Using Storytelling to Maintain Employee Loyalty during Change

Dr Rob Gill
Public Relations and Communications
Faculty of Higher Education
Swinburne University of Technology
Melba Avenue, Lilydale, Victoria 3140
Australia
Email: rgill@swin.edu.au, Phone +61 3 9215 7325

Abstract

Even though storytelling as a communication strategy is well acknowledged by many theorists, there is a lack of documented research referring to storytelling during times of organisational change. This paper reviews contemporary publications on corporate storytelling in order to demonstrate that the use of storytelling as an employee engagement strategy can more effectively contribute to maintaining staff loyalty beyond traditional internal communication, particularly during periods of organisational change. Employees have a deeper affiliation with the message through organisational storytelling due to aligning stories with their own experiences and understanding. Corporate stories reach out to employees on a more personal level, aiding in understanding and enhancing employee loyalty.

Keywords: Corporate storytelling, employee loyalty, employee engagement, organisational change

1. Introduction

Storytelling has been part of human communication for millenniums, and continues to play a critical role in the passing on of knowledge between generations. It is also a valuable medium for internal communication within an organisation, especially during periods of change, as it can bridge the barrier between the employer and employee through engagement at a more personal level. This paper reviews contemporary literature to analyse the relationship between corporate storytelling with employee engagement and protecting employee loyalty during organisational change. Two recent examples are reviewed for their communication strategies during a period of significant organisational change. One case uses traditional internal communication strategies, such as reports, memos, internal newsletters and email, while the other deliberately develops organisational storytelling skills for leaders in the organisation as one strategy to manage employee engagement during change. Organisations constantly operate in a hyper-turbulent change-intensive environment (Agarwala, 2007, Zorn, Page & Cheney, 2000). Change can be at a team, department, discipline or organisational level and can impact at a strategic, structure, systems, role and personal level (Agarwali, 2007; Dunsford, 1996; Zorn *et al*., 2000). Successful change is critically dependent on effective internal communication (Madlock, 2008; Harrison, 2007; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006; Mohan, McGregor, Saunders & Archee, 2008).

Storytelling has potential for a deeper engagement with employees, which is crucial to maintaining employee loyalty during times of uncertainty and change, as the personal approach stimulates a more meaningful understanding for the individual (Madlock, 2008; Barker & Gower, 2010; Boyce, 1996; Brown, Denning, Groh & Prusak, 2004). Through stories, employees can develop a stronger association and deeper understanding of the corporate message from their employers. This knowledge may stimulate a more meaningful understanding of the organisation's strategy for change and result in maintaining or enhancing the employees' loyalty. The convention of storytelling as a sound method of internal communication that enhances employee engagement and internal loyalty is supported by many theorists and academics, but is not currently evidenced in texts and research data reflecting formal internal communication practice during periods of organisational change. This paper brings together evidence from contemporary literature that links the recognised benefits of using storytelling to engender a positive internal culture and enhance loyalty during organisational change. It is intended the findings of this paper will drive greater acknowledgement for the benefits of storytelling in strategic communication planning during times of organisational change and recognise the practice of corporate narration as a calculated and deliberate approach to improving employee engagement and understanding.

2. Literature review sources

An integrated literature review was completed on contemporary academic writings and industry publications (including a blend of concepts from various emerging fields, akin to human resources, management, communication and academia) as a means of ascertaining support for, and the benefits of, the use of storytelling and narration within organisations.

The objective of this review was to identify common synthesis relating to corporate storytelling regarding: the benefits to using corporate stories; the fundamentals to good corporate stories; and, the limitations of corporate storytelling. Organisational change, employee engagement and employee loyalty are also defined through the literature to assist in establishing context. The framing for the literature review included journal papers, conference documents and industry publications from recognised academics and industry leaders in the field of corporate communication and employee communication, including: Boje, 2008; Boyce, 1996; Post, 2004; Kaye, 1995; Denning, 2005; Sinclair, 2005; Simmons, 2006; Dowling, 2006; Lawrence and Mealman, 1999; Gardner, 2004; McKee, 2003, Matthews and Wacker, 2007; and, Brown, Denning, Groh and Prusak, 2004. For the purpose of this review corporate storytelling, organisational storytelling and corporate narration were applied in the same context, even though some theorists argue that narrations are fragments that collectively go towards creating a story (Polkinghorne, 1988; Denning, 2005; Gabriel, 2000).

