

Employees are looking for context rather than content to better perform their roles

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Discovery, discussion, dialogue and debate. That's the new frontier for internal communication, and one of the key insights offered from a newly-released global study of employees and the impact of organizational clarity.

The two-year study of more than 1,500 employees by the Institute for Public Relations Commission on Organizational Communication, confirms that *context* rather than *content* is what employees are now looking for to better perform their roles. It found employees' performance, satisfaction and morale are directly linked to the level of clarity they have about their jobs, the competitive market they are

operating in and their organization's vision for success.

The bottom line is that employees don't want to be spoon-fed information about their organizations. They are searching for the bigger picture and are rewarding organizations that provide it with greater commitment, effort and engagement.

Towards greater clarity

The IPR Organizational Clarity Study identifies the elements for breaking through the clutter of today's modern corporation and offers a method—dimensions, a scorecard, market difference, techniques—focused on clarity to measure progress in real-time.

The study canvassed the views of 1,527 employees representing five countries across six industry sectors: automotive/transportation, energy, financial services, food and beverage, healthcare and technology.

The researchers adopted an "outside in" and an "inside out" approach to better understand *where* and *why* employees look for information about their organization to perform their roles.

They homed in on three key dimensions of clarity to model and measure success: the Job, the Strategy, and the Market.

Dimension

Questions

Overall I have a clear understanding of my organization's core purpose.

I find meaning in my job.

The Job

I am rewarded fairly for the job I do.

When my organization's strategy changes, I notice an impact on my job.

Overall, my organization delivers on its promises.

My organization shapes its market through superior products and services.

The Strategy

My organization knows what it is doing.

In terms of strategy, my organization thinks first then acts.

My organization reacts more often to the market than shapes it.

I have more connection to my profession than to my current organization.

The Market

My organization's behavior often makes little sense to me.

My current job is a stepping stone to my next job.

The study then examined these three dimensions by country and sector, with each country given a grade from "A" to "F," based on the average responses from their employees.

Which countries and sectors are the best performers?

India leads the way in helping their employees engage with their organizations, finishing first in all three clarity categories (with two B+ grades and one F). They were followed by the U.S. (2nd), China (3rd), Brazil (4th), and the U.K. (5th).

The U.S. came in second because, although employees appeared to understand their organization's purpose and mission, they felt bombarded by too many initiatives going on at once, and reported that results for each weren't shared frequently enough.

In terms of sectors, technology topped the list (with two solid B+ grades but an F in marketplace understanding). All sectors received an F in the marketplace understanding category.

	Job	Strategy	Market
Brazil	C+	C	F
China	C+	C+	F
India	B	B	D
United Kingdom	C	C	F
United States	B-	C+	F

Source: Institute for Public Relations

Lessons for organizations and practitioners

The organizations and sectors with the best clarity all took an outside-in approach to explaining the connection linking their marketplace, their organization's unique role and strategy within the market, and detailing the meaning and purpose of the employee's role in achieving their own individual success, as well as the organization's.

The best organizations:

- Ensure managers understand marketplace realities, competitive issues.
- Create a comprehensive narrative describing their strategy in story form.
- Communicate the information in a provocative tone and establish an employee worldview.
- Raise the volume on key inputs of the strategy: customers, competition, products, delivery and societal concerns.
- Align leadership messaging across all divisions and business units.

The study offers 10 takeaways and suggested actions to improve organizational clarity and drive performance in organizations operating anywhere around the world.

1. Comprehending workforce interests, archetypes, perceptions, and bias are the foundation for establishing and sustaining organizational clarity.
2. Employees are diverse, and internal communication should not be treated as a one-size-fits-all proposition.
3. Make certain employees hear and understand you (again).
4. Create continual conversations with your employees.
5. Start recognizing strategic alignment and performance.
6. Get the angle right and the language will follow.
7. Strategy alignment and clarity starts at the top, and disconnect must be eliminated among leaders.
8. Strategy and clarity come together when employees calibrate action, behavior.
9. How smart do you want your employees to be?
10. Place employees at the business strategy apex.

For a copy of the study, visit the [Institute for Public Relations website](#).



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Deb Camden is a career-long communicator based in Australia and founder of a boutique strategic communication consultancy, **PRISM Communication Architects**. In her 35 years as a practitioner, Deb has sat on both sides of the communication desk as both manager and consultant and worked with a variety of public and private sector organisations in Australia and overseas seeking to better engage employees in their strategic vision. Most recently, she has turned innovator - combining her business savvy with academic smarts to create a breakthrough measurement framework, **The Communication Dividend®**, that blends industry best practice and global standards to deliver a simple, practical approach that can be applied in any organisation. You can connect with her on LinkedIn **Deb Camden** and Twitter **@DebCamden**