

# **PRSA 2008 Annual Conference**



## **From Misfits to Heroes**

**By  
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& Les Landes, APR**

# Responding to Opportunity



## ◆ Realities and Possibilities

- **Communication departments continue to decline**
- **A different story of transformation and expansion**
- **Not just about growth, but value and contribution**

# What's a "Misfit?"



## ◆ Characteristics

- **Disconnected**
- **No direction or mission**
- **Tactical focus**
- **Slow response time**
- **Seen as token function**
- **Vigorously maintain "silos"**

# Foundation for Transformation



## ◆ **Team Goals**

- **Create a world-class internal communication system acclaimed for its contributions**
- **Increase capacity to serve and meet communication needs and purposes of groups and individuals**
- **Create an environment where communication professionals would be proud and eager to work**

# Forces for Change



## ◆ **Seizing the Moment**

- **Series of crises**
- **CEO wanted change**
- **Communication “audit”**
- **Web site redesign**
- **Media research project**
- **Functions brought into Corp Comm Team**
- **Interim web editor**

# By the Numbers



## ◆ **People and Dates**

**1 – Jan. 31, 2007**

**3 – Feb. 1, 2007**

**6 – April 1, 2007**

**9 – June 1, 2007**

**11 – Nov. 1, 2007**

# Purpose and Mission



## ◆ Main Focus

- Provide essential information
- Help employees understand the company's business
- Align employees with company goals and priorities
- Help internal clients
- Support other PA teams
- Enhance the communication skills across Monsanto
- Support the exchange of information among employees
- Facilitate working relationships
  
- Valuing people

# Building Trust & Engagement

## ◆ **People & Systems in the Workplace**

- **Basic human needs:**
  - **Security**
  - **Self-esteem**
- **Basic management credibility factors:**
  - **Caring**
  - **Honesty and openness**
  - **Responsiveness**
  - **Competence**
  - **Reliability**
  - **Apology**
- **Build on the basics with:**
  - **“People-first” systems, policies and practices**
  - **Deeper understanding of human nature about work**



# Building Trust & Engagement

## Nationwide Survey

### Workers

### Managers

Interesting work  
Job security  
Tactful discipline  
Being “in” on decisions  
Good wages  
Loyalty to employees  
Appreciation of work done  
Chance to advance  
Good working conditions  
Sympathetic help w/problems

*1999 Survey  
Kenneth A. Kovach  
George Mason Univ.*

# Building Trust & Engagement

## Nationwide Survey

|                             | <u>Workers</u> | <u>Managers</u> |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Interesting work            | 1              | 5               |
| Job security                | 4              | 2               |
| Tactful discipline          | 9              | 7               |
| Being "in" on decisions     | 3              | 10              |
| Good wages                  | 5              | 1               |
| Loyalty to employees        | 8              | 6               |
| Appreciation of work done   | 2              | 8               |
| Chance to advance           | 6              | 3               |
| Good working conditions     | 7              | 4               |
| Sympathetic help w/problems | 10             | 9               |

*1999 Survey  
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# Building Trust & Engagement