A comparison with the literature review findings is made against two recent Australian examples of significant organisational change, one that effectively used narration and storytelling to manage employee engagement, and another that used more conventional forms of internal communication to engage with staff. Both examples were reviewed on the effectiveness of the internal communication against the stated objectives, the methods of engagement used by management, and the results of the two communication campaigns. Example one refers to a case study by Aplin (2010) regarding the implementing of the new customer-centric culture change at Ericsson Australia and New Zealand, which began in 2009, and involved equipping leaders to be good storytellers in order to improve employee engagement. Example two is a case study by Perry (2007) regarding the 2007 restructure of ZooSA with a more impersonal approach to engagement with staff, including changing the zoo's: vision, mission, strategic goals and rapid change to its human resource structure.

3. Findings

3.1 Defining organisational change

Organisational change occurs when a company makes a transition from a current state of operation to a future state of operation. It may encompass the whole organisation, or impact on particular parts of an organisation; either way, change will have a significant impact on some or all employees (Agarwali, 2007; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). Organisational change is common to all organisations and can be built around the central metaphor of living organisms operating in an environment to which they need to adapt to ensure survival (Dunford, 1996). Common nuclei for organisational change include: structure, culture, technology and job design (Dunford, 1996; Agarwala, 2007). Change can be a reaction to a force already impacting on the organisation's performance, or it can be a proactive move to take advantage of opportunities (Agarwala, 2007).

Successful management of change and transformation within an organisation is dependent upon the acceptance, participation and commitment of all employees who are part of the change process (Zorn *et al.*, 2000). Employers play a critical role in managing change through establishing a vision for change and communicating this vision to employees. A human resource manager's role as change agent involves analysing and diagnosing the present state of the organisation, and planning and implementing the important aspects of the transformation (Dunford, 1996; Agarwala, 2007). The communication strategist's role is to engage with employees on a level where meaning for the change can be aligned with business needs, improved organisation performance and positive outcome for key stakeholders. (Harrison, 2007; L'Etang, 2008; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006).

3.2 Defining employee engagement

Employee engagement is an individual's involvement and satisfaction with, as well as enthusiasm for, their work (Harter, Schimdt and Hayes, 2002). According to Shuck and Wollard (2009) employee engagement is associated with building an interactive culture between employee and employer resulting in staff being more willing to engage in discretionary efforts as a result of healthy relations with management.

'Good' employer engagement is reliant on effective internal communication through the sharing of information between employees and management and employees and employees (Madlock, 2008; Mohan *et al.*, 2008; Gallicano, 2009). Scholes (1997) considers internal communication to be the proficient management of exchanges between all those with an interest or 'stake' in the organisation. Internal communication occurs at three levels: day-to-day management of employee relations, strategic planning to carry out the organisation's mission and project management (Cheney and Christensen, 2001). During times of change, employers need to effectively engage across these three levels of communication in order to maintain and heighten employee support (Gotsi and Wilson, 2001).

Pivotal criteria put forward by employees regarding what drives their support and connection with an employer are strong leadership and healthy interrelations, followed by safety, well-being, opportunities, inclusion and community involvement (Madlock, 2008; Hull and Read, 2003; Hewitt, 2003; Gill, 2009). Essential to effective management of employee relationships is development of a culture of engagement and connection; reliant on valued leadership and open communication (Gill, 2009). Welch and Jackson (2007) emphasise the role of clear, accurate, open, continuous and consistent internal communication as vital to building employee engagement and maintaining loyalty. Such a role is often the responsibility of PR or dedicated internal communication strategists.

3.3 Defining employee loyalty

Employee loyalty is defined by Pina e Cunha, (2002) as the commitment employees have to the success of an organisation, and the recognition that working for that organisation is their best option. Such connection and support is influenced by how the employee identifies with the combination of culture, structure and leadership within that organisation. An important predictor of employee satisfaction is the perceived competence of management's communication (Madlock, 2008). For organisations, especially knowledge-intensive organisations, employee loyalty requires almost as much attention as customer loyalty (Gallicano, 2009; Pina e Cunha, 2002; Alvesson, 2001). Many theorists have highlighted the causation relationship between employee loyalty and an organisation's reputation (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Welch and Jackson, 2007; Brown, 1995). Internal reputation refers to the respect in which the organisation is held by its internal public and key stakeholders (Beder, 2002; L'Etang, 2008; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). It is significantly influenced by the organisation's vision, culture, formal policies and internal media activities. Senior management are increasingly faced with the challenge of clearly communicating internally the values and strategy for the organisation to encourage employee identification with the corporate identity, which inturn strengthens the internal reputation (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001).

