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EFFECTIVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR SUCCESS:
THE CASE OF GREATDAYS TRAVEL GROUP (MANCHESTER)

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Contents

Forewords.....	4
1. Internal Communication.....	8
1.1 Defining internal communication.....	9
1.2 The flows of internal communication.....	10
1.3 Internal communication channels and tools.....	12
1.4 Functions of internal communication.....	18
1.5 Factors affecting internal communication.....	20
1.6 Holtz Model for employee communication.....	22
1.7 How effective internal communication affects employee motivation, attitude, job satisfaction and productivity.....	26
2. The IC at Greatdays Travel Group: a case study.....	30
2.1 The context of the research.....	31
2.1.1 The company: Greatdays Travel Group (GTG).....	31
2.1.2 My internship experience at GTG.....	32
2.2 The research.....	34
2.2.1 Methodology.....	34
2.2.2 Internal communication at Greatdays Travel Group.....	37
2.2.3 An evaluation of IC at GTG.....	41
2.3 How IC can improve the performance of a company.....	46
Appendices.....	51
References.....	67

Forewords

Motivation

During my internship experience within the English company Greatdays Travel Group based in Manchester I realised the importance of effective internal communication and interpersonal relationships and its impact on running a company.

This is a topic that has always caught my attention, due by my past experiences within an organisation that was characterised by a total lack of communication between employees and the inability of the director to communicate with her staff. The result was that no one listened to each other, and in particular to the director, no one was interested in creating a better environment and making work more effective, there were several disagreements, staff were not motivated and as a result staff turnover was very high. At that time I realised that there was something fundamentally wrong within the company and that experience has never left me since.

Moreover, I have often heard people saying that they do not like their working environment, do not get on with their colleagues, do not feel rewarded and appreciated and as a result want to change job.

In total contrast, when I started my internship at Greatdays Travel Group, I only met happy people, working in a welcoming environment. So I realised that things can be different and this makes me feel excited, because it means that it is still possible to create an environment where people are happy to go to work, not just because at the end of the month they receive a salary, but because they work in an environment, which is team-oriented, motivated, collaborative and fun. It was a great balance, as everyone worked hard, and were also rewarded for their effort.

During my time at Greatdays I had the proof that an informed and engaged workforce produces better results, both inside and outside the working office. All of this made me feel more curious about the approach of the Managing Director to create such a wonderful and inspiring working environment.

Abstract

Internal communication is a major constituent in any organisation and it can actually be seen as its lifeblood.

The problems I faced in this study came from the idea that a company's communicative know-how should not be limited solely to its functions related to the external environment, but should also provide a widespread competence among the whole organisation. Moreover, internal communication is generally not appreciated enough, when it is only considered for the exchange of information within a company.

The basic idea that is examined is that internal communication is becoming an indispensable component for the running of a company.

The aim of this study is therefore to understand how internal communication makes organisations more effective, also because most of them have not yet been aware of the importance of internal communication.

My work is divided into two main chapters, which include sub-chapters to analyse the topics on a deeper level.

The first chapter aims to giving an overview about the background of the subject, presenting all the important aspects that organisations must take into account when creating an effective internal communication strategy. Internal communication flows, channels, tools and functions have been deeply analysed, as much as factors affecting internal communication. A recent employee communication model has been presented as a guide to ensuring that employee communication is central to the management of the organisation for its successful running.

The last part of this chapter is dedicated to the important role played by internal communication in enhancing employee motivation, attitude, job satisfaction and productivity.

The second chapter is the in-depth analysis into the internal communication procedures at Greatdays Travel Group. The first part describes the company and my internship experience. The second part is focused on the characteristics of Greatdays' internal communication and an evaluation of it, which was facilitated by an interview with the Managing Director and a survey conducted with the employees.

The last paragraph concludes the study and gives the main reasons to consider internal communication as an important tool for the successful running of a company.

At the end of my work there is a section dedicated to the appendices reporting the data collected from the interview with the Managing Director of Greatdays Travel Group and a survey to his staff. Moreover, the last appendix presents the e-shot I created for the European Department during my internship experience at Greatdays Travel Group.

This paper contributes to the literature by demonstrating that effective bi-directional communication between employees, managers and directors improves

happiness and job satisfaction. The majority of the respondents were found to be satisfied with the internal communication procedures and considered themselves motivated in their work.

The results achieved from this research work strongly highlight the importance of internal communication, not just as a tool to share information between all levels of an organisation, but also as a fundamental tool to boost employee motivation, attitude and job satisfaction. Moreover, the study underlines that internal communication carries as much important as the external one to enhance a company's productivity and performance.

1. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

«Like a human being, a company has to have an internal communication mechanism, a “nervous system”, to coordinate its actions»

(Bill Gates).

Before evaluating the internal communication processes of a specific company, it seems appropriate to briefly discuss its general definition and characteristics.

In this first chapter, I will begin analysis of this issue by focusing on its definition and on the different kinds of flows, channels and tools required to make a business function properly.

Then, I will present the general functions of internal communication and also take into consideration some of the main factors that affect it.

Moreover, a theoretical model will be analysed, the Holtz Model, offering an employee-centric approach to internal communication.

Taking into consideration the importance of the employees, the last paragraph of this first section emphasises the relationship between effective internal communication and employee motivation, attitude, job satisfaction and productivity.

1.1 Defining internal communication

According to Windsor-Lewis S. at the launch of the Internal Communication Alliance in 2002, internal communication is an essential element in the business mix, but its importance is often underestimated. In fact, internal communication is generally not appreciated enough, only being considered for the exchange of information within the company and not as fundamental to the external one (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 9).

Research on internal communication started to interest business people at the end of the 1900's, where they began to develop and understand that it is an important tool in order to deal with the increasing competition. In fact, employees who are aware of and follow their company values and work towards the same goal make the company survive. Internal communication is then no longer just considered as a marginal tool for the improvement of the company's image, but as an essential element for the running of the company (Invernizzi, 2000: 2).

In the current literature, there are numerous definitions of the concept which attempt to explain and understand the communicative phenomena. One of these describes internal communication as the set of activities with the aim to create an internal network of information, in order to spread know-how and expertise within a company and to share its goals with all their employees (Inside Marketing).

However, internal communication within a company is not just about giving information to employees. Mazzei, highlights the active role played by employees in the communication process; they are not just the recipients of the communication, but with their behaviours they contribute to the promotion of the knowledge and the spread of information. Therefore, people with their own emotions, attitudes and relationships can be considered internal communication's central element. Internal communication should be then looked at as something inspiring, that generates involvement (Mazzei, 2006: 13).

If business men stop considering the final client as the only recipient of their company's activities and start considering other aspects important as well, such as their employees' quality of life and their engagement, they will understand the strategic value of the internal communication.

1.2 The flows of internal communication

When people want to deliver a specific message within a company, the first thing to consider is simplicity. As Smith stated, «information should be kept simple and presented in language with which the selected audience is comfortable» (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 80). For instance, if boardroom jargon cannot be understood by the lower levels of the company, it will be ineffective; staff need a clearer and simpler terminology in order to get the message.

Timing would obviously be another important factor when delivering information. (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 80). There is not point giving important information if staff are too busy to take it on board and thus time needs to be set aside for staff meetings.

Within the company there are three different management approaches of communication (Romano, Felicioli, 1992: 60-67):

1. top-down or downward communication: the flow of information from managers to employees;
2. bottom-up or upward communication: the flow of information from employees to managers;
3. horizontal: the flow of information between departments.

The first one, the top-down flow, is the one which is used the most. The manager gives the orders and instructions and informs employees about what is happening within the company. The downward communication includes:

- job instructions;
- feedback to employees about their work and results achieved;
- job rationale: information given to employees in order to make employees understand their tasks and their relationship with other people's organisational tasks;
- procedures and practices;
- indoctrination of goals.

The first and third points go together: if employees understand what their colleagues' job is (job rationale), they will be able to work independently and they will not require detailed guidelines (job instructions).

The aim of this communication flow is to enhance employees' involvement. However, it is often used incorrectly resulting in problems. In fact, if a manager neglects to communicate with his staff, they will ignore the importance of the role of communication, because the message they receive from their manager is that internal communication does not play an important role in the running of a company (Murnigotti, 2019).

The “bottom-up communication” (also “upward communication”) is when the lower level employees report to the highest hierarchical levels. It is not taken into account as much as the upward one, but managers should be aware that the acquisition of information by employees can play an important role for the company to function efficiently (Larkin, Larkin, 1996).

The upward communication is used to (Romano, Felicioli, 1992: 65-67):

- report the work done;
- inform about working problems and ask for help;
- give suggestions in order to improve departmental or company aspects;

- express opinions, thoughts, feelings about work, colleagues or the running of the company.

The horizontal communication is an important addition to the vertical one. It is the transmission of information between people, divisions, departments or units within the same level of organisational hierarchy (The Business Communication).

It is used to (Romano, Felicioli, 1992: 65-67):

- share information about working programs and activities;
- coordinate the job's running and decide who is going responsible for a certain task;
- solve problems when people share tools;
- develop interpersonal support.

1.3 Internal communication channels and tools

Nowadays, there are a lot of different channels and tools available for sending information to employees and creating an effective system for feedback.

Therefore, it is essential for the management to know how each of these communication channels and tools work and be able to choose the most suitable ones, which can serve his organisation in a practical and beneficial way.

The usual classification suggests dividing the communication channels in three main groups: verbal, written and electronic, as shown in the graphic below.

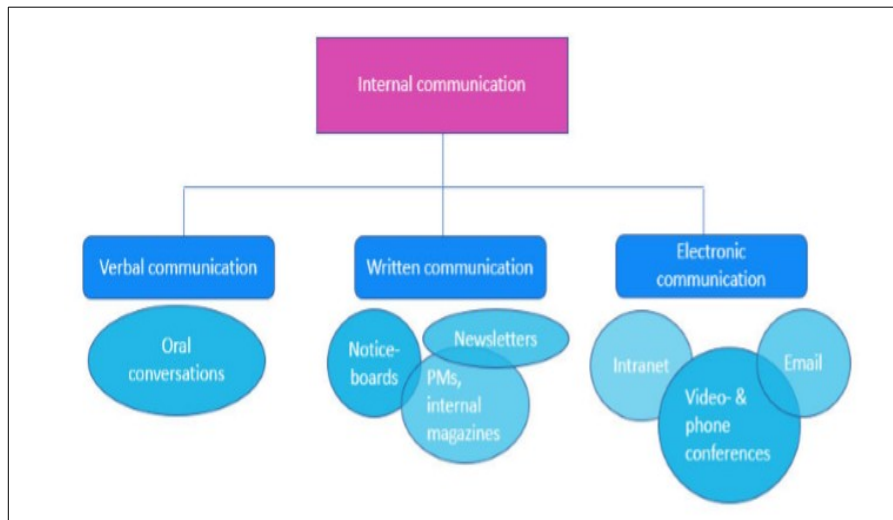


Figure 1. *Channels of internal communication* (Stuart, Sarow 2007, Forssberg, Malm 2001) taken from the Bachelor's thesis of Sergeeva, 2018: 17).