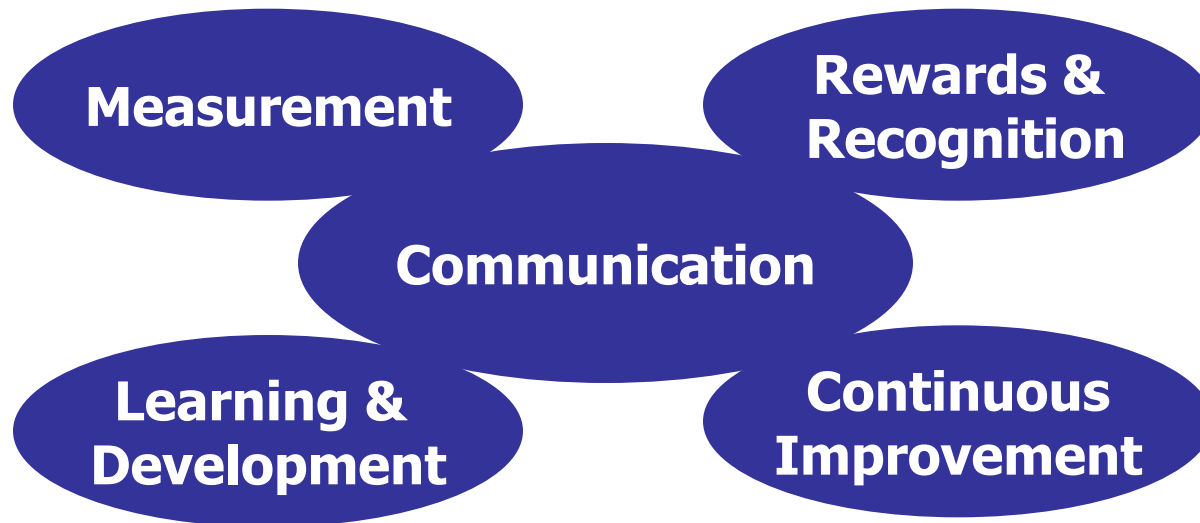
## ◆ **“Truths” about People**

- **Want to do a good job**
- **Want to be on a winning team**
- **Want to be included and appreciated**
- **Have the desire and ability to improve**
- **Resist force and uncertainty more than change**
- **Perform best when engaged in decision-making**

***“Always approach people as the source of the solution, not the cause of the problem.”***

# Building Trust & Engagement

## "People-First" Systems, Policies, & Practices



*Support claim that ...*

***"People are our most important asset"***

# Communication System Effectiveness

## ◆ Core Concepts

- Role of communication goes beyond mere function
- Employees are not an audience
- Communication is about *conversations* more than *messages*
- Communication is too important to be left in the hands of professional communicators

# Communication System Effectiveness

- ◆ **“Real-Life, Real-Time Communications”**
  - **Interaction**
  - **Availability and accessibility**
  - **Speed**
  - **Inclusion**
  - **Relevance**
  - **Authenticity**

***“Propaganda ends  
where dialogue begins.”***

**-- Marshall McLuhan**

# Actions



## ◆ **Getting Operational**

- **Immediate improvements**
- **Created a year-long plan for FY08**
- **Staff changes**
- **Grounded in company fundamentals**
- **Staff developed a dashboard**
- **The day the staff took ownership**

# Learning & Development



## ◆ Principles & Guidelines

- Core value beyond just skill-building
- Source of strength, value and contribution
- Required hours for “learning” and “teaching”
- Built on both personal aspirations and team needs



# Learning & Development



## ◆ **Process**

- **Articulated bold mission and to inspire people**
- **Co-created staff development required to realize department vision**
- **Developed broad curriculum with emphasis on key areas**

# High-Performance Heroes



## ◆ **Outputs and Outcomes**

- **Focused on quality, effectiveness and value**
- **Transformed the web site**
- **Revolutionized internal communications**
- **Turned media research into gold**
- **Led Monsanto to discover social media**
- **“Seats at the table” all over the company**

# By the Numbers



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**9 – June 1, 2007**

**11 – Nov. 1, 2007**

**25 – Sept. 1, 2008**

**26 – Nov. 1, 2008**

# Effective Client/Consultant Relationship

## ◆ Key Factors

- **Common beliefs and principles**
- **Mutual trust and confidence**
- **Combination of planning and development**
- **Reinforcement and momentum**
- **Sounding board and a soft “hairshirt”**
- **Latitude**
- **Part of the team**

# Heroes



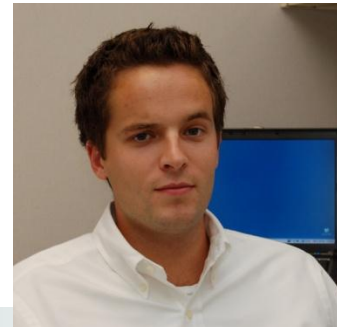
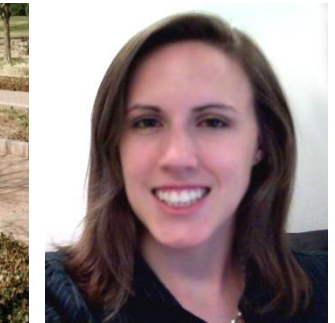
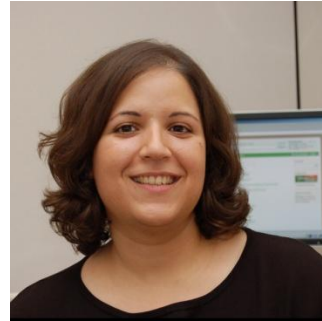
## ◆ Part Two

- Entire team expanded – from 11 to 26
- Six brand-new people managers
- Given the freedom to design and hire their teams
- New goals, new plans, new expectations

# Meet the Heroes



# Meet the Heroes, Part 2



# Contact Information



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