

All You Need Is... Creativity!

While perhaps not immediately obvious, the role of a global mobility professional is actually very much one of a communications specialist. Take a moment to consider the number of stakeholders you interact with on a weekly basis. Internally, employees, business unit leaders, representatives from HR, tax and finance; externally, service providers, business partners and tax and immigration authorities in multiple countries. Each stakeholder will have a different perspective on their relationship with you, and their own expectations of the style of communication anticipated. Quite a challenge!

At Stitch, a Deloitte business, we're passionate about creating innovative communications that engage employees, taking subjects that can, at first glance, seem complex or uninspiring and turning them into compelling stories that elevate the employee experience.

A key mantra we'd urge global mobility professionals to adopt would be to think of each stakeholder as a consumer. Starting out on any project we think first and foremost about the end user; what do they need to know and what is the best and most engaging way for them to receive that message? When answering that question we usually find creativity is key. As the employee is the ultimate consumer of global mobility services this article focuses on engagement with them, particularly as the volume, timeliness and criticality of information can feel overwhelming. Whether it's the intricacies of tax equalisation or the complex web of vendors that the employee will have to directly interact with, our clients are keen to disseminate what they rightly see as important and valuable information to their employees; but sometimes this can be quite technical data that can seem anything but user-friendly. As global mobility specialists, our job must be to turn that information into something employees find compelling, engaging and inspiring.

And that's pretty much how any marketing professional would think when devising a creative campaign for a consumer product. Decide what the end user is likely to find appealing about the product and use that to drive consumer engagement. We all consume

creative marketing content on a daily basis, on our high streets, public transport or in store, through commercials on TV and radio, or banners on websites and emails. We expect to see it, and if it engages with something inside us then we're likely to react to it in a positive way. It calls us to action. To react. To participate. To be involved and to buy. It can make us smile and it can make us feel good about ourselves. We know it works. It's a multi-billion pound industry. So why should the way we communicate important information to employees be any different? It's no less important.

Employee Experience Is Key

Employees today have much higher expectations of their employers and their working environment. Corporate transparency is high on the employee agenda. We see organisations that focus on transparency engaging employees more than those that don't. A 2018 Forbes report ⁽¹⁾ found multiple studies that showed employees indicate company transparency is the number one factor in determining workplace happiness. They want to know they can trust in their leaders to help deliver a positive work environment and opportunity for growth and career development. It's a challenging landscape for employers to negotiate as it can often mean significant change in corporate practice, but it's in their interests to keep up with trends so they can attract and retain the very best talent.

Executives and leaders know employees who feel valued and empowered are the beating heart of a successful business. The 2019 Deloitte Human Capital Trends Report demonstrated the value placed on improving employee experience, with 84% of people consulted rating it important and 28% classing it urgent.

Think Outside The Workplace

So how can we as global mobility professionals help our businesses deliver an optimal employee experience? The answer may well lie in the creative way we, as consumers of modern technology, express ourselves in our lives outside the workplace.

We now lay bare so much of our lives for all to see on social media. We check in to restaurants, bars or holiday resorts; we post pictures and stories of amazing experiences, nights out, cute pets, new clothes and babies. People are doing whatever makes them happy and they're shouting about it. Why would we not want to provide an employee experience that would make employees

happy enough to want to shout about it too? Of course this is exactly what we want to do. And if we always bear our consumer/employee in mind then there's no reason why we can't do it.

Stitch recently provided a communications solution for a major global engineering firm. They were launching a scheme that promised free shares to all employees over a period of three years. The plan was promoted less on its financial credentials but more as being a way for every employee to feel an integral part of the company they work for, empowering them to do their best work so they could all share in the company's success. The key to global engagement was to create a strong campaign name and strapline as well as a range of clear communications that would reach everyone, regardless of geography or financial literacy and which would make employees feel valued and part of something important.

And it worked. The company held a worldwide celebration to launch the plan. People stopped work for a moment to enjoy themselves together, dressing up, baking, and posting photos and comments about their excitement at being part of this moment on multiple social media platforms. Whilst this wasn't specifically a mobility project, the same principles and methodology could easily be transferred to global mobility. After all, the heart of the campaign was less about the subject matter and more about ensuring a positive employee experience.

Don't Be Weighed Down By Old Ways Of Working

Of course it's not all about creating a culture of internet humble bragging (though that's never a bad thing!). Sometimes it's not going to be possible. But it should be all about putting ourselves in the position of the employee and working from that perspective to inform our creative plans and actions. Remember an employee engagement strategy could be made up of hundreds of communications, some big, some small, but all adding up to the overall employee experience. In global mobility our methodology is to deep dive into each of these moments and try to understand how they are experienced by the employee - how would that interaction make them think or feel? What is the context in which they experience that moment - what are they likely to be doing and how can we make that moment a seamless part of their life or job rather than a disruptor to it? How do the Diversity & Inclusion aspects of our employees' lives and careers impact the way

in which they experience their journey and inform their expectations? Do Millennials want to receive information in the same way as Generation X-ers, for example? It's not about creating a one size fits all approach, but designing something that puts actual humans, with all their foibles, wants, needs and desires at our heart.