According to Smith and Mounter, verbal communication appears to be the most complete type of communication, as aspects such as intonation, vocabulary, facial expressions can be powerful sources of information. However, not all information can be presented through verbal channels, sometimes it is necessary for it to be done in writing. It all depends on what kind of information the communicator wants to pass and what are the set goals. Information that is urgent and vital for the company, should be provided and presented by the manager in person. For the transfer of information required for daily work, electronic communication channels are often used such as e-mail, Intranet and telephone (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 86-87). Moreover, the busy working life does not allow managers to talk personally to employees on a regular basis. Therefore, the two remaining ways of communication, written and electronic, are the ones which are used the most. The second one, in particular, is the most time efficient; for instance, emails allow managers to reach every member of the staff at the same time with just one click.

According to Smith and Mounter, the Work Foundation has conducted research into internal communication and a report published in 2002 showed team briefings as the most effective tool at 60 per cent. E-mail is close behind at 59 per cent and Intranet is at 38 per cent. This last should give pause for thought, because it indicates how far this tool had spread at the time of the survey. In the last years the percentage would have been probably increased (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 99).

A good communication strategy recognises the strengths and weaknesses of each communication tools and uses it appropriately to ensure horizontal as well as top-down and bottom-up communication.

Face-to-face communication can take in many different forms, such as one-to-one discussions, staff meetings and conferences. Information is provided directly to the recipient or group of recipients and facilitates the sharing of ideas and opportunity to discuss them immediately, as well as to take into account employees' feelings and points of view.

Starting with the one-to-one communication, Smith and Mounter stated that it is still the most valued form of communication and it is particularly used to strengthen and enhance communication processes. It is the stated preferred mode by staff and it is most effective when messages are relatively simple and the opportunity it gives for the listener to give feedback instantly provides an excellent way of checking understanding (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 80-81).

According to Smith and Mounter, «there are obviously occasions when a message has to be delivered to more than one member of staff in the same way and at the same time, during meetings or conferences». Simplicity still plays an important role and a clear agenda must be set. Their aim is to keep people up to date about the company's activities, the results achieved and those which still need to be reached. Meetings should be considered as a time for sharing and sometimes it is necessary to use supporting materials to emphasise the message, such as information packs and audio-visual tools (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 81-83). However, it is important to remember that too many meetings can reduce employees'

productivity and they are one of the major reasons of burn out and stress (Inside Marketing).

Nowadays many companies abandon print in favour of Intranet and e-mails. However, publications are an excellent way of ensuring that important messages are stressed and elaborated. They give time for reflection and feedback and they can also be used as support for face-to-face activities, explaining important or difficult points (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 83-84).

An example of printed publication is the house organ, published by the company itself on a regular basis (e.g. once a month). It is usually a full-colour publication, but sometimes it can be printed in black and white. Regarding the distribution, it can be delivered directly in the office or it can be sent to employees' home. (Romano, Felicioli, 1992: 15-16). They can also include articles generated by junior employees who were asked to interview senior management, in order to involve new employees and learn something new from people who have experienced company's tasks and values for a long time. Nowadays some companies have re-elaborated the concept of house organ as a technological tool, creating companies' social network that can be used only by employees (Inside Marketing).

«As all good media studies graduates know, the moving image is more involving than static print» (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 84). Therefore audio-visual is an interactive tool and it is usually used to reinforce face-to-face activities.

They are very useful when staff are located in different areas; audio-visual tools are in fact an «effective way to create a sense of “one-ness” via team viewings» (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 85). Moreover, they are used to remember particular events, such as the opening of a new office or to present the company's life.

As mentioned before, electronic communication is the most time effective communication tool. Since decisions need to be made more and more quickly, the information has to flow even faster. However, attention and caution should be paid

when using electronic channels. Therefore it is important to carefully manage the data flow and avoid information overload (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 86-87).

Two types of electronic communication are mostly used:

- Intranet: it is the company's internal website. It is a communication and working platform on which you can quickly transmit data in electronic format, text, images, etc. independent of location, time and staff hierarchies. To ensure data security, Intranet is not accessible from the outside (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 86).
- E-mail: it is fast and time effective, as it allows to send a message in a confidential manner to a large number of people at the same time. As a result, it has currently become one of the most used internal communication tool (Farrant, 2003 in Zivrbule's dissertation, 2015: 19).

An additional electronic tool is texting, obviously more popular with younger members of staff. Mobile phones can keep everyone in touch on a constant basis and they are time-saving, as they allow to shift larger amounts of information much more quickly.

It is important to remember that electronic tools are not as easy to read as print publications. Older people and those with sight problems might have difficulties.

In 2002, Nick Pelling coined the term “gamification” as «about taking something that is not a game and applying game mechanics to increase user engagement, happiness and loyalty!» (Growth Engineering).

According to Smith and Mounter, corporates often organise working days away from their usually working environment to try to foster relationships and encourage their employees' creativity. Among the many kinds of possible activities, the most common are training sessions, such as the fine art of chocolate making, a trip to the pub with some ‘pub-style’ quizzes, sport or theatrical activities. All of them provide opportunities for longer-term relationship building within teams and between individuals and the organisation (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 87-88).

In the last years gamification has proven to be very successful in engaging people and motivating them to change behaviours, develop skills or solve problems (Burke, 2013).

Corporate events are usually organised to motivate people and make them feel part of “a big family”. This category includes meetings of all employees in one location, which can be marked on the corporate diary. Theming the occasion can also be useful to help remember the day.

Other events are the so called “family days”, whose aim is to consolidate the concept of belonging. The offices are opened and employees' families who are invited to come and visit the company, while they are entertained by shows and food. They can also be organised on particular events, such as Christmas, to exchange wishes and presents. Occasions like these are not just important moments for the spread and sharing of corporate values and cultures, but they are also essential to boost involvement and motivation of everyone. Staff members, at each level, feel the responsibility to realise company's goals (Invernizzi, 2000:279).

Another factor that significantly influences how employees feel about work is the environment, i.e. the physical workspace. Ergonomic factors such as lighting, noise, and space play an important role in people's working day. Employees who enjoy and like the environment and are reassured that it is safe, will be more engaged, productive, happy and healthy (Morgan, 2015). If these factors are not taken into account, they can lead to stress and discontent, which result in lower performance, motivation, comfort and social interaction. Creating an open environment, a collaborative innovation hub, conference rooms, smaller meeting rooms, a comfortable kitchen and lunch room and a small tea and coffee area with some snacks where people can refresh their mind will make employees feel happy and pampered. Internal communication is not just about verbally communicating; it is about all the gestures that can make the employees feel involved and valued.

According to Smith and Mounter, «corporate social responsibility programmes have always existed but are now moving on from nice-to-have to a must-have status» (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 89)

Having corporate social responsibility has advantages both inside and outside the company: outside the company is seen positively because it is involved in social programmes; inside it boosts employee engagement and makes them feel proud to work for them (Glavas, 2016).

There are many ways in which organisations can act properly:

- at a local level, organisations hire staff from the surrounding area or engage them in working within the community;
- animal and child welfare charities, such as adopting an animal which needs medical care or adopting a child in a third world country and support him with education;
- volunteering programmes for both not-for-profit organisations and public sector bodies including schools and hospitals;
- nature reserves and other conservation projects provide a real challenge for teams. Senior members of staff can benefit from offering their specialist and practical skills, whilst younger employees can find an opportunity to enhance their CV.

1.4 Functions of internal communication

Among the several functions that internal communication can fulfil in a company, Invernizzi considers the diffusion of the guidelines as one of the most important. It allows, in fact, to coordinate all the activities and engage everyone in the achievement of company's results. It is essential in a company to inform employees about their work and their personal commitment to the welfare of the company's

development in order to create a loyal and responsible team. One of internal communication's tasks is in fact to help each employee to understand his role in the company (Invernizzi, 2000: 251).

The most important function, in Invernizzi opinion, is to spread messages which are coherent with the company values. It will help to maintain and develop a culture that is unitary, strong and pervasive and shared both by management and lower levels (Invernizzi, 2000: 265).

Another function that he underlines is to inform staff about new products and convince them about their value, because they are the ones who sell them to the customers.

Internal communication also has the function of communicating and supporting innovation and changes in leadership and management activities. Both innovation and changes need to be communicated in an appropriate and clear way, because employees need to know, understand and share them. It leads to the fundamental function of creating the suitable conditions for learning and cooperation of everyone, who is involved in the running of the company.

Another function is to inform people about successful experiences that have been realised and spread competencies, in order to make feel people proud to work for a certain company.

Another function is linked to external communication. Internal communication helps promote the company outside. In many organisations employees spend much time talking to external people and, in this case, they play an important role as ambassadors. The employee has to be considered the most important asset of the company, because if he feels involved and valued within the company and he will

be happy, he will communicate positively to external people (Chmielecki, 2015: 36).

Creating engagement is another important function. Employees who are more motivated are committed to reach company's goals and this helps improve the working environment. As said before, employees are a company's fundamental asset, so it is important to gain the trust of them and create a feeling that the staff have an important role to play in the company's growth (Inside Marketing).

In conclusion, linked to this last point, internal communication, in particular through the upward flow, allows manager to meet employee's wishes and receive more information about the company's business.

1.5 Factors affecting internal communication

Barriers to communication within an organisation is a factor that affects and inhibits the flow of information.

Barriers to communication are caused by environmental, physical, semantic, attitudinal and varying perceptions of reality (Communication theory).

1. Environmental and Physical barriers are:

- Time: adopt appropriate time saving tools of communication.
- Space: maintain the distance in the communication exercise as determined by the situation.
- Place: avoid overcrowded and discomfort places.
- Channels: choose the appropriate channel (verbal, written, electronic).