3.4 Storytelling

Storytelling is a phenomenon that is fundamental to all nations, societies and cultures, and dates back to the earliest recording of communication between mankind (Denning, 2005). Storytelling has the ability to transcend age-groups, cultures and genders. Walter Fisher's interpretation of (1989) Narrative Paradigm Theory is a simplistic application of storytelling, which follows a humanistic model of communication where people breakdown complex knowledge into narratives that are shared among groups. Managers and staff can use meaningful narrative as a valuable communication strategy within organisations as it can be a means to separating constructive communication from the 'mundane message overflow' associated with more traditional corporate communication (Sinclair, 2005; Barker & Gower, 2010). The use of storytelling has high social presence that bring people physically and psychologically closer, and media richness through utilising a variety of media. Narration in stories can heighten shared meaning amongst those present who interpret the narration in line with their own experiences, allowing personalised cognition about problems, solutions and explanations (Denning, 2005; Simmons, 2006). These characteristics enable stories to carry symbolic information and convey meaning, as well as greatly enhancing commitment and recollection (Sinclair, 2005).

3.5 Benefits of corporate storytelling

Corporate storytelling is the process of developing a message that creates a new point-of-view or reinforces an opinion or behaviour by using narration about people, the organisation, the past, visions for the future, social bonding and work itself (Wilkins, 1978; Witherspoon, 1997; Kaye 1995). Organisations are dependent upon effective communication as a driver of success, particularly internally (Madlock, 2009; Marques, 2010). Storytelling already plays an important role in the world of organisations, business and contemporary politics (Brown *et al.,* 2004*)*. More directly, stories can be used internally by organisations as a means to motivate people and create a message memorable enough for employees to take cause and action (Prusak, 2001; Kaye 1996). The strength of storytelling as a corporate communication model is demonstrated by the Storytelling Model of Organisational Communication (Barker & Gower, 2010, p. 302). The model recognises all humans as storytellers with the ability to send and receive messages that establish a common ground between participants, providing an accelerated social relationship.

Traditionally, stories in the workplace have been used to emphasise safety and wellbeing and to decrease risk (Prusak, 2001; Work Safe Victoria, 2004; Wilkins, 1978). From an employer perspective, a broader value for corporate storytelling is its potential to persuade, motivate and inspire employees about their organisation, particularly during periods of change, thus strengthening internal loyalties (Zorn *et al*., 2000; Simmons, 2006). Many theorists concur that corporate storytelling is a valuable method for engendering culture into an organisation (Denning, 2005; Dowling, 2006; Kaye, 1995; Boje, 1991& 2008; Prusak, 2001).

However, what is evident from the reviewed literature was that over time, organisations had displayed little documented evidence of formally utilising this medium as a communication strategy to engage with their staff and other key stakeholders, especially during times of organisational change (see for example, Boje, 1991; Denning, 2006; Hansen, 2008; Kaye, 1996; McConkie and Boss, 1994; Shamir, 1998; Wilkins, 1978; Witherspoon, 1997). A key benefit to using stories as a communication strategy during organisational change is that management can use narration that is appropriate to the comprehension of their staff, without compromising the objective of the communication (Harrison, 2008). Therefore, storytelling is an ideal mode for delivering communication that is engaging, relevant and in context for teams and individual employee's (Boje, 1991). Shared meaning on the logic of change between management and employees may be greatly enhanced through storytelling, helping to bring staff 'onboard' with desired changes (Mohan *et al*, 2008).

Another key benefit identified is the universal appeal of storytelling to culturally rich audiences who have diverse interests and learning styles. Many large organisations have an assorted range of stakeholders (Barker & Gower, 2010). Stories provide a flexible framework for the narrator to reflect the organisation's objective in line with the associated interests of the particular stakeholders (Dowling, 2006). Through stories PR practitioners can foster trust and loyalty for their organisation by creating an emotional bond with employees and other key stakeholders as a result of explaining the behaviour of the organisation in terms of its mission and morality (Dowling, 2006). Below is a table that summarises the primary benefits to using storytelling for internal communication as a strategy for employee engagement. The condition for inclusion is support by three or more of the authors from the reviewed literature.

