

AGENDA SETTER

 Communication ideas in the eyes of experts

A DOUBLE IDENTITY

Faced with several well-established external brands, Telefónica recently brought all its internal brands together.

By Dafydd Phillips

Telefónica is one of the world's largest telecommunications companies, with more than 285,000 employees in 25 countries. It presents several faces to people depending on where they are on the globe: it is the parent brand of Movistar in Latin America and Spain, O2 in the rest of Europe, and Vivo in Brazil. On the inside, however, it's another story. The huge company recently recognised the benefits of creating a unified concept that its disparate workforce could feel a part of, no matter which market they work in; and so they created one of the biggest employee brand projects in Europe. Amanda Clay, head of brand management at Telefónica Europe, describes the motivation behind this change like this: "Telefónica's brands are well loved in their markets and high performing. We recognised that O2 customers have a strong emotional connection with the O2 brand. Its reputation and equity as a consumer brand are too high for Telefónica to replace O2. So different audiences are given different brands. Telefónica is the institutional parent brand and deals with multinationals, large corporations, society and employees – all those things that are global in nature. O2 stays as the brand for all consumer products and services."

ICONIC QUESTION October 2010: a short video of Matthew Key, the company's then European CEO, is launched across the global internal network, kicking off an ambitious tri-fold project: changing the company name to Telefónica, changing the internal and institutional brand to Telefónica; and launching a cultural change programme. Behind the changes was a core team of 25 in-house people along with their lead international agencies. A central project team of experts from every internal department were put in place to support the local

teams and make sure the project had a consistent approach across Europe. Senior project managers from each market were appointed locally and then joined the European team to make ensure a collaborative approach. This team was led by Amanda Clay. "It was essential to get a team of experts in place centrally to help create one plan" she says. "This plan was then underpinned locally by a team of experts who know their markets and employees best." Together, the team created one communications plan, called 'Did you know?' This had an iconic question mark visual which was made up of thousands of different objects representing Telefónica, O2, Movistar and Vivo's work. It was designed on the one hand to tell employees what they'd need to know, while on the other

“O2's reputation and equity as a consumer brand are too high for Telefónica to replace it.”

hand engaging them emotionally. In addition, according to Clay, "we also wanted to show that change is for the better. At every stage of the project we looked at how we could make things better than they were

before. Simply put, we wanted to create symbols of change, not just a change of symbol.”

HOME VIDEOS A brand and project induction was created for everyone responsible for delivering the project, offering key guidelines, tools and templates, as well as local support. To date over 4,000 employees have had this induction, and numbers are still growing.

Another part of this early stage was to recruit and train a team of over 600 ‘Sharers’ from across Europe, at every level and across all functions, to spread the knowledge about Telefónica and help their colleagues implement the changes. The Sharer managers met every month to share best practice across Europe and also provided key feedback to the project team

BALANCING THE BUDGET

The next phase of the plan focused on practical changes and what employees needed to do. According to Amanda Clay, “We launched an FAQ-microsite and sent emails of what practical changes people needed to do, for example; ordering new stationery. All of these were branded with the question mark so employees knew they were part of the same programme. This was the point when everything internally started to change from O2 to Telefónica, including our PowerPoint templates, business cards, email signatures, signage and so on.” This was followed by a 10-day ‘Did you know?’ campaign. Each day employees got a teaser email on a new topic about the Telefónica family. Then they could click through to a dedicated microsite, which had a daily theme and was full of facts, videos, interactive maps, scrolling



Telefónica is the institutional parent brand of O2, Vivo and Movistar

timelines and animation. Employees could take part in daily competitions and win prizes from iPhone 4s to tickets to events. This frenzied activity raises a question about budget. According to Clay, “we were conscious of the fact that budgets were tight and we were working in a tough economic climate. So we needed to deliver the project in a cost-effective and sustainable way.” An on-line campaign was the ideal solution, given that the campaign had to only be cost-effective and environmentally friendly, but also had to span five countries, be instant and interactive, had to enable instant feedback and quick content-updating, and had to be trackable and measur-



