

Dea McKenzie, project case study

What to Say About Pay

that resonates.

Let computers and links about net pay and the link deposits. Your message you create it from the — not the author.

to take to get the message method of communication go and the audience, and then if it.

has more to do with **building** do with words and pictures; is not the communicator is one.

empowering.

we their pay stacks up to the want to know how they can go to performance, career project experience, or highly organization is likely to reward which the employee has some

out the future, put yourself to. To a younger crowd, a long time, and retirement is to immediate future fits.

and then distant goals.

The market of ME

Employees expect personalized communications, and perhaps even personalized rewards. These new expectations, coupled with an overall reduction in supply and average returns create the market of ME — a world where employees "own" their own work. The agency "owns" a work relation that best fits them, not their employer.

Employees can reach the market of ME or any employee by:

- identifying their audience segments: high performers, low performers, new grads, midlife-to-late-career
- establishing a credible employment proposition
- customizing tailored reward packages
- consistently delivering tailored communications

the complete process

Goal: year and benchmark
 Strategy: identify message, secure leadership support
 Tactics: develop a brand (communication guidelines)
 Implementation: implement campaign
 Measure: measure and reinforce

Say something that completes the story.

When you communicate about anything, the people in your audience first try to figure out your story and then determine whether or not they believe you. This means you can't be vague or leave out too many details — water down the data, and you lose credibility. None yet, provide too many particulars, and you can over-whelm them and lose their attention. The key is figuring out the appropriate hierarchy, organizing the information to support the message, and, above all, relating it to the end user (the audience). A large amount of data can be comprehended if it is well organized.

If you fail to convince your audience to believe your story by leaving out too many details, they will look for alternative information sources. Coworkers, friends in the industry, neighbors not in the industry, and websites sit ready, willing, and able to provide input about pay.

When you talk about the market and your competitors, name the companies that participate in the salary survey you reference. Explain how geographic and out-of-industry comparators are used.

If base salary levels or this year's merit pool are below historical levels or competitor rates, explain why — as a general practice, does the company reward more through bonus than base? Are the training and development opportunities greater than in competitor organizations? Or, has it just been a bad year and budgets are tight? Whatever the reason, don't gloss over it — just say it.

If you can confidently predict your audience's questions, answer them in your presentation or document before they are asked.

Say something revealing.

Your audience will tune out if it hears too much of what it's heard before.

Do whatever it takes to capture the interest: establish a context for relevant information and statistics; information speak the audience a variety of security; have the message from the user perspective; a large amount of data is comprehensible if organized well; if the information is complex, surprising, or better, frame the data, not the design; use or point the answer directly on what you are talking about and what you need from your audience; materials that are targeted and less clutter than those that are outdated; focus on links, not old CEO news links; you can teach managers something new about pay; it takes a long time to write something short.

Say something short and to the point.

Eliminate the fluff and include only what's important. But be sure not to leave out anything that's crucial to getting the point across; in other words, work with a good editor who understands your content and allow sufficient development time. Creating succinct, effective material takes longer than creating lengthy pieces that often go unused.

Say something that separates pay and emotion.

The strategy behind your company's approach to pay is based on market position, growth plans, the current talent market, last quarter returns. Yet, when you talk about compensation, the conversation gets emotional.

Separate the two. Put emotion into your message, but detach it from the employee program. Educate about the science behind pay. Remember that the pay program itself is not the company; it is just one component of the company's business strategy.

Your employees should be able to explain why they are paid what they are paid, and feel good about it.

Say something that gives you a return on investment.

Salary is one of the largest — if not the largest — line items in the corporate budget. Explain this to employees. Then, use the power of communication to reap direct return. There is real data linking good communication practices to increased employee engagement and commitment, retention and productivity, and superior financial performance and shareholder return.

Even in a downturn — especially in a downturn — you need employees to be loyal and feel committed to the company. A communication project with a budget that equals only a fraction of your salary expense can help you realize true return on your talent investment.

Intangible rewards can be compared to intangible benefits: health and accident programs, an allowance, generous paid time off, tuition reimbursement, club membership.

Intangible rewards being internal value or motivation, quality of work, work-life balance, innovation and learning opportunities, rich culture, future opportunity.

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CHALLENGE: To educate leaders on how to get employees to listen

SOLUTION: A leave-behind following an energetic presentation with a fresh perspective on how to communicate about compensation issues. Presented in chunked soundbites, compensation directors walked away with direct advice, implementable ideas, and new thinking on how to better approach an emotional and often-skirted but significant business topic.