Table One: Primary Benefits Relating to the Use of Storytelling in an Organisation (Gill, 2009)

Benefit	Link	Author
Storytelling is an effective means of communicating with internal employees	Employee engagement	▪ Barker & Gower, 2010 ▪ Kaye, 1995 ▪ Post, 2004 ▪ Denning, 2005 ▪ Sinclair, 2005 ▪ Shuck & Wollard, 2009 ▪ Brown *et al.*, 2004
The use of stories by management is more engaging and appealing to employees	Good employer practice	▪ Kaye, 1996 ▪ Prusak, 2005 ▪ Simmons, 2006 ▪ Dowling, 2006 ▪ McKee, 2003
Story objectives can remain the same, even when the content is adapted by the narrator to make stories more personal	Internal communication	▪ Lawrence & Mealman, 1999 ▪ Gardner, 2004 ▪ Sinclair, 2005
Knowledge presented through narration is more believable as receivers apply their own interpretation and experiences to the information	Employer engagement	▪ Boje, 1991 ▪ Sinclair, 2005 ▪ Simmons, 2006 ▪ Hansen, 2008 ▪ Tichy & Caldwell, 2002
Effective corporate stories appeal to emotions and have a lifecycle relating to the organisation	Internal communication	▪ Brown, 1995 ▪ Prusak, 2001 ▪ McKee, 2003 ▪ Tichy & Caldwell, 2002 ▪ Fryer, 2003 ▪ Denning, 2005 ▪ Dowling, 2006
Employees may adopt a notion of ownership over corporate narrations and stories by applying their own experiences to the message	Employer engagement	▪ Harris & de Chernatony, 2001 ▪ Drucker, 1989 ▪ Mohan, McGregor, Saunders & Archee, 2008 ▪ Barnes, 2003
When employees are comfortable with their organisation's values and work practices they become important assets to enhancing company reputation	Good employer practice	▪ Madlock, 2008 ▪ Beder, 2002 ▪ Post, 2004 ▪ Herman & Gioia, 2004 ▪ Leary-Joyce, 2004 ▪ Dowling, 2006 ▪ Brown *et al.*, 2004

Table One demonstrates that leading academics and theorists in the communication field who have deliberated on corporate storytelling support the link between internal narration (as a communication strategy for strong employee engagement) and good internal communication practice. There is strong consensus around stories being a means to deeper engage and be more inclusive with employees. Many theorists endorse the belief that engaging with staff on a personal level builds stronger loyalty that may galvanise a committed internal reputation towards employers.

3.5 Fundamentals to good corporate stories

A number of key points can be identified from the literature that is fundamental to composing, developing and implementing a 'good' corporate story. These are included in the table below.

Table Two: Fundamentals to good corporate stories

Key attribute	Authors	Year
Heightens awareness among employees about their organisation and its direction, strategies and values	Dowling Prusak Rossiter & Bellman	2008 2001 2005
Follows a lifecycle, with employees part of the cycle and future	Dowling Denning Boje Brown	2006 2006 2008 1995
Allows employees to make sense of the narration – true to the receivers own circumstances and knowledge base	Tichy & Caldwell Boje McKee	2002 2008 2003
Provides salience to the employees, their roles and their concerns – drawing on collective memory and actual characters	Tichy & Caldwell Boje Sinclair	2002 2008 2005
Shows a struggle between expectation and reality by including both positives and negatives, strengths and weaknesses - through facts and statistics	McKee Prusak	2003 2001
Extends the value beyond the immediate moment by making employees part of the solution	Dowling Denning Matthews and Wacker	2006 2006 2007
Acknowledges expertise that fosters esteem and respect – promoting trust	Rossiter & Bellman Boje	2005 2008
Stays true to the organisations brand and values	Tichy & Caldwell Beder Frombrun Dowling	2002 2003 2005 2006

A common theme from the literature is that a well designed and executed corporate narration links well with the concept of telling stories in order to engage with staff and enhance their understanding and commitment to the message. Many of the theorists reviewed (see Table Two) emphasise the model of staying true to the organisation's communication objectives and desired branding, with storytelling being a deliberate strategy to heighten employees awareness and understanding of these objectives (see for example Tichy & Caldwell, 2002; Dowling, 2006; Denning, 2006; Mattehws & Wacker, 2007). Stories must not lose sight of who the organisation is, what it offers and what it stands for (Dowling, 2006; Fombrun, 2005). Design and delivery of narration is a particularly delicate process during time of significant organisational change.

