THE WORKPLACE

5 ways to unleash your employees' inner rock stars

Consider these takeaways from the chief communications officer for National DCP, the supply chain for Dunkin'.

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"America might run on Dunkin', but Dunkin' runs on us," says Shira Miller, chief communications officer at National DCP.

From overseeing the communications, image and reputation for the $2 billion supply chain management company serving Dunkin' franchisees to authoring the upcoming book, "Dislodged: Get Unstuck, Master Self-Doubt and Thrive in our Post-Pandemic World," Miller focuses on helping people transform to fulfill their potential.

She shares advice such as how to unleash your own inner "rock star" by becoming your own advocate:

For internal communicators, HR professionals, employee engagement directors and more, advocating for the members of your workforce is just as important as promoting your own career—and can help you unleash more stars.

Consider these takeaways from Miller, adapted to help you power your employees' journeys as much as your own career path:

1. Encourage employees to promote themselves—and your organization.

Miller's first lesson to becoming a rock star communicator is self-promotion. A blog post, webinar for your colleagues, LinkedIn update or invitation to an upcoming speaking engagement are all ways you can share with your colleagues both your efforts and crucial takeaways.

"It's a matter of sharing your achievement in a way that benefits the organization and others," Miller says.

In a similar manner, you can encourage employees to share their expertise at industry webinars and events, talk about their success story in a town hall or all-hands meeting, or share their case study in your company's blog or digital newsroom.

Also encourage your employees to share openly and often on their personal social media channels. As they share their experiences, insights and stories, you can learn more about them, more effectively amplify their voices and strengthen your brand's reputation—without the use of social media ads or a promotional campaign.

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2. Cozy up to workforce insights and analytics.

"If you're looking for a raise or promotion, make sure you're armed with the latest industry statistics about what you should be earning," Miller says.

The same is true when you're asking for a larger budget or additional resources for employee engagement and experience.

Come to the table with workforce insights and feedback that show off employee behaviors and needs, along with what competitors are doing to retain top talent. Show your executives that employee campaigns help boost the bottom line, and you'll have a much easier time gaining buy-in for your ideas and strategies.

3. Remember, the sky's the limit.

When thinking about your career dreams, you shouldn't limit yourself.

"Think about the apex of your career—what would be amazing to achieve," Miller says. "Take a step further, think about what's possible."

Internal and employee communicators shouldn't impose limits on their ideas, campaigns and strategies, either—especially limits that are arbitrary, such as former policies and procedures that no longer make sense or excuses such as, "That's what we've always done."

Just as going another step further to think about what's possible in your personal career journey, ask yourself what's possible for the members of your team or entire workforce. Don't be afraid to test new things and create solutions that answer questions and requests. If you're also paying attention to workforce insights and asking for employee feedback, you'll know along the way if your new direction is working—or if you should change course.

This might include more traditional channels and low-tech solutions, as well. Considering 70% of National DCP's employees aren't regularly connected to email, Miller and her team also spread messages through its app as well as on flyers, in home videos and more.

4. Be proactive in your employee communications and campaigns.

For years, communicators have grappled with the increasing pull on their time outside of work and how to set a sustainable work/life balance, especially as social media platforms and mobile devices have made us more reachable than ever before.

Miller says:

> Being [accessible 24/7], there isn't really a division between your personal and professional life. So, you need to devise a plan about how you can create the life that you're looking for. Anticipate by taking a long-term approach.

Your employees are probably feeling this struggle as they work from home or are working on the front lines as essential workers. The stress of the COVID-19 crisis, combined with a nationwide movement calling for racial equality and a tumultuous presidential election, is continuing to take an emotional and mental toll on your employees. If your workforce is currently remote, your employees are also dealing with feelings of isolation as well as how to be productive in a completely new setup—many of which aren't optimal office spaces.

You can help your employees by communicating any potential changes early and often. This means offering town halls, video messages and executive memos, while also not overwhelming employees who are already bombarded with messages.

Miller says constant and authentic communications should be your goal. She offers as an example Scott Carter, National DCP's chief executive, who wrote employees a letter straight from the heart. Place those communications from your leaders front and center throughout COVID-19 and beyond, and give your employees as much information for the future as you can.

5. Banish negativity.

Miller says the voices telling you that you don't have the talent or knowledge to reach your goals are common. Some communicators call these feelings "imposter syndrome." They're only standing in your way, however, so kick them to the curb.

"At one point, they might have been trying to protect you, but now you've outgrown them," Miller says. "Instead of trying to ignore them, have a conversation … let those voices of insecurity and doubt know that you appreciate the security and protection of the past, but you're ready to strive forward with purpose."

Though helpful throughout the employee journey and during times of crisis, this advice is well served when creating diversity, equity and inclusion goals. Don't let past missteps or uncertainty silence you or keep your organization from making meaningful changes and supporting your employees with opportunities and a welcoming culture.

Look to your peers and solicit insights from them as well as your employees. Partner with organizations that specialize in DE&I efforts or with organizations that fit your values and mission. Take the first step, and leave those voices in the dust.

Learn more from Miller along with speakers from BP, American Psychological Association, Charles Schwab, Brunswick Group, Ben & Jerry's and more at **Ragan's Internal Communications & Employee Experience Virtual Conference, Oct. 14.**

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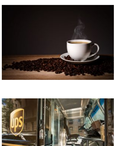

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