EXPERT OPINION

→ **The psychology of change**

While reading the interview, I realised how hard it must have been for Amanda to summarise this complex change process. One interview just doesn't do justice to the immensity of a rebranding process. It requires a great deal of strategic thinking, a tight project-management, a strong commitment from the CEO, smooth cascading and solid reporting lines. But, perhaps more importantly, it requires a great deal of effort to shape and mould the meaning that employees will attach toward the new brand. In such processes, the role of symbolism becomes extremely important. Gioia and his colleagues explain in their Organization Science article (1994) that when people try to understand a new experience, they do so by ascribing meaning to it and symbolism is an effective way to help people grasping this meaning. Symbolism goes beyond the adoption of just a logo; it includes corporate language, cultural artefacts, and even the type of behaviour from the CEO or employees. Telefónica clearly understood the power of symbolism as their intention was to "create symbols of change, not just a change of symbol." They did so through: 1) their corporate language ("One Team"), their tone-of-voice ("real but authentic"), the communication flow (e.g. top-down & bottom-up) and even through cultural artefacts symbolising the new Telefónica (e.g., visual changes in the coffee-comers). All these different aspects of communication symbolise the company's desire of who it wants to be in the future, an important psychological facilitator of change!



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→ **Excellent execution**

I love this case: it's very inspiring. Telefónica aims to align employees across brands and country borders in order to stimulate behaviour that supports the corporate identity as well as the local brand. This requires that employees understand and support the goals. From a communications perspective, organisations can enhance alignment by implementing 'soft' measures such as: having the right media in place to distribute the strategic messages; optimising line management communication and behaviour; stimulating dialogue about implementation; ensuring that employees have the capability to perform the desired behaviour; and by celebrating good examples. What matters next is excellent execution and consistent messaging. Not just words but symbolism, rituals and behaviour, too. Telefónica seems to have touched all these aspects: consistent messaging, tooling and tone of voice; internal ambassadors. They allowed for local colour where it concerns events. I wonder if Telefónica plans to go an extra mile: supporting the results of the 'soft approach' with 'hard measures' embedded in KPIs. What I'm also curious about is how Telefónica has managed external communication about the topic. In the era of social media and blurring boundaries between stakeholders, consistent (and instant) internal and external messaging across all stakeholder groups becomes increasingly important.



Pauline Kamphuis
Alignment Factory

Pauline Kamphuis is owner of consultancy start-up Alignment Factory, facilitating strategy implementation through in- and external communications. Pauline holds a master's degree in corporate communications. Over the past 20 years, she has gained experience in communication, marketing, strategy and customer service for business-to-business markets in medium, large and corporate organisations.

able. Clay sums up the appeal of online like this: "We created a campaign where employees could spend as little or as much time online as they wanted, dipping in and out of videos, interactive games and quizzes. Each day there was something new, something that would appeal to every type of interest, be it technology, innovation or social responsibility. Or just something as simple as some facts about their colleagues in another part of the world."

HITTING THE RIGHT NOTE

Another important factor was getting the tone of voice right and sharing it across the company. In this case, says Clay, it was important to "lead by example and help people become self-sufficient. Take the employee brand campaign as an example – everything we wrote was a shining example of our tone of voice. If people see it all around them, and if they see their bosses and senior management doing it, it gives them permission to do it too. With O2 in the UK, we even went as far as rewriting the words in all the 'nooks and crannies' around the office – from signage and visitor's passes to bus timetables."

The past few years have perhaps not been the most obvious time to launch an ambitious, international rebranding programme. But Clay argues makes a strong case for the business value of creating a family feeling. "In tough economic times," she says, "few organisations can promise job security. So we focused on our aim to make Telefónica the best place to work – one team and ultimately one great company giving customers a world-class experience. Happy, motivated employees are always going to deliver better service to our customers." |

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