The benefits of cultivating and maintaining strong personal relationships with employees during these times of change is vital to employee 'buy-in' for the strategic motive behind change (Gallicano, 2009; Welch and Jackson, 2007; Shuck and Wollard, 2009). Therkelsen and Fiebech (2003). argue that the 'linchpin' to employee relations is the immediate supervisor, and employee loyalty lies more with their work unit and immediate manager than with the organisation as a whole. The manager's ability to meaningfully engage with their staff through carefully constructed narration that adds relevance to the organisation's change strategy may have a significant impact on employee's loyalty during periods of organisational change (Boje, 2008; Prusak, 2001, Denning, 2006; Therkelsen and Fiebech, 2003).

3.6 Limitations to corporate storytelling

The reviewed literature provided insight into the benefits of storytelling. However, there are considerations and limitations to using stories as a means of employee engagement and generating a stronger internal loyalty, as detailed in Table Three.

Table Three: Limitations to corporate storytelling

Limitation	Authors	Date
Corporate storytelling is but one communication method, strategists must consider the theory of varied communications in order to provide the opportunity for shared meaning across a diverse audience.	Mohan *et al.*	2008
Public relations practitioners need to focus on storytelling as 'one tool from the toolbox' for delivering verbal information, when face-to-face delivery is established as the most effective medium.	Harrison	2008
Building trust and good relationships between managers and staff involves more than narration, including actions and open communication that has symmetrical benefits	Therkelsen & Fiebich Gallicano	2003 2009
Storytelling is a supplement for decision-making by enabling employees and communicators to imagine new perspectives and is more ideally suited to communicating change and stimulating innovation.	Denning	2005
Storytelling as a less formal approach to information exchange still applies the general principles of effective communication. Consideration for the audience, their abilities, aspirations and their motivations are still critical to the foundation of any good communication plan.	Harrison Dowling	2008 2006
Careful planning in line with 'good' communication practice applies equally to storytelling when used in a business environment. Research on the target audience and reflection on the desired outcome of the communication still play essential roles in the use of storytelling.	Denning Mohan *et al.*	2005 2008
Time and location considerations may influence and restrict the practicality of the more personal approach to storytelling. Even though podcasts and video-streaming can overcome the variables of distance and time-zones for storytelling, the face-to-face delivery that involves a more personal approach is somewhat lost through these media.	Harrison Macnamara Cutlip *et al.*	2007 2005 2006
It is important that the narrator composes the story from a perspective that will resonate positively with the audience. Using a story of a negative tonality will generally fail to spark action, as opposed to using a springboard story for an example, which communicates complex ideas and launches people into action.	Denning	2006
Face-to-face delivery of the message is still a form of uncontrolled media, as the storyteller applies their own interpretation to the narration, which may contrast with the filtered message.	Welch & Jackson	2007
Being a good storyteller doesn't necessarily make you a good leader, which requires intelligence and life experience.	McKee	2003
Effective corporate communication is more complex than delivery style, and involves consistent and uniform attention to component, such as: responsible, concise, professional and sincere	Marques	2010

Key considerations identified from Table Three with using corporate stories to engage with employees and other stakeholders include: the practicalities for using face-to-face narration; ensuring storytelling remains part of a broader process; following professional structure consistently across the organisation; being part of an overall strategic goal; and, the risk of poorly constructed and delivered narration distorting the desired meaning. Although most of the theorists reviewed have proposed many benefits associated with the use of corporate storytelling, they acknowledge the deficit to utilising narration without due diligence to professional design.

3.7 Enhancing staff loyalty through storytelling

The use of narration via face-to-face stories is an ideal strategy to reinforce the organisation's values, as it is one of the richest communication mediums for engaging directly with staff (Sinclair, 2005; Zorn *et al.,* 2000). This medium has the potential to promote dialogue, or symmetrical two-way communication, that allows greater communication balance between the organisation and its internal stakeholders, therefore, advancing trust (Welch and Jackson, 2007; Mohan *et al*., 2008; Therkelsen and Fiebech, 2003). Gaining employee trust and reinforcing respect through engagement are critical to building a healthy internal loyalty (Madlock, 2008, Dowling, 2006; Gallicano, 2009).   The social construct of reality for employees is shaped by their social interaction and their interpretation of organisational symbols (Boyce, 1996). A good reputation for the internal brand of the organisation is reliant on perceptions by staff regarding how the organisation performs against their own employment desires (Hull & Read, 2001; Dowling, 2006). Employees who believe their employment desires are given due attention by their employer embrace a stronger loyalty for the organisation (Campbell, 2004; Harter *et al.,*2002; Gill, 2009). Employees have a vested interest in information that relates to their own wellbeing and opportunity for advancement (see Table Three).