- Connotational meanings of words: choose the correct and precise language depending on the context and the receiver's ability in the use of language. Avoid jargon with the lower levels of the organisation.
- Cultural Barriers: understand and accept the cultural differences in individuals and groups and adopt an appropriate communication style.
- Psychological Barriers: try to understand the receiver's mental state and attitudes.
- Perception of Reality: try to understand the different levels of perceptions of a situation and an issue. Be open, flexible and transparent.

Chmielecki has identified other factors after his own study, revealing the following ones (Chmielecki, 2015: 31-34):

- Information sharing: in many companies people do not share information with each other because of a lack of trust. «Sharing information with colleagues can help them to feel part of a team and promote a caring attitude in the working day».
- Insufficient amount of information: this point is linked to the previous one, but it takes into account communication between managers and employees. The latter, actually, often complain that they do not get enough information from their supervisors about how to accomplish their tasks, which, of course, is an essential element.
- Not valuing communication: «Frequent problem is management not really valuing communications or assuming that it just happens». The first people to be responsible for how internal communication is developed and maintained are managers.
- Time: inappropriate timing is one of the biggest factor that affects internal communication, because information is not often delivered on time.

- Hierarchy: this is another problematic area, because senior management is often not willing to communicate with lower rank employees, which are seen as just workforce and not people. The result is that lower rank employees, in turn, are not willing to communicate with senior management.
- Lack of feedback: if managers are not willing to communicate to the lower levels, employees will not receive any feedback about their work. Giving feedback not only motivates people, but it also allows mistakes to be corrected, provide guidelines and, therefore, a better service to the customer. Once employees are provided feedback about their job, they become more motivated, build trust, create shared identity and engage more fully; it provides a way for individuals to express emotions, share hopes and ambitions and celebrate and remember accomplishments (Olurotimi *et al.*, 2016).
- Too much information: this last problem is particularly relevant due to the amount of emails employees receive every day, forcing them to scroll through all of them resulting in the potential to miss vital emails.

1.6 Holtz Model for employee communication

(The information provided in this paragraph has been obtained from the blog page of Shel Holtz).

One of the most recent developments in the field of internal communication was made by the SCMP¹ Shel Holtz, currently director of Internal Communication at Webcor, a commercial contractor based in San Francisco. Before joining Webcor in 2017, he worked as principal of Holtz Communication + Technology, experiencing

¹ Certified Strategic Communication Management Professional

organisational communications in both corporate and consulting environments. In 2017, at the IABC World Conference in Washington, D.C., he introduced a new important term: “employee communication”. This theoretical background was quite new, as he used the term “employee communication” instead of “internal communication” to point out that the central element are the employees themselves. As he stated «Internal is a place, employees are people». Holtz takes them as personalities into account and not just people who accomplish a certain work.

The theoretical model developed by Holtz offers an employee-centric approach to internal communication and employee engagement. The aim of this model is to be used as a guide to ensure that higher levels of organisations consider employee communication central to their management style and understand their importance and value. In fact, Holtz believes that «good employee communication can elevate a company's culture, inspire its employees, deliver bottom-line results, and help leaders sleep better at night».

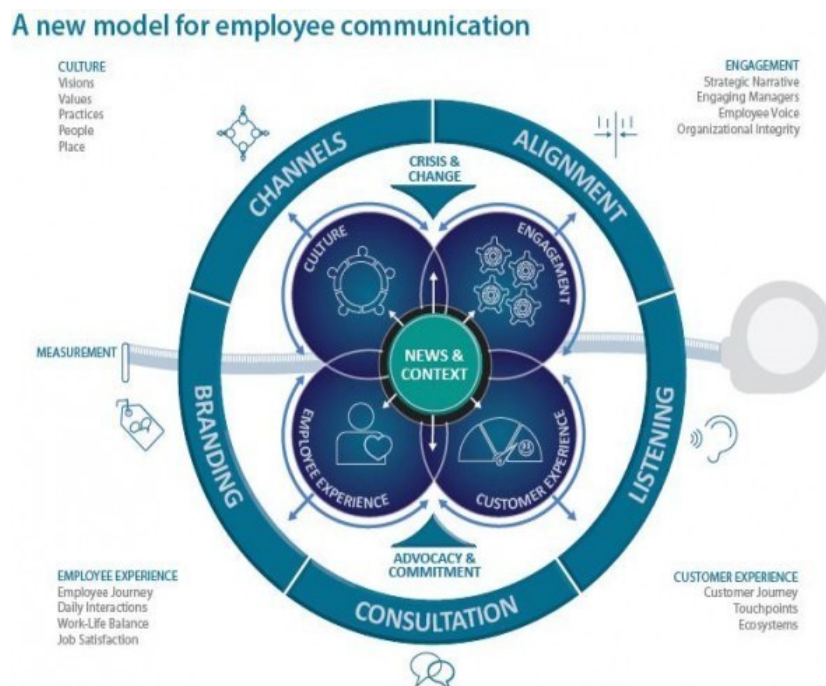


Figure 2. A new model for employee communication (Holtz 2017)

The figure highlights its dynamic nature. While the image of the model is static, it manages to bring to life the very dynamic, inter-connected nature of the elements. For instance, the narrows indicate that the very notion of communication is two-way. One-way communication is not communication at all but it is really just messaging. All those arrows convey the idea that dialogue is inherent in communication.

The central circle is about news and context: the content that employee communication departments produce is central to the function and it is essential to remember that departments deliver news and information as the «unified, central voice of the organisation».

In the outer ring, Holtz (2017) pointed 5 elements of the internal communication:

- Alignment refers to the harmonisation between company's strategy, goals, values and employees' day-to-day work and vision.
- Listening refers to the ability of top management to know what employees are talking about, what's on their minds, what are their sentiment, issues and interests.
- Consultation is about ensuring leaders (and employees) to be authentic and transparent with one another and helping leaders be as effective as possible in their official communication activities.
- Branding is about integrating the customer, the employee and the values brand, thus reflecting what customer or employee feels and thinks when he sees the logo or hears the company name (or that of a product or service they deliver) well as how competitive the company can be with the existing values.
- Channels stand for distribution of the crafted content and participation in conversations using the various channels employees use.

The inner circles are about employee communicators, which are connected in order to create a communication strategy:

- Culture defines the environment in which employees work and the way how leaders and staff members interact. Company culture includes a variety of elements, including company's mission, values, attitudes and standards. A variety of factors influence culture, such as vision, values, practices, people and place.
- Engagement is a key factor for a successful company. When employees are engaged, the company enjoys greater growth, higher profitability and better productivity. Engaged people do not look for another job, because they are happy and satisfied with their employment. In fact, it was affirmed that satisfied employees are more committed and are not likely to leave the organisation.
- Employee Experience is the key factor in the employer brand and it affects the way employees engage with customers.
- The customer experience: most companies are focused on customers, therefore it is essential to know the customer in order to meet his expectations. The customer experience is therefore about creating a connection between employees and customers.

Moreover, there are communication inputs that have to be considered for each of the four key categories:

- Advocacy and commitment are quite linked with the engagement category that has been previously analysed. As already mentioned, communication is an essential tool to motivate employees, to commit themselves to the organisation and feel responsible for the successful of the company, based on shared values and job satisfaction. Employees are the company's ambassadors, supporting and commending it.
- Crisis and change: every company may at some point deal with an expected event that may have a direct impact on its brand image and reputation. It

can produce anxiety in employees and the workplace can become chaos. For this reason, it is important to have a dedicated communication's strategy that ensures employees are never surprised by change and are prepared for crises. This will avoid employees to get confused and worried and let them spread misinformation outside the company.

Finally, measurement crossed the outer ring and the inner circles for a reason: you will not know if you are succeeding unless you measure the impact of your efforts on each of the model's segments.

1.7 How effective internal communication affects employee motivation, attitude, job satisfaction and productivity

Effective internal communication is an essential part of any successful organisation and, according to Chmielecki, it can improve the effectiveness of the whole company, including organisational success and good employee relations (Chmielecki, 2015: 26-27).

Moreover, effective internal communication resolves conflicts, transfers information, increases understanding and ultimately strengthens your relationships (Robbins).

In order to determine how effective the internal communication is in an organisation, it is essential to analyse the characteristics of effective communication (MSG):

- Clarity of Purpose: the message to be delivered must be clear, avoiding rambling. The more clear information people receive, the more quickly they get it.
- Completeness: the message delivered should be complete, organised and supported by facts and observations. Every decision need to be communicated to all members of the staff, from the higher to the lower levels; therefore it will raise the sharing of the goals and the corporate culture and the spread of changes and news will be much faster (Invernizzi, 2000: 278).
- Conciseness: the message should be concise, avoiding unnecessary details.
- Feedback: it is essential to understand whether the message has been well received. It should be timely, in personal and specific.
- Empathy: «empathy with the listeners is essential for effective verbal communication. The speaker should step into the shoes of the listener and be sensitive to their needs and emotions».
- Modify the message according to the audience: as already mentioned, use of jargon «should be minimized because it might lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretations. The message should be modified according to the needs and requirements of the targeted audience».
- Multiple Channels of communication: the use of multiple channels allow to reinforce the message and increase the chances of clarity.

Moreover, according to Lockwood, effective communication is an important management tool to foster employee motivation and engagement, keeping the workforce happy, focused and productive (Lockwood, 2007: 5). On the other hand, lack of communication or poor communication can lead to higher staff turnover and absence levels, poorer performance, a breakdown in the customer relationships and satisfaction, significant costs and some missed revenue opportunities (Institute of Internal Communication). In fact, «engaged employees work harder, are more loyal and are more likely to go the 'extra mile' for the

corporation (...). Engaged employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organisation forward». (Lockwood, 2007: 3).

In conclusion, effective communication also plays an important role in terms of company's performance and productivity. In our modern world, characterised by intense competition, new technologies and globalisation, an engaged human resource has become the defining factor in determining its success. That was one of the results of the study about the role of internal communication made by Headlines Corporate News and University of Oxford psychologist Laura Godwin (Institute of Internal Communication). At the end of this research they came up with the important role played by the internal communication in maximising the potential of employees, which is much more important than pay or other benefits, such as discounts or company's cars. Employees who work in a company characterised by a high level of interpersonal communication have a genuine and strong belief in their organisation's goals and values, they are happier and more productive, and come up with interesting solutions that contribute to improving the business, considered part of them.

During this research several case studies were analysed and the report concludes that the business impacts of effective communication can include:

- employee retention: 44 per cent higher;
- customer loyalty: 56 per cent higher;
- safety: 50 per cent better;
- productivity: 50 per cent higher;
- profitability: 33 per cent higher.

