

Case study: UNRWA

Developing an internal communication strategy



Background and challenge

UNRWA is the main provider of education, health, relief and social services to over 4.6 million registered Palestine refugees in the Middle East. It employs 30,000 staff in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and West Bank, the majority of whom work in schools, clinics and other installations in and around the refugee camps. In 2007 it started an organisation development (OD) programme to ensure that it is better able to meet the demands of its many stakeholders. A key component of this programme is to improve internal communication and in March 2009, UNRWA commissioned Ibis Communication to undertake a strategic review of internal communication following a tendering process.

Approach

Our approach featured three discrete stages:

- **Gathering insight:** In consultation with the OD Programme Manager, we identified a range of stakeholders to interview. They included senior managers and programme heads in HQ and local field/area offices, local implementation managers and staff from the schools, clinics and other installations. We carried out the vast majority of the research face-to-face over a two week period, using a translator where necessary. This primary research also included a detailed review of existing media channels and was supported by desk research.
- **Developing the strategy:** The second phase involved using and interpreting the insight to

develop an internal communication strategy. Fundamental to this was being absolutely clear about the benefits we would expect to get by improving communication and translating these into clear and measurable success criteria. From there, we identified a number of discrete audience segments, the core messages we wanted to communicate to each and the channels through which to do this. For the most part this involved proposing new channels to support those already in existence.

- **Building the plan:** Over a period of a few weeks we built support for and acceptance of the strategy, which allowed us to move to a subsequent phase of detailed planning. Given the scope of proposed activity and a requirement for this activity to be spread over a two-year period, this was a complex process which resulted in a detailed project plan that identified activities, dependencies and the resources required to deliver them. The plan was then delivered to a steering group for its implementation.

Results

At the present time the steering group is still working through how best to implement the plan and in the process of obtaining the funding required to deliver it. The feedback we received was that the process had been thorough and the output both practical and comprehensive.

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engaging conversations

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