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Website redesign? Bolster buy-in with these 5 techniques

By Abigail Malik

Inviting all your employees to the makeover 'party' can yield lasting success

Creating a new company website should be an exciting time, and things can go a lot smoother if there's open communication, especially internally. Whether you're a small organization or a multi-silo corporation or university, here are five tips to make the transition more like a party than a funeral for employees:

1. Create a countdown. Treat a website redesign like New Year's Eve. Make sure your internal users—staff members, stakeholders, other constituents—know that a redesign will occur and when the transition will take place. There shouldn't be any surprises: Everyone should know the change is coming months before it happens.

2. Keep internal constituents pumped about the change! Happy employees make for happy customers. Drop hints in a company newsletter or on your employee Facebook page about interesting, useful and unique capabilities or features the new website will have. Remind everyone consistently that the change is coming and that it'll make their lives better. On the flip side, some folks may think it's annoying to be reminded of the change every time they turn around. Prevent this by keeping your messages short, simple and clever.

3. Educate and train. In some organizations, a central entity (usually the marketing or IT department) creates a website's template, and then individual offices are responsible for updating their section. So if your new website requires people to learn a new skill in order to edit it, hold workshops well before the launch date to train employees. Be patient and kind, and your colleagues will appreciate your making their transition easy. Offer free snacks at the workshops, in addition to holding them in a room with a lot of natural, bright light.

4. Design by suggestion. We all know that designing by committee can be challenging, but if your organization is open to input (and it really should be), allow employees to suggest ideas for the website, whether it be about content, colors, images or style. Including everyone in the process will ensure employees on every level feel as if they have a stake in the change. And they do have a stake, because the change affects them.

5. Have a large focus group (consisting of your employees) test out the new site before it goes live: There's nothing more frustrating than coming across a problem months after a redesign launch and wondering if hundreds of others have also gotten frustrated and left your site (ending with potentially a lost customer or client). In addition, employees use various parts of an entire website. Someone in finance may see a problem with a section that someone in marketing wouldn't.

When a print magazine completes a redesign, it completes the redesign. Just because websites are dynamic and can be changed easily doesn't mean we should count on changing things later. When you launch, make sure it's as perfect as possible.

And make it a party!

Abigail Malik is the media relations coordinator at Centre College.

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