

Mind The Gap: Organisations Need Better Alignment Of Comms Discipline To Reduce Risk And Save Money

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New study highlights the risk of splitting marcomms between brand and corporate

The critical issue of who in an organisation should manage, monitor and measure social media content is unresolved and potentially misaligned in as many as 50 per cent of British companies, creating greater exposure to reputational risk and increasing costs.Â In our social media age, in which customers and stakeholders have a critical role to play in brand and reputation management, half of companies have experienced or witnessed at first hand the damaging impact of misalignment between paid-for and earned communications. Â

In addition, 40 per cent have changed their paid-for marcomms activity in a direct response to news coverage or social media content.Â These are the main findings of a new survey from marketing performance management specialists Ebiquity, conducted by its reputation analysis company, Echo Research.

Almost nine in ten (85 per cent) respondents in the survey among UK marketing and communications leaders claim it is essential to explain the impact of brand and reputation on business performance to the board, while only a quarter (26 per cent) believe that their own business understands very well the impact of stakeholder perceptions on organisational success. Â

As a result, almost half (45 per cent) believe that their business would benefit from closer alignment of the marketing and corporate affairs functions.Â Marcomms strategy is currently set and aligned by both functions working together in just half of Britainâ€™s organisations.

Sandra Macleod, Echoâ€™s CEO, said:

â€œThe power and reach of social media mean it has never been more important for groups to speak with one voice, and the impact of brand reputation on performance should be a board-level issue.Â This study found that, although the vast majority of brand marketers and corporate communications professionals agree that internal alignment is critical for business success, much of UK plc is still a long way from owning â€˜matching luggageâ€™ in both the corporate and brand centres.Â Companies are asking for trouble if they fail to align marcomms across the increasing number of functions that touch the outside world, so itâ€™s time to swap power struggles for the collective responsibility of truly integrated communication.â€•

Catherine May, Group Director of Corporate Affairs at Centrica, commented:

â€œThe really big challenge today is the increased level of scrutiny we are under as businesses. There is a much greater level of government and regulatory intervention than ever. This has increased the focus of boards and management teams around what they can do to prove â€˜ through integrated communications and campaigns â€˜ that they are going about business in a decent way and taking care of their customers and other stakeholders.â€•

Echoâ€™s study found that in half (51 per cent) of Britainâ€™s companies, marcomms strategy is set by both marketing and corporate affairs departments, while in nearly the same proportion (40 per cent) it is set by marketers alone.Â In most (56 per cent) companies, consumer brands are managed by marketers. Responsibility for corporate brand management, however, is less clear cut. Â

MarketingÂ alone manages corporate reputation in a quarter (26 per cent) of companies, corporate affairs alone in a fifth (21 per cent), and a hybrid of both functions in nearly half (46 per cent).

Mike Hoban, Chief Marketing Officer of Confused.com, added:

â€œEvery penny you spend in todayâ€™s economic environment has to deliver against your commercial objectives. We all know that if you can create efficiencies across platforms, across media and across audiences, you will get better results. All different media when aligned â€˜ when working together â€˜ will deliver you a better result in totality.â€•

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