The ultimate beneficiaries of this are the clients; an effective communication within the company's staff allows a better communication with the customers, who are much more satisfied (Chmielecki, 2015: 36).

This first chapter clearly explained that internal communication is the most important tool to change staff behaviour, increase their happiness and motivation to go to the office, make them feel rewarded and guarantee that everyone is always up-to-date with the latest business goals and that they are working towards the same aim. Moreover, assigning great attention directly to company's internal communication can improve overall work performance.

2. THE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AT GREATDAYS TRAVEL GROUP: A CASE STUDY

«Effective internal communication is a powerful force that not only helps organisations to be more successful, but also helps enrich employees' lives in meaningful ways»
(Paul Barton).

After reviewing the published literature on internal communication and analysing its main characteristics, I will now study how a specific company, Greatdays Travel Group, based in Manchester (UK), deals with this aspect of business.

In this chapter, I will first introduce the company and the six-month internship programme I undertook in the summer of 2019 and will then critically evaluate it.

I will then present and evaluate its internal communication processes, based upon the information I received from an interview with the Managing Director of the company as well as a survey conducted with all its employees.

The last paragraph of this final chapter concludes the study and gives the main reasons why effective internal communication is such an important tool for the improvement of a company's performance.

2.1 The context of the research

2.1.1 The company: Greatdays Travel Group (GTG)

Greatdays Travel Group is one of the leading specialist tour operators in the UK for both incoming and outgoing tourism, serving London, Great Britain, continental Europe and many worldwide destinations (Greatdays Travel Group Website).

The company is a family-run business, established in 1985 by John Beaumont and his son Paul. Nowadays, the current managing director is Andy Beard and the company employs a team of over 40 experienced travel consultants handling over 2,000 group reservations per year; where group's sizes range from 20 people up to over 1,500 people. This experienced staff provide all the necessary travel elements, from accommodation in 3, 4, 5-star hotels, meals, coach and train transfers to tickets for attractions and sightseeing. They also produce tailor made itineraries to suit individual client needs.

The company is divided into eight specialist departments, which cover sectors such as London experiences, Daytrips, UK & Ireland tours, European visits, Disney holidays, Air & Cruise travel, Sales & Marketing, Accounting & Finance. It is made up of four different businesses: Greatdays Holiday Services Ltd², Greatdays Holidays Ltd, UK incoming Ltd and Manchester Sightseeing Ltd.

The first one, Greatdays Holiday Services Ltd, is dedicated to B2B (business-to-business) customers, selling tours to the UK Coach industry, Tour Operators, Travel Agents (resellers), Incentive and Individuals.

The second one, Greatdays Holidays Ltd, operates in a B2C (business-to-customers) environment. In this case, Greatdays sell their tours directly to UK Group Travel Organisers, who can be independent organisers or part of a demographic group,

² Ltd = Limited; Limited to your loss above and beyond the share capital you put into the company.

such as schools, Women's Institute, U3A (University of Third Age), Probus (a club for retired or semi-retired business or professional people) and Historical Associations.

The third one, UK incoming Ltd, operates in a B2B environment, selling tours to overseas agents with clients wishing to visit the UK and Europe.

The last one, Manchester Sightseeing Ltd, is a relatively new product, launched in June 2017. The idea was to offer tourists not only a great choice of activities and ideas including walking tours of Manchester, Manchester bus tours and river cruises, but also one or two days holidays packages to discover the surrounding area, such as the historical cities of Chester and York, the stunning Lake District and Peak District or the vibrant city of Liverpool, where the famous band "Beatles" started their successful career. It operates in a B2C environment, selling to overseas individuals wishing to visit the Northwest of England.

In 2019, B2B business covered approximately 55% of the entire business, of which incoming was about 10%, whilst B2C business covered the remaining 45%.

2.1.2 My internship experience at GTG

Greatdays Travel Group offer 6 or 12 month internship opportunities to gain practical experience in the travel and tourism industry. Realising that employers are increasingly looking for people with real work experience, Greatdays has put together an internship programme that offers the first-hand knowledge and experience that employers are seeking.

Their internship programme is relevant and discussed with the intern prior to accepting an offer. It allows the intern to learn not only how a tour operator works in a specific market but also to experience first-hand what the core values of a successful company look like.

My internship lasted 6 months and from day one, I have been considered part of the team, which I feel is an important trait in an organisation. During my internship I was invited to ask every time I had a doubt and to take part in every meetings, which allowed me to develop a better understanding of the workings of this successful company.

I was based within the Day Trips and UK Department, but then I was also asked to give my contribution to the other departments. From my colleagues I quickly learnt day by day all the processes involved in tour booking, from the initial enquiry, to the actual booking, to the feedback given by the customers after they had been on the tour. I also learnt the importance of being precise, accurate, and thanks to the many 1-1 meetings I had with the Managing Director Andy Beard, I realised how important internal communications and interpersonal relationships are, in the successful running of a company. This is what I mean by experiencing first-hand the core values of a prosperous and successful company.

I was not just given simple tasks, the projects I took responsibility for were challenging, and tested me and helped me build on my strengths and develop my weaknesses. The most interesting and rewarding task I completed, whilst on my internship was when I was asked by the European Team to write a full itinerary for an 8 night tour in Italy (Appendix 3). With my strong interest in the tourism industry, I have always dreamt about creating one and finally I had the chance. I had never done this before, so didn't have any previous experience to draw on, but I did my research, asked for help when necessary and pulled together a proposal for discussion with the rest of the company. After a lot of hard work, my tour was

published online and I was so proud to see my finished product. During this work I experienced both internal and external communication, as I worked closely together with Sales, Marketing and the European department, as well as external suppliers. I had several contacts with different guides, attractions, hotels and lunch venues which allowed me to develop my communication skills, becoming more fluent, eloquent and responsive as a result. Thanks to this, I could develop my strengths and also prove to myself that I can work on my own. It was my responsibility to do the initial research, to plan the tour day by day and decide what should be included in the package.

Overall, I consider that the internship programme they offer is excellent: it focuses on the intern, with the aim of helping him understand how the Tour Operator Industry works. Moreover, the programme includes various activities, in order to make the intern understand what he likes and what he does not like. In fact, the aim of an internship is not only to give the person the opportunity of enrich his curriculum vitae, but also to understand if he likes a certain job and where his strengths lie. Greatdays Management understand it and it is for this reason that during the months spent within the company the intern receives tasks from and experience in every department.

2.2 The research

2.2.1 Methodology

In terms of the present thesis project, I decided to use qualitative research, since the research itself is focused on non-measurable issues. In fact, qualitative research focuses on meaning-making, on «understanding the nature of the research problem rather than on the quantity of observed characteristics» (Strauss, Corbin, 1994, taken from Baškarada, 2014: 1).

In particular, most information has been obtained from my personal experience whilst working as an intern at Greatdays Travel Group, but also from an interview with the Managing Director, Andy Beard (Appendix 1) and a survey conducted with the Greatdays' staff (Appendix 2).

In this study, a semi-structured interview with the Managing Director was used in order to give the respondent the opportunity to express his own subjective opinion and personal experiences. The questions were focused both on the changes in terms of internal communication strategies from when he was appointed in 2010 to current day and on his personal thoughts regarding the interview's topic. Therefore, the first section included questions about the company itself, such as communication tools and methods used, common barriers to effective internal communication and assessment about the current communication processes. The second section was more focused on the Managing Director personal experiences and thoughts regarding the importance of internal communication within a company. The acquired data have directly contributed to answering the research question.

Regarding the survey, which was used to reach a larger audience, i.e. all the employees of the company. Closed questions were chosen because they are more specific, as the participant can only choose an answer to a question. However, a multiple choice question and an open question were included to give participants the chance to express their own opinion. The survey was conducted through an anonymous questionnaire. All employees received an email invitation to complete the online survey, then an email reminder was sent two weeks later and the survey was closed after four weeks. The questionnaire assessed the state of the participant's workplace communication and measured their level of engagement as employees. Sending a form was considered the simplest and fastest way to get all the information required to evaluate the internal communication situation within the company and reach clear and objective conclusions. Moreover, the data gathered also contributed, in a way, as proof checking the data acquired during the

interview process.

The first section of the survey requested general information on demographics and current job status.

Demographic questions included gender and age, whilst job status questions included current employment status and how long have they worked at Greatdays. These questions were included because gender, age and job status may affect individual's expectations about the communication they receive as employees.

The second section included a series of questions about the communication climate at their workplace. Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with communication, the frequency of it and which communication channels they prefer. Moreover, they were asked to rate their level of satisfaction about their manager's communication.

The third section was about how much they feel motivated and what motivates them.

The final section was composed as an open question, asking employees if in their opinion there are any aspects that could be improved.

The interview and the survey questions were inspired from both the literature review on internal communication and my personal experience as an intern at Greatdays.

The next two paragraphs present the results of the data collected.

2.2.2 Internal communication at Greatdays Travel Group

Internal communication represents an essential part of Greatdays' operating environment.

In 2010 a new Managing Director, Andy Beard, was appointed. When he started, he realised that it was essential to implement changes in terms of internal communication. The moral in the different departments was low, deadlines were being missed, meetings were not organised, employees did not know each other and did not know what was going on in the company.

He was well aware that if he could not motivate the team in order to raise its performance, the company would not be successful.

Therefore, he started considering various options to improve the team's communication and performance, and has established the following means of communication among employees.

First of all, he decided to increase the number and improve the quality of the meetings; they are essential, because they allow people to know what is happening in the company as a whole and in the individual departments. For this reason he calls:

- Weekly Monday morning kick off meetings with all managers, where each one presents and discusses a handful of relevant issues about their area of the business.
- Bi Monthly management meetings, where each manager prepares a one page summary report of their area of the business which gets bound with all the other reports and distributed ahead of a meeting to discuss each one in turn.

- Alternate to the above and again Bi Monthly departmental meetings are held, where the above report is prepared and each area of the business has a meeting individually with the directors, to openly discuss their area.
- Monthly individual one to one meetings with the direct manager to discuss performance, develop new ideas and give constructive feedback.
- Individual one to one meetings with the Managing Director, which happens every 2 to 3 months to discuss about job satisfaction, and provide an opportunity to discuss any problems that the employee would like to share.
- Weekly product meetings to discuss the progress of events and take any required action.
- Monthly brochure production meetings to discuss progress of events and take any required action.
- Return to work interviews, in order to bring any employee up to date with work or reallocation of work after an absence and to help line managers identify where they can help or take action to prevent a recurrence³.