According to Green (1998) employees often seek out information they can use to improve their professional position or make a change for the better. Engagement with staff on issues such as what motivates them and aligns with their values, has primary importance for employers (Green, 1998; Boje, 1991). Many organisations already have in place policies and practices that complement what employees desire from their employers (Hewitt, 2003; Hull & Read, 2003). But effectively communicating this to staff can be problematic through traditional modes of business communication, such as policy documents, intranet and email (Harrison, 2007, Mohan *et al.*, 2008). Storytelling may provide the 'cut-through' regarding building loyalty to the brand that traditional business communication struggles to achieve with busy employees (Brown *et al.*, 2004; Schneider, Erhart, Mayer, Saltz, & Niles-Jolly, 2005).

4. Examples of employee engagement during change

The following two examples demonstrate contrasting approaches to managing the change process with employees in an organisation through communication. Ericsson's strategy is to deliberately develop the corporate storytelling skills of its leaders, while ZooSA employs a more traditional strategy of conventional internal communications.

4.1 Ericsson Australia and New Zealand 2009

Results of an employee satisfaction survey conducted by Ericsson Australian and New Zealand during the global financial crisis period in 2008 indicated poor results, with: senior leaders' motivation rating 52 per cent; leadership communication capability rating 57 per cent; and, strategy awareness rating 66 per cent (Aplin, 2010). Ericsson launched a three-year strategy with programs addressing business challenges and opportunities, focussing on transforming the organisation's culture to becoming more customer-centric. The goal of the program was to help employees understand the organisation's ambitions and feel motivated to contribute. To achieve this, Ericsson recognised the need to build communication competence with senior leaders. The organisation set objectives to improve leadership communication capability and strategy awareness by three points. The senior leadership group (including the CEO) were required to attend two half-day workshops on storytelling, which had been identified as the way to connect, not just communicate, with staff.

It was identified from these sessions that although the organisation had a story to share with employees, each team had unique challenges that needed to be addressed by the leaders to gain support for the cultural change. Gaining senior leadership 'buy-in' was an important element to making the storytelling strategy a success. Of the Ericsson leaders, although some scepticism was initially detected, 97 per cent rated the workshops as developing relevant skills for their roles as leaders and 91 per cent saying storytelling improved their influence as a leader (Aplin, 2010; onethousandandone, 2010). The results from educating leaders in the strategy of storytelling to engage with employees indicated a resounding success rate, with employee surveys at the end of 2009 showing leadership communication competency jumping 18 points to 75 per cent, strategy awareness increased by 11 points to 77 per cent, and senior leaders' motivation increasing by 22 points to 74 per cent. Ericsson's customers rated them five points ahead of their competitors in the Customer Satisfaction Index Survey and the company finished the year in a stronger financial position (Aplin, 2010). The 2009 turn-around was due to a range of initiatives, but equipping leaders with storytelling expertise had a real impact (Aplin, 2010; onethousandandone, 2010).

4.2 ZooSA 2006 restructure

The newly appointed CEO and the Director of Adelaide Zoo considered in 2006 that a restructure of the two ZooSA managed sites, including changes to the organisations vision, mission and structure was necessary in order to implement newly developed strategic goals. The restructure was announced and begun in March of 2006. The goal was to communicate to, and gain buy-in from, all 174 staff on the new vision, mission and employment structure for organisation. The ZooSA board were seeking extra funding for re-development of the zoo sites from the Federal Government (Regan, 2009). The main objective was to ensure information was transmitted down the reporting line and formally documented in minutes and agendas, as part of governance for ZooSA's operations. A study conducted by Perry (2007) a researcher at Charles Sturt University investigated the engagement with and the morale of ZooSA staff during this restructure process. The investigation involved qualitative interviews with 24 employees working at a middle-management or staff level. The interview data collection for this project utilised in-depth semi-structured interviews, using a highly iterative explanatory approach using interview guides to identify how much staff knew about their organisation's missions, policies and management processes and to assess the communication strategies and media used to inform, consult and engage staff (Neuman, 2003; Perry, 2007). Data identified the communication of the restructure by the senior management as being a top down approach (monologic approach) devoid of a dialogue and lacking inclusion of employees in the process of change.