A lot of what we do, on the face of it, might not seem to provide a canvas for creativity, but that's just because we're not used to thinking about it in the right way. A popular emerging trend in employee communications is animation. It's the perfect way to communicate to employees in a concise, colourful and engaging manner and has enormous scope in terms of style and structure. We know it works. Studies have proven that people retain 80% of information they consume visually compared to 50% aurally. Visual information is processed in our brains 60,000 times faster than text so it should come as no surprise that businesses are recognising the value of animation as a communication tool. Also, it's fun! A host of topics which might on the face of it seem dry and uninspiring lend themselves perfectly to animation. When an average global mobility policy is over 40 pages long it's little wonder employees rarely read them and instead come to briefings with reams of questions. A relatively simple but eye-catching animation could present the key contents of that policy in a fun and digestible way. And you don't just have to drive your audience to an intranet page to view them. They can be played in communal work spaces, lifts, or even employee transportation.

Be Aspirational

This takes us back to thinking of the employee as a consumer. If you receive an email from your bank about a special mortgage offer it's unlikely to be just several paragraphs of complicated, financial information. More likely it will feature some sort of aspirational imagery and clear headings, with links to more information and deliberate calls to action. You walk into that bank and there may be an animation playing on a big screen about the key points of that mortgage offer that catch your eye as a consumer. It's designed to pique your interest and inspire you to find out more.

So it makes sense when communicating to employees to treat it in a similar way. People respond to what feels familiar to them. If we have to promote the launch of a new global mobility policy for our existing assignees, think less about the nitty gritty of the policy's detail. Instead think creatively about what the new policy will actually mean to an employee; what will change for that person. Use aspirational images to present the positive impacts of this change. Don't neglect the negative impacts or hide them in

the small print – instead be transparent about these, while emphasising the benefits of the package as a whole – not just financial, but the personal benefits of being an assignee (especially in terms of life experience).

Embrace Future Tech

It's rare now to find FAQ pages on public facing websites. They have largely been replaced by chatbots which can answer specific questions submitted directly by the user. If your intranet pages are littered with FAQ sections, think about how this differs from what your employee is used to seeing outside of work and change it up. An engaged employee is a connected employee.

Rapidly developing technologies are perfectly placed to help enhance the employee experience in creative ways we'd never have thought possible a few years ago. Augmented reality platforms offer really exciting ways of interacting and communicating. Imagine hovering your phone over a picture of your company CEO and suddenly he or she comes to life and talks to you about the company's employee engagement or talent agenda. Some are even using relatively inexpensive hardware to allow users to experience an artificial 3D

world that can be entirely personalised to them. A real-life mobility use case is using a VR look-and-see trip to allow an employee and their family to get a sense of what life in their new location will be like.

Summary

We know in business we value our customers above all else. But for employees the story can sometimes feel different. And it shouldn't. Employees make our businesses work. When they feel happy, valued and connected to their workplace it stands to reason they will stay with you, do better work and create a better working environment that will spread out across the business exponentially. Given mobile employees often represent our most strategically important employees, it makes even more sense to creatively enhance their experience.

Harnessing new and creative ways of improving the employee experience, and the ways in which you communicate will benefit your business for the long-term. Employees are what makes businesses work. Employees who feel valued, empowered and connected to their work life are what make businesses work better.

References:

(1) *10 Things Transparency can do for your Company – Forbes Online, Oct 2018.*



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Having worked as a script writer for ten years alongside his day job as a planner for BBC1 Drama, Comedy and Documentaries, Jeremy upped sticks and moved from London to Bristol in June 2018, taking up a full-time position as Copywriter for Stitch – a Deloitte business in March

2019. Since joining Stitch, Jeremy has worked on a host of communications projects for major global organisations, including scripts for pay and reward and share plan animations as well as interactive content for e-learns and gender pay sites, all of which are geared towards engaging and elevating the employee experience. If you would like to understand how Stitch – a Deloitte business can support your communications strategy please visit our website www.talkwithstitch.co.uk or get in touch – stitch@deloitte.co.uk



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Ross is a Consultant within Deloitte's Global Workforce team, joining in September 2014. He has worked with over 100 organisations, across a range of industries and geographies, delivering digital transformation projects in the global mobility space. He has also been seconded to work in-house with client mobility teams, gaining practical insight

into the day-to-day challenges that busy global mobility teams face. As a regular business traveller he also has first-hand experience of life as a mobile employee.

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