Employees are sent a briefing document in advance of each meeting to enable them to contribute rather than simply listen. As stated by Smith, this behaviour is called “The Team Listening programme”, that «changed the focus from the manager’s contribution to everyone’s» (Smith, Mounter, 2008: 98).

Several events have also been planned throughout the year to allow employees to get to know each other better and work together more effectively, not because of the need, but because of the environment of high motivation to cooperate and achieve the same goal:

³ Implementation of the Bradford Factor absence reporting which analysis any team members absence and prompts structured management assistance for that team member.

- The annual off site staff conference, where each area of the business presents to the rest of the business the high and low points of the previous year and then presents the plans for the following year. This is coupled with an evening dinner dance and staff awards ceremony recognising long service, high achievements and going above and beyond what would normally be expected of a team member. Events like this allow the team to bond, feel valued and get to know each other better, outside of the working environment, and to strengthen relationships as they have fun all together.
- Greatdays Social Events Calendar, include Fish & Chips Day, St George's Day, sweepstakes on Wimbledon and The Grand National, Summer Evening Barbecue, Willy Wonka Chocolate Fest, National Reading Group Month, Christmas Secret Santa and many others.
- Staff competitions, such as giving each staff a small tree and see which one grows faster and which one blooms first. These activities do not distract people from their daily work, on the contrary they invite them to communicate with each other and work together on something other than work.

To implement the internal communication structure, the Managing Director introduced staff announcements sent via email to everyone (i.e. when a new team member is appointed, the Managing Director emails information about this new person, such as origin and past work experience in order to get to know him and welcome him) and the open door policy, meaning that the Director's door is always open to every employee, encouraging open and honest communication.

Essential to the successful running of a company is to prioritise the welfare of their employees, listening to them and ensuring they know they are valued. Expressing warm approval or admiration is important as it motivates staff and ensures a

positive working atmosphere is maintained. It is said that people who feel happy and valued work better. For this reason small bonuses and perks have been introduced, which are funded by the Director's on an ad hoc basis. These are small things, which contribute towards a happy workforce. For example, he sometimes buys and personally distributes ice-cream and lollies to all staff. Moreover, birthdays are also celebrated within the company, with cakes, sweets and good wishes, making that day more special for the birthday person.

Moreover, to motivate the team members, annual budgets are set, with each team submitting what they believe they will achieve and once agreed with the directors these departmental budgets are divided into individual personal targets for each team member with monthly reporting on actual results.

The company has always had a corporate social responsibility programme. For 2020 they chose Diabetes UK, the UK's leading diabetes charity, whose vision is to build a world where diabetes can do no harm. Greatdays Travel Group engage themselves in raising funds for this important cause through events.

Last, but not least, he has given high priority to the importance on the environment, both inside and outside the office.

Starting from the inside, he decided to move the office to a lighter but smaller building, where employees are obliged to meet each other's during the working day, increasing the number of interactions between the different departments and pushing employees to talk face-to-face instead of sending emails or picking up the phone. However, sometimes it is useful to phone a specific person, for example when you need to put a client through a colleague or you just need an information whose another department is responsible for; for this reason, each staff member has his own phone on his desk, so employees can directly call the person they need

to talk with. This measure is important to make people feel value as a person with his own tasks and not as a number working for a specific department. Moreover, there is free access to the kitchen and lunch room and an area with tea and coffee was created, making feel people cared for.

In regards to the outside environment, he chose a calm and cosy area, not far from the town centre, where employees can spend their lunch time walking through the pedestrian area, doing shopping or having a good meal. For those who prefer spending their lunch time with nature, surrounded by silence and peace, there is a park just at the corner. In this way both employees' needs are satisfied and catered for.

In the end, all these measures and actions taken by the Managing Director prove that internal communication represents an essential part of Greatdays' operating environment and that the Board of Directors consider GTG to be not just a company, but first and foremost, a team of people, with their own personalities and emotions.

2.2.3 An evaluation of internal communication at GTG

The information I obtained from the employees survey (Appendix 2) helped me evaluate the internal communication situation within the Greatdays Travel Group from an objective point of view.

The analysis of the survey is divided into two parts: the first one consists on a general analysis of the survey, whilst the second one is a more in depth analysis of

the responses, taking into account the working level, gender and the age of the respondents.

Starting with the general analysis, of the respondents who answered the survey, 79.2% are women and 66.7% are staff members. A majority of respondents age is less than 30 and between 30 and 40 years old, both with a percentage of 37.5%, meaning that the average age is young.

Half of the respondents have worked for Greatdays for more than 3 years, demonstrating the level of staff turnover is low and so most of the respondents feel part of the company. Therefore, the level of extreme satisfaction is good (45.8%), followed by a 37.5% who affirm to be satisfied.

More specifically, when asked the overall satisfaction level of communication within the company, only 12.5% is completely satisfied, but 58.3% of the respondents said that they are satisfied with the communication level, which is a satisfactory result.

Participants were asked to indicate their communication channel preferences for communication with their colleagues. The majority of respondents selected face-to-face (70.8%) as their first preference. Only 16.7% selected email and 8.3% chose phone to communicate.

Almost everyone (83.3%) feel that the frequency of communication within the company is about right. This figure shows that the measures taken by the Managing Director 10 years ago have been effective and his team agrees.

As stated in paragraph 1.5 (p.21), managers are the first person that should communicate to their staff, sharing with them the importance of an effective internal communication, in order to work in a better environment and achieve the

expected results. For this reason, some questions focused on the managers' communication skills. Overall, the satisfaction is quite high: 37.5% of the respondents rated their managers' communication skills very good and 37.5% excellent. Only one respondent was dissatisfied, and rated them as 2 on a scale, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. Moreover, the common opinion is that tasks and objectives are clearly defined and communicated.

In paragraph 1.7 it has been analysed how effective internal communication can affect employee motivation, attitude and satisfaction. Therefore, the third section of the survey was focused on if they feel motivated and what motivates them. To the first question, 66.7% of the respondents answered they are motivated, while 29.2% said periodically. Only one person does not feel motivated at all. To the second question, two factors emerged: the majority of respondents are motivated by their colleagues (78.3%), with job satisfaction being the next motivator at 73.9%. This is important and illuminating data, meaning that the working environment is very positive. Moreover, thanks to this question it is possible to affirm that salary is not considered by these employees as the most important motivating factor, contrary to what people generally think. In fact, only one respondent selected this option.

Finally, the last question gave respondents the opportunity to have a voice and make suggestions about what could be improved in their opinion. 10 out of 23 argued that there is nothing to improve and that the working environment is great.

Going on with the deeper analysis, I examined the individual questions, taking into account respondents' working level, gender and age.

First of all, I took the responses from 8 managers and 16 staff members.

In general managers are the most satisfied in terms of internal communication and they think it is very effective; in fact all of them have worked for Greatdays for more than 3 years, meaning that they are satisfied and happy to work there. They prefer

face-to-face communication, only one of them gives preference to phone calls. They agree that the frequency of internal communications is about right, only one thinks that it is too much. Different opinions came up regarding the communication between managers and workers: more than a half of the managers believe that it is not as effective as it should be. Regarding the motivation question, the main factor that affects managers is job satisfaction, followed by colleagues, work activities and interaction with the management team. One of them also gives much importance on family.

Only one person is not satisfied and not motivated at all (a female, staff member, less than 30 years old). Her answers are very negative, however she is 1 over 24 respondents and with all other responses are being very positive, therefore her answers do not affect my final conclusions.

Secondly, data does not show particular differences between men and women: in the company the feminine gender predominates (I have received responses from 19 women and 5 men, 3 of these men being managers). My conclusion is that whilst the team is predominantly feminine, it does not influence the working environment and there are no differences in their opinions on internal communication.

Thirdly, I focused my attention on the age of the respondents and how it can influence their behaviour. To start with, the average age is quite young, between 30 and 40 years old. After a deeper analysis I conclude that people's age does not have a considerable influence on how staff view the internal communication processes. The only aspect that I found interesting is about the motivation factors: employees who are less than 30 years old are more motivated by colleagues, probably because they consider the working environment as a place to find new friends and because they see the senior employees as examples to follow, people who can teach them a new job and therefore be considered their "work guide". Otherwise, the more remarkable data comes from the 30 and 40 year group: a large majority is

motivated by colleagues and job satisfaction. The main reason is that between 30 and 40 years old people start being aware of the working environment and job satisfaction plays an important role in people working life. In fact, 3 over 8 that are less than 30 chose the job satisfaction as a motivator factor, whilst 8 over 10 between 30 and 40 years old chose it (Tables 1 and 2).

	< 30	30-40	40-50	> 50
Colleagues	4	8	3	3
Management	2	3	2	2
Team				
Work activities	3	4	1	3
Job satisfaction	3	8	3	3
Salary	0	0	1	0
Family	1	2	1	1
Friends	1	2	2	0

Table: Number of employees who have chosen a certain motivator factor, classified by age.

Age	< 30	30-40	40-50	> 50
N. of respondents	8	10	3	3

Table 2: Number of employees who have filled in the survey, classified by age.

Finally, I analysed the open question in terms of what employees think about future improvement on the internal communication processes within the company, considering the age of the respondents.

Firstly, employees who are less than 30 years old affirm that they would like more meetings. They are at the beginning of their working experience, so meetings would allow them to acquire more information about the company itself and its running and boost their sense of belonging.

Secondly, employees between 30 and 40 years old want more training opportunities for professional development and possibilities of progression within the company; that is the age of employment growth and career advancement.

Thirdly, for employees between 40 and 50 years old internal communication is essential in an organisation and in their opinion it must always been taken into account and, if necessary, varied depending on people and situations. The reason of their point of view is that they already have an extensive working experience and they are able to make criticism, in a positive way.

Finally, employees who are more than 50 years old, and who in this case are all managers, believe that the present internal communication procedures are really good, they do not need improvement. Only one of them suggested better forward planning and clearer objectives, probably thanks to the great experience he acquired during the past working years.

To conclude, according to the survey analysis, internal communication is overall well developed and effective within the company and information is shared on time among all the staff members.

2.3 How internal communication can improve the performance of a company

Based upon the literature review and the qualitative research that I have conducted in this thesis, it seems possible to conclude, that effective internal communication practices lead to enhanced organisational performance. I will now set out the key reasons why.