All informants had some criticism of the extent and speed of the restructure, and in particularly, the lack of detail on the restructure had at the time of implementation. Communication processes documented by the research included: formal and informal meetings; written documents such as minutes, reports and newsletters; and, emails and electronic media (Perry, 2007). Results indicated significant concerns from staff regarding the communication from management, including: a perceived lack of consultation by management; failure to communicate changes clearly; a lack of detail to support the structural changes; a mistrust of messages due to the incongruence between rhetoric and behaviour by management; and, ineffectiveness in communicating messages to all employees (Perry, 2007). A strong theme of the staff concerns was that the decisions on the restructure did not involve dialogue between management and staff, but were more information sessions based on selective divulgence, and that the restructure was a fait accompli. The study concluded that leadership skill levels were less than optimum and were contributing to the poor relationships and lack of trust held by middle managers and non-supervisory staff for the senior management (Perry, 2007).

4.3 Discussion on examples

These cases focussed on two very different approaches to internally communicating change and restructure within an organisation. The Ericsson case made the development leadership skills in storytelling as a means to more personally engage with employees a deliberate strategy. This is in keeping with the many theorists beliefs on using stories to reach out on a more personal level to employees (for example: Dowling, 2006; Kaye, 1996; McKee, 2003; Gardner, 2004, Sinclair, 2006; Denning, 2006). Ericsson recorded resounding success for its objectives of improving leadership communication capability and strategy awareness amongst employees (Aplin, 2010; onethousandandone, 2010). In this case, storytelling not only improved senior management's confidence in their ability to engage with employees, but also heightened employee understanding on the strategic direction for the organisation, in keeping with beliefs of Dowling (2006) and Simmons, 2006). A stronger financial position for Ericsson followed immediately with an improved annual result, which management believed (in line with the beliefs of Simmons, 2006; Boje, 2008; Gardner, 2004) was a direct result of the healthier internal culture and improved employee loyalty for the organisation (Aplin, 2010).

The ZooSA case used traditional corporate communication that was heavily weighted with a monologue through electronic, hard-copy and meetings communication. ZooSA achieved the objective of securing major Federal Government funding as a result of good governance and operational structure, but failed to build trust and understanding with staff on the new vision, mission and work structure for the zoo (Perry, 2007; Regan, 2009). This practice contrasted with literature that states a more personal approach to engage through storytelling leads to heightened trust and stronger loyalty (Kaye, 1996; Prusak, 2005, Dowling; 2006; Denning, 2006; McKee, 2003). Staff results for the ZooSA case indicated significant concerns over management engagement with employees around the new strategic direction, particularly the ability to seel clarification and further understanding. This resulted in a distinct lack of trust for management and the direction of change by employees (Perry, 2007). This undesired outcome of distrust by employees for management may have been considerably improved through the more personal approach of corporate storytelling and management narration (Sinclair, 2005; Kaye, 1995; Simmons, 2006; Dowling 2006).

One of the limitations to the comparison of the examples is that the method of research by the original authors varies, with the recorded results are quantitative for Ericsson example and qualitative for ZooSA example. However, general comparisons on the supplied data can be made against the intended objectives. Another consideration is the difference in worksite structure, with Ericsson being primarily workstation based and ZooSA field based.

5. Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that the use of storytelling as an internal communication strategy will engage at a more personal level and lead to a deeper understanding of the management decisions. The use of corporate stories by management is an engaging means to building employee loyalty during change through strengthening support and connection with employees for the organisation's culture, policies and leadership. The literature reviewed in this paper robustly supports the concept that corporate storytelling has a powerful role to play in building stronger engagement with employees and heightening employee loyalty. Employee needs include cognitive and emotional engagement, especially during periods of uncertainty and change, and corporate stories can address these requirements through a deeper and more personal communication medium. Carefully planned narration delivered through a story reaches out to the employees at a more individual level, strongly improving the potential for understanding, recollection and commitment for the corporate message. The overwhelming conclusion from the reviewed literature indicates corporate storytelling to be an effective communication medium for developing stronger engagement with employees and building internal loyalty.

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