

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

WEBCASTING FOR EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

HOW WEBCASTING CAN IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT, PRODUCTIVITY AND SHAREHOLDER VALUE

Especially in uncertain times, increasing transparency and engagement between your senior management and employees has a significant impact on the financial health of your company. Use webcasting to more effectively facilitate knowledge sharing of organizational strategy, empower the employee voice through two-way dialogue, and deliver measurable business intelligence to help you demonstrate the success of your corporate communications.

Enterprise-level corporate communication strategies generally employ multiple information distribution channels, such as emails, newsletters, intranet postings, blogs, face-to-face town hall meetings and teleconference calls. While several of these channels push information out to employees, most fall short in providing an effective means of employee communication because they offer neither a measurement of impact nor a sustainable mechanism for two-way dialogue.

Smart companies are realizing that traditional push communications are becoming stale and are evolving toward enterprise 2.0 solutions and social media tools to increase employee engagement. Webcasting can help you personalize the *what* and *why* of organizational strategy while also enabling the collaboration and feedback of *how*. Employees are the brand stewards of your corporate strategy and dialogue across all business units helps clarify the line of sight between senior management and workers to strengthen engagement and productivity.

Empowering Employee Communications with Webcasting

In a study conducted by the Corporate Executive Council (CEC), employees cite the most important driver to their commitment to the firm is a company's ability to lay out a clear vision of its strategy and direction that is linked to their day to day lives. The town hall meeting is widely considered the most impactful method of delivering this guidance. In practice, the CEO's availability, frequency of touch points, the enterprise reach, and associated travel costs (especially when multiple members of the executive team are involved) can all limit the effectiveness of in-person town halls. Webcasting is a perfect alternative—and suitable complement.

Where blogs, email and newsletters might transfer the verbal message, they lack the vocal and visual cues that work together in making the emotional connection. The effective impact emerges from the body language, facial expression and tone of voice conveyed through the webcast. This is complemented by the visual support of accompanying PowerPoint slides highlighting the strategic vision and direction. Webcasts also allow for timely, relevant, and personable communications—all of which help increase employees' understanding of the corporate strategy and goals.

For more than a decade, we've helped companies communicate more effectively with employees using webcasting. From these experiences we've identified the five most common applications of webcasting for employee communications as well as suggested frequency for maximum impact.

- Town hall/employee meetings (quarterly)
- Performance updates (quarterly)
- Product launch and training (frequency is dependent on your company's product release cycle)
- Year in review (annual)
- Employee recognition (annual)



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Webcasting Enhances Communication Effectiveness

There has been much written about communication effectiveness, employee engagement, and the correlating impact on shareholder return. The CEC has written that companies with more engaged employees are likely to outperform their peers. A Watson Wyatt study found that firms with highly effective communications delivered a 47% higher total return to shareholders. In another study, Towers Perrin highlighted that companies with high employee engagement had a 19% increase in operating income and almost a 28% growth in earnings per share.

The most fundamental level of driving improved shareholder returns through effective communication begins with using employee feedback to create dialogue with employees. Webcasting offers multiple ways for enabling such dialogue including live Q&A sessions, polling and post-event surveys. Though enabling two-way communication with employees is important, the feedback offered and the actions taken are what empower the effectiveness. As such, strategy changes or new deliverables stemming from employee feedback should be referenced in subsequent communications.

Using webcasting for employee communications also allows remote office locations and distributed workforces to gain more frequent exposure to the executive team. These additional engagements present the opportunity to bring management closer to front-line teams and make an emotive connection while adding transparency to the corporate strategy.

Factors to Consider in Choosing a Webcasting Format

Webcasts can be produced in multiple live and on-demand formats including live video, simulated live video, live audio, on-demand video, and on-demand audio. With several options, how do you decide which is right for you? The choice between a live and on-demand webcast has both strategic and practical considerations. A pre-produced (i.e. on-demand) piece of content is often scripted, allowing for a concise message that stays on point. When compliance is required, scripted content can also expedite the legal review process. The personality type of your speaker(s) is another consideration. Some may be comfortable in the live environment while others may prefer having scripted content.

In general, when choosing between a live and on-demand webcast, consider the following factors as they relate to the content of your message, your audience and available resources:

- Purpose of the communication and appropriate speakers
- Workforce distribution across time zones
- Multiple language requirements
- The sensitivity or importance of the content
- Internal resources available for video production
- Lead time and budget availability
- AV resources available in remote venues
- Accessibility challenges in remote location

The Business Intelligence from Webcasting Enhances Measurability

For most corporate communications and human resources professionals, measuring the impact of enterprise communication strategies is very elusive due to correlational versus causational relationships amongst independent communication tactics. It is near impossible to measure whether an email message has changed the behavior of an employee, and for many organizations it is challenging just to measure who has read email messages.

In the article *Six Secrets of Top Performers* published by Communication World (May, 2008), John Finney writes that “highly effective companies are far more likely than other companies to measure the impact of communication on key business indicators.” And yet, Watson Wyatt research has found that many companies with robust internal communication programs are not measuring the return they are getting on their communication investments.

Webcasting captures an array of business intelligence that can help measure the impact of your communications including front-end viewer registration, polling surveys, user-submitted questions, and event statistics.

Webcasting Offers a Low Risk Solution

In a time when you’re being asked to do more with less, there is an opportunity to re-evaluate the traditional tools used for communication strategies, especially employee communications. Trying a webcast can be as simple as producing a single virtual town hall meeting to compare against traditional communications tools, sidestepping the complexity of signing an annualized license or purchasing hardware that the IT team needs to deploy. While you are focusing on building the credibility and trust of your senior management team, enabling the employee voice, and increasing employee engagement, you may also find that you can achieve cost-savings along the way. With that type of value proposition, using a webcast for town hall communications would be worth considering regardless of market conditions.

About Thomson Reuters

Thomson Reuters is the world's leading source of intelligent information and workflow solutions for businesses and professionals. Our webcasting and on-demand video services help over 5,000 clients worldwide meet their business communication needs, including client outreach, employee engagement, marketing & branding, corporate messaging and IR communications. Use our cost-effective solutions to engage your global audiences without expensive travel or teleconference costs and increase the measurability of your results.

North America: +1 617 856 4030
Europe: +44 (0) 20 7542 5881
Asia Pacific/Australia: +61 (2) 9373 1671

thomsonreuters.com/corpcomm
corpcomm@thomsonreuters.com

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