Firstly, an effective internal communication system is fundamental to remain in control of the messages within the company, ensuring that important company news is shared in a professional and prompt manner, avoiding unwanted rumours. For this reason, establishing fast, interactive and trusted channels of

communication to reach all employees is crucial. Communicating frequently and immediately will help employees be aware of what it is going on within the company, it ensures staff feel involved and motivated and it helps avoid misinformation and misunderstandings which can negatively affect business performance.

Effective internal communication also allows employees to understand the company's goals and know how to reach them, giving their work meaning and purpose. Internal communication, through feedback and interaction, play an important role to make feel people part of a team and confident about the value of their contributions, as their work is essential for the achievement of the set objectives. Effective internal communication is thus essential to create a motivated team who work towards common goals (Invernizzi, 2000: 249-251).

Internal communication also enables two-way communication. Top-down and bottom-up flows (Paragraph 1.2, p. 10) are both crucial for the proper sharing of information within the company. On one side, it allows employers to better understand their workforce, to know their thoughts and emotions and to listen to their suggestions for improvement. On the other side, allowing employees to get to know their employers and to receive all the information they need for the proper performance of their daily tasks makes the business stronger. Interpersonal relationships are essential within an organisation to stimulate cooperation and employees must be encouraged to share with managers and directors everything related to their working life (Invernizzi, 2000: 69-70). In fact, as we have noticed on the evaluation of internal communication at Greatdays Travel Group (Paragraph 2.2.3), organisations that openly share information, encourage bi-directional communication, care about the well-being and value the contributions of their employees have a higher rate of happiness, job satisfaction, organisational identification and productivity results.

Moreover, a good internal communication system plays an important role in improving your company image externally. Paying attention to how you communicate to your front-line employees will help increase customer's satisfaction as they will communicate in a similar way (Chmielecki, 2015: 36). In fact, clearly-communicated goals, well-trained and informed staff and happy faces will definitely enhance your revenue. If your employees are happy and satisfied, it will be mirrored directly onto your customers and there is no better advertisement for your brand than happy employees and satisfied customers.

Effective internal communication is also an important tool for the establishment of a better working environment. It can help companies to avoid high turnover rates and, as a result, it will help retain people, saving the company money and time in the long run. This study is an example of how directors and managers have the responsibility to foster a pleasant working atmosphere – with their personal behaviour as well as the creation and maintenance of good interpersonal relationships with their employees. The case study I have presented highlights this aspect, a management style based on an openness to honest dialogue and willingness to listen, giving great attention to the informal organisation and to all the aspects regarding emotional involvement of the employees (Paragraph 2.2.2).

An important key to a successful business is thus a positive employee attitude alongside effective internal communication, both verbal and gestural. This is what keeps the workforce together, boosting employee engagement, which in turn helps the business achieve their goals. Employees are an exceptionally valuable asset and the better relationships they have with their colleagues and managers, the better the work of the individuals and the entire organisation will be. The results of the case study I analysed show that increased productivity is not the result of the job itself, but of the attention given to the employees. The research study shows that good relationships within the working group and with the directors provide more efficient incentives than the economic ones (Paragraph 2.2.3, p.43). Therefore, it is

essential to retain and motivate employees. This does not have to be achieved with grand gestures, as the case study shows, instead, it is the day to day appreciation which count. For example, buying and distributing ice-cream and lollies to all staff (Paragraph 2.2.2, p. 40) is a gesture which does not cost much effort or money, but it is a little gift that can make your employees day and put a big smile on their face. After receiving this work perk, everyone is happy, grateful and ready to keep working hard, even on a warm afternoon. Staff are your number one priority: treat them well, and they will treat your customers in the same way.

A practical example of how effective internal communication can improve the performance of a company came from the Greatdays Managing Director, who stated that after the measures taken to boost internal communication within the company, he has noticed many improvements on the overall running of the organisation. He mentioned (Appendix 1):

- lower staff sickness levels, which results in higher staff retention levels;
- higher staff moral;
- more highly trained staff;
- increased cross departmental collaboration;
- a higher valued team member as they understand the implications on the whole company of decisions they make and not just on their area of the business;
- higher efficiencies leading to higher revenue and profit as the whole business works as one and not as individuals;
- a happier and more dedicated team.

To conclude, internal communication and employee engagement are two aspects that should be at the top of every company's list of priorities. The more employees

get appropriate information and the more quickly they receive it, the better they develop good relationships with their colleagues and superiors. In turn, this results in each individual outputting higher quality work, which results in a more successful and profitable organisation. The beneficiaries of this are both the clients, who see their needs met, the employees who are satisfied and committed and, finally, the company itself, which raises its revenues and maintains a positive working environment, avoiding problems such as high staff turnover or strikes. A company that establishes an excellent internal communications system and a good working environment definitely has an advantage in today's highly competitive market.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: interview to the Managing Director of GTG Andy Beard

Interviewer: How long have you worked for Greatdays Travel Group?

Director: I have worked and co owner at Greatdays for 9.5 years now.

Interviewer: How was the communication strategy within Greatdays when you started?

Director: It was very loose with maybe one or two company wide meetings per year.

Interviewer: Have you ever asked the consulting of a communication expert? If so, what was the result?

Director: Never.

Interviewer: What kind of internal communication tools and methods are used in your company?

Director:

- open door policy: my door is always opened to encourage internal communication;
- meetings;
- individual one to ones;
- intranet;
- emails for staff announcements;
- gamification;
- corporate events, in fact at the beginning of the year we write down a social events calendar;
- corporate social responsibility programmes: for 2020 we chose Diabetes

UK, the UK's leading diabetes charity,

Interviewer: Which channels and tools of internal communication do you prefer? Why?

Director: I like all the channels we use but probably my favourite's are the personal one to ones with all my managers and also walking the floor chatting with team members, not to mention my time mentoring the interns.

Interviewer: Which are the most common barriers to effective internal communication at Greatdays?

Director: We have to train every member of the team in the company culture of openness and honesty at all levels and if this fails you can have challenges.

Interviewer: Which tools do you use to assess internal communication processes?

Director: I use feedback from personal interaction with all members of the team and also formally by one to one's with all the managers.

As a team happiness measure I also use sickness levels, staff turnover levels year on year, long service levels and also exit interviews with anyone leaving the business to discuss the reasons around why they are leaving.

Interviewer: How do you assess current communication processes within Greatdays Travel Group?

Director: The actual results of effective internal communication are:

- lower staff sickness levels;
- higher staff retention levels;
- higher staff moral;
- more highly trained staff;
- increased cross departmental collaboration;

- a higher valued team member as they understand the implications on the whole company of decisions they make and not just on their area of the business;
- higher efficiencies leading to higher revenue and profit as the whole business works as one and not as individuals;
- a happier and more dedicated team.

Interviewer: Do you think there is anything that could be still improved at Greatdays in terms of internal communication?

Director: it is hard to change the culture of a business, especially when it has been run one way for so many years (24 years before I started). But it is even harder to keep this culture alive and in good shape. Continuous improvement is the way I keep it going and as long as I am Managing Director it will be run this way. Responsiveness to the world around you is key and you must change and adapt to every situation.

Interviewer: During my internship experience at Greatdays, I realised that you give much importance to internal communication. Where does this interest come from?

Director: Personal experience of working in the corporate world of finance and travel. The corporate culture is so often only sharing information out on a 'need to know basis' because the culture is not open and honest. People tend to be scared of asking or saying the wrong thing to the wrong person in case they upset someone which is very wrong. The leadership of communication must start at the top and people must see and experience that to be able to accept the culture as honest and open.

Interviewer: Is there anyone who inspired you?

Director: I have come across many reference books and speakers and the two main ones that I align myself to are:

- Tony Robbins who is a motivational speaker about life, self help and well being. I take these stories and learn from them, adapting them to my everyday life including how to run the business and treat and motivate the team.
- The author and speaker Stephen R Covey is also another great source of inspiration. The first book I read of his was called 'The 7 Habbits of highly effective people' and it changed my life.

Interviewer: Do you think that communication is an important leadership characteristic? State some of the attributes that you think communication is an important characteristic of good leaders.

Director: Absolutely it is a very important leadership characteristic.

Attributes: Honesty, Openness, Integrity, fairness, free and open access to me and willing to spend time with people, treating everyone as equals but also treating everyone as individuals, seek first to understand and then to be understood, understanding that there is always another side to a story.

I would like to explain this last point with a story. It is 8am and you are on the London underground. The doors of the train open, a guy gets on and sits next to you. just before the doors shoot. Two kids start screaming, shouting, kicking. They are with the guy and he just sits there, reading a paper. Then, one of the kids comes by and drags the paper and throws it on the floor. You look at this guy; he picks the paper and starts reading again. The two kids get on running, screaming and this guy is doing absolutely nothing. What would you say to that guy? You would probably say "Listen, sort your kids out". What about if the guy looks at you and says "I have just come from the hospital. The mother has just died and I do not know how to tell them". Now what would you say to that guy?

That's why "there is always another side to the story". I read this story 30 years ago and that changed my life. Because every scenario I come across now, I do not instantly judge. It taught me to listen and understand what is going on first.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how does effective communication influence working style, employee motivation and job satisfaction?

Director: Effective, regular and accurate Internal communication can influence working style, employee motivation and job satisfaction in different ways:

- it ensures that each team member understands the processes around the company;
- it boosts moral as the whole team understand the overall objectives of the company;
- it boosts moral as the individuals feel valued that you take the time to communicate and discuss their future career and the future of the business with them;
- it ensures that each team member understands where they fit into the overall company structure and that they are important to the whole company;
- it offers positive and remedial feedback in a timely fashion.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how does internal communication with employees strengthen personal relationship as well as the working environment?

Director: First of all, it gives each team member the opportunity to discuss any matter in open forum or private with their peers and managersit.

Then, it gives each team member the opportunity to have a say in how the business is run.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how internal communication can help to improve the performance of a company (for example in terms of productivity)?

Director: If all the team have the full understanding of the ultimate company goals they can make more informed and intelligent decisions in their area. This in turn can assist other areas and by heading off challenges that may otherwise have not been resolved. Also if you share information openly about mistakes or wins made in one area then all the company can learn from one experience.

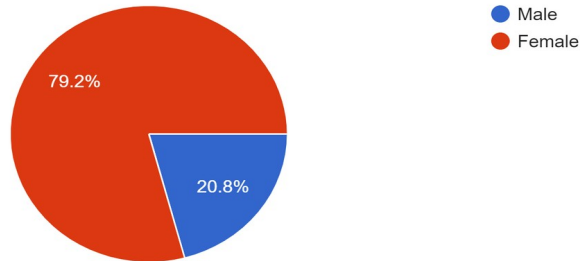
Interviewer: Do you think there are any disadvantages that effective internal communication can bring to a company?

