first: Shinola tapped into the human capital in its home city of Detroit.
- Social responsibility works hand in hand. Askinosie Chocolate hires ex-offenders and shares profits with cocoa farmers; Rumi Spice, based in Chicago, helped farmers in Afghanistan grow saffron instead of poppies. It’s the No. 1 employer of women in Afghanistan.
- “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. Build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” —Buckminster Fuller.
- YWCA gutted its HR function and started from scratch, changing its director’s title from CHRO to “Chief Possibility Officer.”
- Childcare program for veterans called “Tiny Boots” was an employee initiative supported by the organization.
- Is your job a job, a career or a calling? Not everyone at YWCA sees it as a calling, but YWCA does its best to bring out the best in their employees while they’re at YWCA.
- “A solitary fantasy can totally transform a million realities” —Maya Angelou.
- Found people felt demotivated after annual performance reviews. Traded performance interviews for “Weekly partner possibility conversations.” Communicated the change with multiple internal emails and got positive reaction.
- Sixty-four percent of employees want feedback every two weeks; 42 percent of millennials want feedback every week.

## How Target disrupted its internal communications channels to modernize its culture

Sean Madigan, senior director, communications, Target

- “Pyramids are just really big silos.”
- Interim CEO tore down opulent executive offices and made leaders sit together. They did a town hall, and it was imperfect—and people loved it. Leaders spent hours talking with employees in person, asking what they were working on and how the leader could help.
- Old: Overpriced, obsessively polished videos. New: Less corporate, more human content.

- New “briefly” publication offered 150-word stories every day. People loved it so much, they thought it was fake at first. Tone was punchy and fun. Content was 450 words max, no exceptions. No links. Just stories.
- Modeled its “[A Bullseye View](#)” after [GE’s brand journalism website](#).
- Red talks: TED-style talks for employees. Content did not have to be flashy—the most popular one was about tax policy.
- “Spot On”—a series of sensory events. Had a craft beer expert come in (the person who buys it all for Target) and had him talk about craft beer with employees.
- Town halls—people asked execs things like “What was your first job in high school?” (Answers: lifeguard, restaurant cook.)
- In times of tragedy, it created a forum where people could talk about how they feel, and leaders would listen and commiserate.
- In 10 words or fewer, why does your organization exist?
  - Consultant answer: “Target builds your needs and fuels your potential.”
  - Target answer: “To help all families discover the joy of everyday life.”

## Friday, March 22

### How a culture of open communication powers innovation

Victoria Chen Norland, head of global sales and marketing internal communications, Facebook

- Facebook’s goal: Give everyone a voice, regardless of location, job or title.
- Facebook uses Facebook Workplace for its own communications to facilitate conversation.
- Principles it adheres by on Workplace:
  - Open by default
  - Mobile first
  - Multimodel
  - Integrated
  - Connect everyone
  - Personalized and prioritized
- Mark Zuckerberg hosts a Q&A every single week; Facebook runs a poll on Workplace to ask questions and vote on the best questions, and Zuckerberg answers the top five questions every week.
  - Company all-hands meeting once a quarter to share what is coming internally before it is shared externally.
  - Facebook hosts “Hack-a-thons” to encourage employees to take part in things that aren’t part of their day-to-day job.
  - Feedback is a gift—Facebook encourages internal feedback from employees, whether good or bad.

### Lessons from Fitbit: Use humor and humanity to drive a culture of innovation at your organization

J.D. Norton, director, internal communications, Fitbit

- Essential formula for a communications plan: Create, test, iterate. Start with one thing you could do differently and build from there.
- Laughter can help people solve problems that demand solutions. When people are in a lighter mood, they experience more “eureka!” moments.
- Three elements of communications:
  - Connection to mission, goals, leadership and people
  - Participation: Ask employees for their opinions and act on the feedback they provide
  - Fun: Keep it real and keep it human. “Fun” does not have to be dad jokes
- Ways to celebrate:
  - Add an innovation section to your newsletter
  - Start a video series focused on innovation
  - Take five minutes at every all-hands meeting to recognize an innovator
  - Slack or other collaboration and communication tools
  - Externally—LinkedIn, social media feeds
  - Don’t forget to celebrate failures—failure is where we learn
- Fitbit uses vinyl stickers on employees’ computers to represent projects, teams, etc., to help make connections and start conversations.
- For graphic creation, FitBit uses [Canva](#). Paid accounts are less than \$20/month, and you can load your brand standard into the system.

Did the Burn After Reading sheet provide value to you? [Yes](#) [No](#)

