

PWR Automation Case

*This case is intended to focus on the key strategic issues which need to be considered when preparing and delivering any business message: **audience, objectives, context, sender, medium, and message content and structure.***

Company background

PWR Automation is a large multinational power and automation technologies corporation which serves electric, gas and water utilities as well as industrial and commercial customers, with a broad range of products, systems and services for power transmission, distribution and automation. PWR Automation has plants and sales offices located all over the UK and subsidiaries operating in Europe and Asia. Over the past three years, the group has grown substantially through mergers and acquisitions and the number of personnel has almost doubled.

PWR's corporate image

According to an extensive survey carried out by Image Marketing Ltd late last year, PWR Automation's strong corporate image of the past now seems somewhat vague, especially in comparison with newer aggressive marketing methods used by rival companies. This was alarming news for senior management at PWR, who discussed the survey results at a crisis meeting in December.

The reasons for the declining image seemed obvious; the pace of growth had been fast and after several smaller acquisitions and two major mergers the unification project was still under way. But fast action was needed, i.e. concrete steps to consolidate PWR's identity and strengthen the corporate image. Therefore, the following email was sent to all advertising managers in the plants and sales offices worldwide:

Dear Managers,

The Corporate Communications Unit has now decided to coordinate the advertising activity in PWR Automation to improve the company's image. While the long-term plan is being prepared ads should be cleared through the Corporate Communications Unit.

From now on, each manager responsible for advertising in the sales offices and subsidiaries of the company should submit all ads to the Corporate Communications Unit at least three weeks before the deadline given by the journal.

I am sure that you will understand that this step is necessary if we are to coordinate our advertising. This procedure should give us at the Corporate Communications Unit the information we need to see that PWR's advertising is independent of the unit that initiates it. In this way the interests of each sales office and subsidiary, and of the group as a whole, will be served.

*Best regards,
Claire Blaire, Corporate Communications Unit*

Although most managers responsible for advertising acknowledged receipt of the email message, the Corporate Communications Unit was not notified of any ads to be published. The email had clearly failed to convince the managers to act.

Analysis of communication strategy

Use the following questions and Munter, Chapter 1 to analyse the case. How successful was Claire Blaire's strategy? What would you have done differently?

1. **Communication objective:** What are the 'general', 'action' and 'specific' objectives of this message?
2. **Audience:** How would the audience affect the message?
 - Who are they?
 - What do they know?
 - What is their attitude?
 - How can you motivate / persuade them?

To what extent did Claire Blaire take these factors into consideration? How would these factors affect your approach if you were in her shoes?

3. **Objective:** Tell, Sell, Consult, Join

What communication style did Claire Blaire employ?

What communication style or combination of styles might have been more successful given the intended outcome? Why?

4. **Credibility:** What initial credibility does she have as a communicator (rank, goodwill, image, expertise, common ground)? How could she have enhanced her credibility (acquired)?
5. **Media:** Claire communicated by email. Was this the best channel? What communication channel(s) would you choose? Why?
6. **Message:** How did Claire structure the message? Direct or indirect? How would you suggest she organise the message content? Why?