Director: None that I have ever encountered as long as you are happy to be open and honest and willing to answer any question put to you about anything in the business.

APPENDIX 2: Greatdays Staff Survey

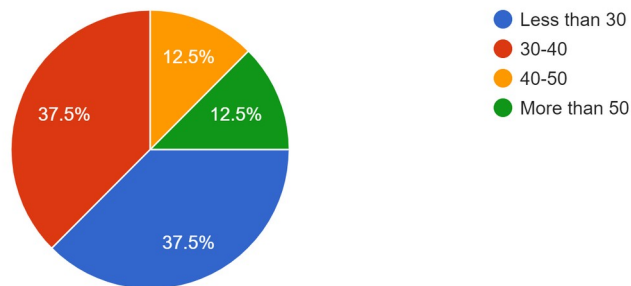
Please select your gender

24 responses



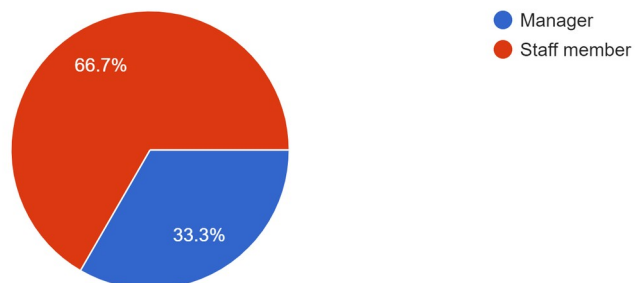
Please select your age

24 responses



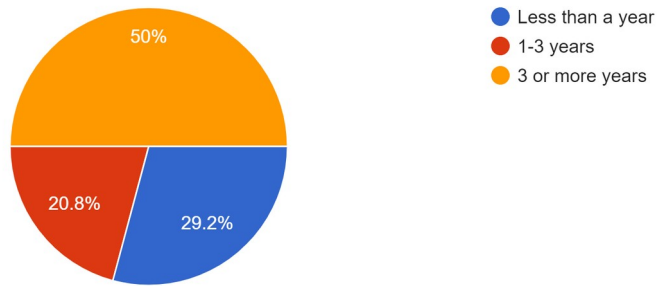
Please select your working level

24 responses



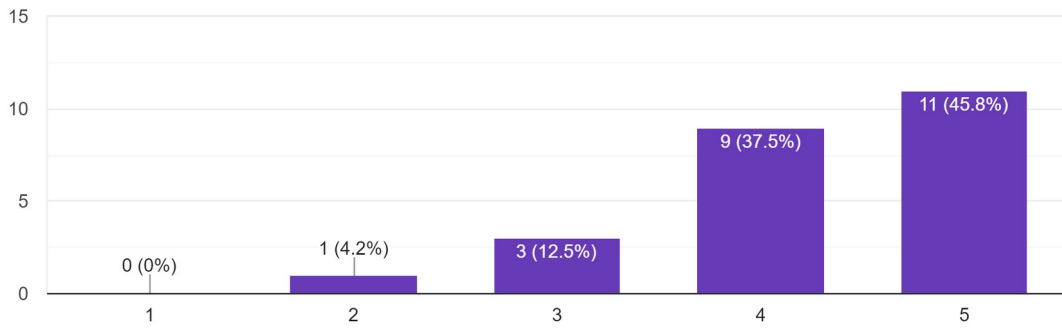
How long have you worked for Greatdays Travel Group?

24 responses



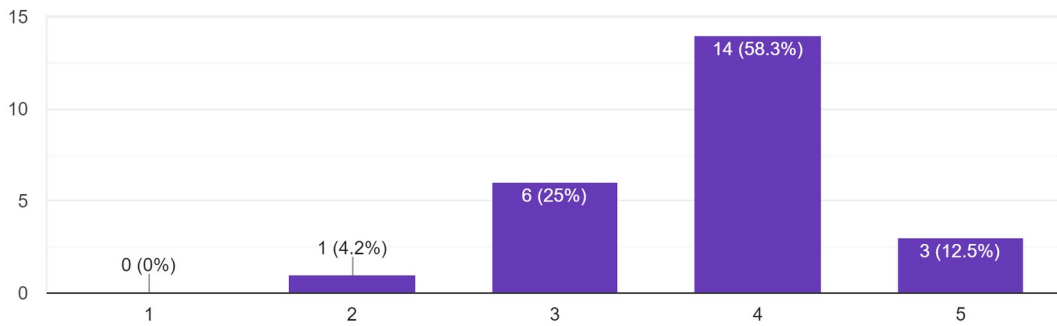
How satisfied are you working for Greatdays?

24 responses



Overall, how satisfied are you with communication in your company?

24 responses



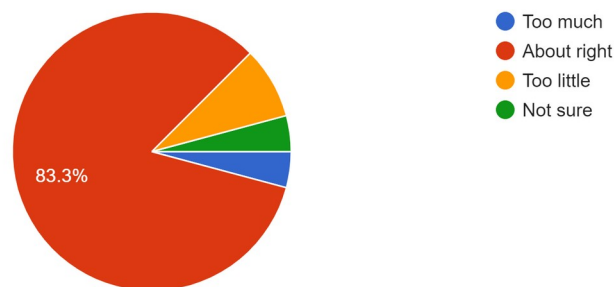
Which internal communication channels do you prefer for communication with your colleagues?

24 responses



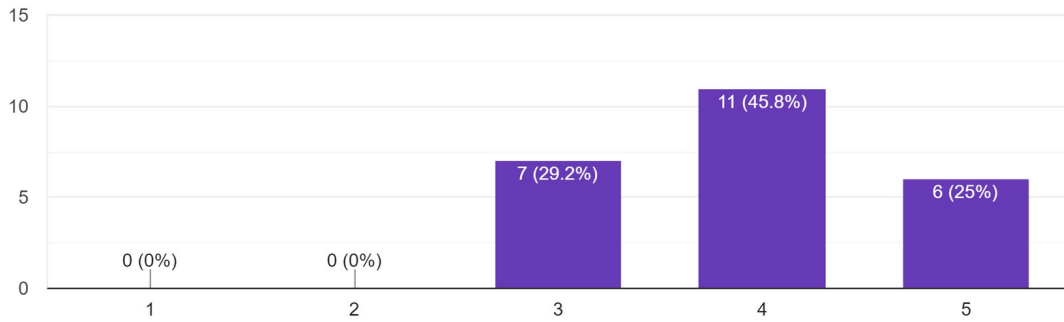
How do you feel about the frequency of internal communications?

24 responses



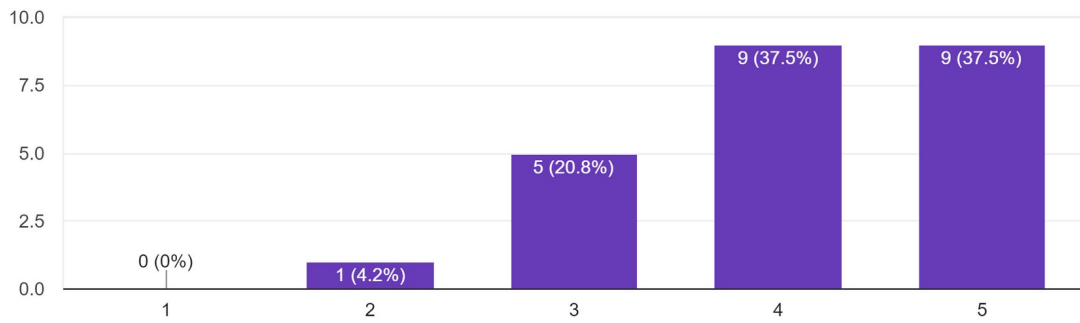
Is the communication between the managers and the workers effective?

24 responses



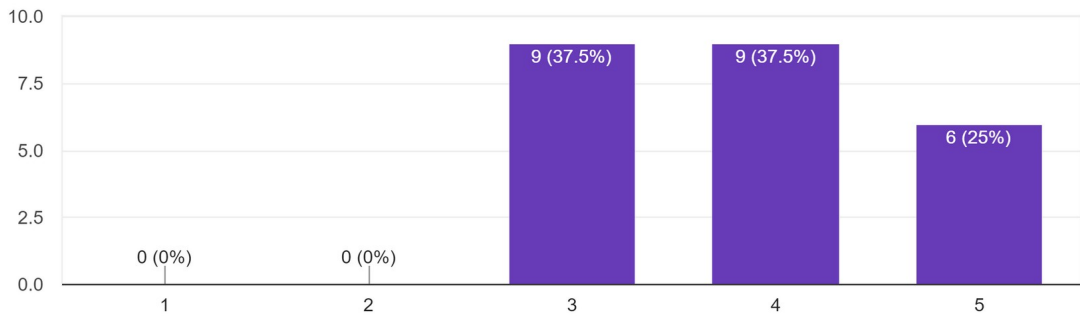
How would you rate your manager's communication skills?

24 responses



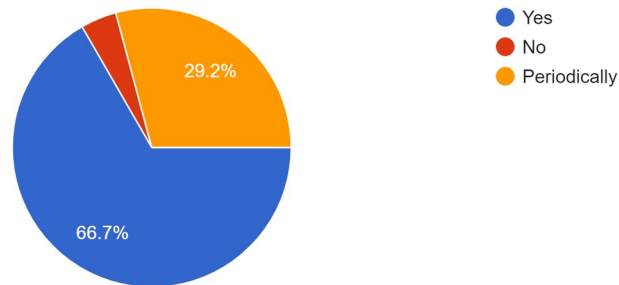
The tasks and objectives are clearly defined and communicated

24 responses



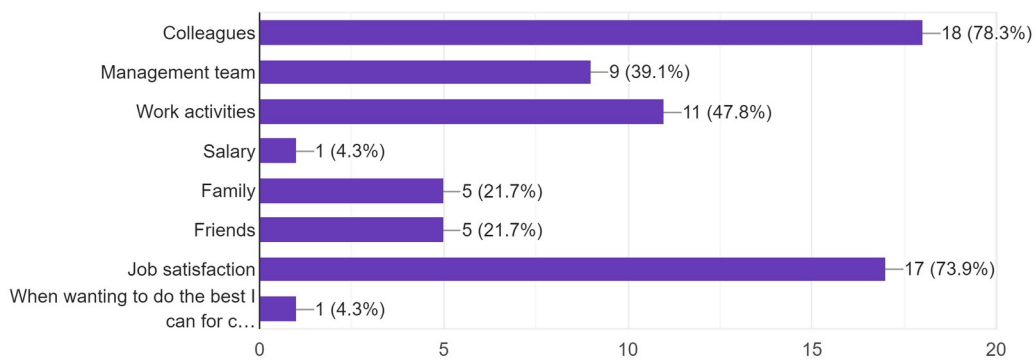
Do you feel motivated?

24 responses



If you feel motivated, what motivates you? (You can choose more than one answer)

23 responses



* When wanting to do the best I can for clients so they get the best service available. It is always nice to get good feedback

In your opinion, are there any aspects that could be improved?

24 responses

No

n/a

Maybe less use of telephone and more direct talking

There is always room for improvement but I think internal communication is continually improving.

No generally internal communication within the company is very good.

Training opportunities

Inter-departmental meetings

Would like more one-on-ones with my manager

There should be a flow chart "In the know" so if you are absent on leave or out of the office, you can catch up on what has happened whilst you have not been in. Better than no communication at all, especially after Management meetings.

Not at present

Progression within the company

Communication always needs improvement as each individual responds in a unique way. Finding the best way needs a comprehensive approach.

It is good for information to be provided by email within a team so that it can be kept for future reference, but many things can be said face to face so it would be good to have more communication within the team.

no

can't think of anything

Better forward planning and clearer objectives.

Sometimes it seems that the Directors have different opinions and one may ask you to do something without agreement from the other. This may cause friction.

nope

N/A

No. Greatdays is a great place to work with a good working atmosphere

Some meetings can feel too focused on the negatives and a 'blame game', rather than finding solutions, it can sometimes leave you feeling a little deflated afterwards rather than motivated. Everyone being more aware of the phrasing of any issues can really make a difference (myself included).

I think the amount of meetings held is a really good way to communicate with colleagues, however I don't think the context of the meetings is always beneficial. I think too much emphasis is put in to having meetings, rather than really communicating during them. I think a lot of focus is put on the little things or the things that have worked in the past and I believe greatdays would benefit from focussing on ways to explore the opportunities that exist now and looking in to the future. I also believe the lack of incentive leads to lack of motivation which is seen amongst the team. Incentives should be higher than a trophy after 5 years service and a goodie bag of FAM trip freebies.

APPENDIX 3: Piedmont E-shot

Culture, History and Flavours of Piedmont – New Tour, Crafted by a Local



Turin, Mole Antonelliana, Piedmont, Italy © Image by nonnisveglia from Pixabay



Turin, Mole Antonelliana, Piedmont, Italy - Vineyards, landscape © Image by nonnisveglia from Pixabay



Details



Carcine de Marchesi di Barolo Winery © Carcine de Marchesi di Barolo Winery

Price includes:

- Return Dover – Calais ferry crossings
- 2 nights bed and breakfast in France (overnight hotel)
- 6 nights dinner, bed and breakfast including 3 course set menu with water included
- Half day Turin guide
- Entrance to Venaria Palace and Gardens – 3 hour guided tour
- Entrance to the Fortress of Fenestrelle – 2 hour guided tour
- Traditional lunch at Cafe des Forçats in the Fortress of Fenestrelle (3 course set menu with water included)
- Entrance and wine tasting at the Marchesi di Barolo winery (3 wines)
- 1 free place in a single room for the coach driver/ group leader with 25 paying passengers

Group Travel Options

9 day tour **From £582 per person - minimum 25 passengers**

Authentic Piedmont – An Unmissable Experience

Here's a wonderful tour that gives you a host of memorable and authentic experiences in Piedmont.

Piedmont is a lovely rolling region of Italy just the other side of the Alps from France. True to the meaning of its name – *the foot of the mountain*, it is surrounded on three sides by the Alps, with the highest peaks and largest glaciers in Italy. This region is also rich in history – ancient fortresses, royal residences, legends, battlefields – and at its heart is the city of Turin, the first capital of the unified Italy, and home to FIAT and Juventus FC. Renaissance and Baroque architecture, museums and galleries, and gourmet restaurants grace its boulevards and piazzas.

On this tour, you can experience the region's very best hidden gems including Venaria Reale Palace and Gardens, also known as the Versailles of Savoia, and the Fortress of Fenestrelle, the largest alpine fortification in Europe, surrounded by a stunning mountain landscape. You'll be based in the picturesque town of Bra in the scenic Barolo wine region, characterised by rolling hills, vineyards and winding roads which deliver breathtaking scenery around every corner. With some of Italy's best wines, truffles, beef and chocolate, this tour will also offer you exhilarating tasting experiences.

Like 18 people like this. Be the first of your friends.

Dates

18th June 2020 and 1st October 2020

Suggested itinerary

Day 1-2

Travel to Italy

Crossing from Dover to Calais by ferry, we travel south through France, making an overnight stop along the way. The following day we continue to Italy and arrive at the hotel for dinner.

Day 3

Turin Sightseeing

After breakfast in the hotel, we head towards Turin, the ancient capital of Italy and home to FIAT cars and Juventus FC. We will meet our local guide for a sightseeing tour to explore the cultural and historical sights of this beautiful city, both by coach and on foot. Sights include the large Piazza Castello with Palazzo Reale and Palazzo Madama, the elegant Via Roma, which links Piazza Castello with the eighteenth-century Piazza San Carlo, best known as the lounge of the city. By coach we will be able to reach the Parco del Valentino, with its medieval hamlet and Piazza Vittorio Veneto, where we can admire the River Po, the Basilica di Superga and the hills upon the city.

Perhaps spend the afternoon strolling along the city centre and taste the classic "bicerin" (hot drink with coffee and chocolate) in one of the historic cafes or visit the National Cinema Museum inside the Mole Antonelliana, which is definitely worth a visit. For dazzling 360-degree views, take the Panoramic Lift up to the 85m-high outdoor viewing deck.

Day 4

Venaria Reale Palace and Gardens

Today we travel to Venaria Reale Palace, the Versailles of Savoia. It is an architectural masterpiece and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the morning, you will discover the magnificent Reggia, which boasts some of the finest examples of universal Baroque, including the elegant Hall of Diana and the solemn Great Gallery. In the afternoon head to the Gardens, which with their archaeological remains and contemporary artworks, bring together ancient and modern charm. Why not visit the Gardens on board a trackless train or a horse-drawn carriage? To enjoy the Gardens from a different point of view, you can also sail on the Great Pond on the gondola of the Reggia - an activity that was fashionable in the 17th and 18th centuries, when the typical Venetian boat was a staple at all riverside court residences.

Day 5

Fortress of Fenestrelle

Today put your trainers on as we travel to the Fortress of Fenestrelle, the largest alpine fortification in Europe and one of the largest in the world, second only to the Great Wall of China. You will be welcomed by an enthusiastic guide who will take you on a 2 hour guided tour, offering an interesting portrait of facts characterising life in the fortress and a detailed overview of its intriguing history as a border construction. Moreover, the Fortress of Fenestrelle is home to a characteristic element that makes the complex unique in Europe: a covered stairway with 4000 steps, which climbs inside a tunnel connecting all the various sections together. The fortress is surrounded with peaks over 3,000 metres high, so, remember to look up and enjoy the landscape! After your visit, a traditional lunch will be waiting for you in the onsite restaurant "Cafe des Forçats".

Group Travel Options

- **Air** - Fly from a number of UK airports direct to Milan's Malpensa or Linate Airports with both scheduled and low-cost airlines. Flights with low-cost carriers are also available into Bergamo Airport. We can arrange transfers to / from your local airport as well as from Milan or Bergamo Airport to your hotel.
- **Coach** - Depart from your home town and travel to Italy by coach. We can arrange short-sea Dover-Calais / Dunkirk ferry crossings or Eurotunnel crossings from Folkestone-Calais. Alternatively, take the overnight ferry from Hull-Zeebrugge / Rotterdam, Newcastle-IJmuiden or Harwich-Hook of Holland. We can arrange overnight stops to break your journey between the ports and Piedmont at a selection of hotels to suit your budget and travel plans in France, Germany or Switzerland.

Useful Links

[Travel Options](#)

[How to Book](#)


[General Information](#)

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Day 6

Day at Leisure

Enjoy a more leisurely day today with time to explore Bra, located in the heart of the so-called food valley. Bra is one of the main centres of the Piedmontese Baroque architecture with its many 17th and 18th century churches and palaces, and also the seat of a University of Gastronomic Science. Take a stroll and visit the several small, family-run shops selling local produce such as organic sausages, cheese and chocolate.

Day 7

Barolo Wine Land: Alba and La Morra

After breakfast we drive the short distance to the historic centre of Alba, the capital of Italy's premier wine region, and also dubbed the "medieval town of one hundred towers". Alba is not only a beautiful medieval town, it is also known as the gourmet capital of Piedmont. In particular it is famous for its white truffles and chocolates – it is the birthplace of Ferrero Rocher, Nutella and the legendary Gianduiola. Aside from being a foodie heaven, Alba is a fortified town with the soaring 12th-century gothic cathedral, Cattedrale di San Lorenzo, at its core.

In the afternoon we travel the short distance to the town of Barolo, passing through La Morra, with panoramic view over the Alba wine valley. In Barolo we visit the historic 19th century cellars of Marchesi di Barolo, where Barolo wine is produced. This was the former summer home of the Marquis of Barolo, with 200-year-old barrels. The visit will be followed by a tasting of their excellent wine, along with the typical Piedmontese grissini, Italian crispy breadsticks.

Day 8-9

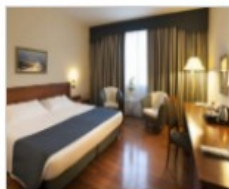
Return to UK

It's time to leave Piedmont and return home, making an overnight stop along the way.

Suggested hotel

Hotel Cavalieri, Bra ****

This 4 star hotel is located in Bra, just a few kilometres from the smooth hills of the Langhe and Roero, both UNESCO heritage sites. The Alps and the hills of Bra are the staggering views that you can admire from your room. All rooms have air-conditioning, private bathroom, free Wi-Fi, hairdryer, satellite flat-screen TV, minibar, coffee and tea making facilities. This hotel provides free coach parking.



Hotel Cavalieri Bra, Piedmont, Italy –
Classic Bedroom



Hotel Cavalieri Bra, Piedmont, Italy –
Dining Room



Hotel Cavalieri Bra, Piedmont, Italy – Bar

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